

~ DAILY ~ VARSITY

WEDNESDAY

Wednesday June 17th 2009

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press and politics



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Last night's Balls
reviewed inside!



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Vestal virgins

Jesus ents shut down after noise complaints

Helen Mackreath

The Jesus May Ball ended in disappointment on Tuesday morning after complaints from local residents forced the Committee to shut down the music an hour and 20 minutes before the advertised end.

The move is unprecedented in May Week history. The Survivors' Photo was brought forward to 5.45am in a departure from its traditional time of 6am.

With ticket prices at £105 for a basic ticket and £135 for a dining ticket, the abrupt end to the Wizard of Oz themed evening left many students feeling short-changed. Carly Hilts, a graduate student at John's said, "loads of students ended up just leaving early and were very cross about paying so much money and having the evening effectively cut short. We had nothing to do except eat and wander about in the cold."

The ceilidh, advertised for 5am, was cancelled, as was other acts such as the Bohemian Ukelele Band and the Shut Up And Dance DJ set, scheduled from 4-6am.

Environmental Health Officers, from the Cambridge City Council, were alerted to noise emanating from Jesus College by "a number of calls" made to the Council's out of hours noise service. Following these calls "more than one visit" was made to the College by the Environmental Health Officers. *Varsity* understands that, based on their findings, the Officers made an agreement with the Committee that led to the closure of the ents.

It is not yet clear whether the Jesus May Ball Committee was at fault for flouting Council regulations, or wheth-

er the Council were overly stringent in their enforcement. *Varsity* attempted to obtain comments from Katrina Hewitt and Ben Hosford, Presidents of the Jesus May Ball Committee, but was unable to do so.

Varsity spoke to residents living in close proximity to Jesus and found that many were unconcerned by events: "it's nothing to do with me," said one resident, while another admitted that this year's Ball had been "surprisingly loud" but that it didn't bother him. One of the complaints about the noise levels may have come from a Jesus graduate student occupying graduate student accommodation.

Some students complained of general confusion amongst the partygoers. "No-one knew what was going on," said one student, who did not wish to be named. "There was no information provided about the reasons for the closure."

The Council's Environmental Health Manager, Selwyn Anderson, said that "We do try and work with Colleges and Ball Committees in advance of events to try and ensure they do not give rise to noise problems for the community. We try to be proactive."

The Environmental Health Service of Cambridge City Council releases an Organisation Handbook to ensure that May Balls comply with Council regulations, which includes specific information and advice on noise levels. They highlight that May Ball Committee members should be "patrolling the perimeter of the college and listening for noise, visiting the houses nearest the college to assess whether noise is likely to be disturbing and, in particular, using a sound level meter."



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Anglia Ruskin dropout rate is second highest in UK

Emmie Hodges

Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) has the second highest student dropout rate in the UK, according to a recent study.

The study, conducted by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), which looked at all 157 higher education institutes in the UK, found that over two-

fifths of students who began their degrees at ARU in 2006-7 did not complete their studies. Only the London Metropolitan University has a higher non-completion rate for undergraduates.

Of the 43.9 percent of ARU students who do not finish their degrees, around half will transfer to other institutions or stay on to complete an alternative quali-

fication. The remaining students drop out of higher education altogether - an increase of 14 percent from comparable figures for last year.

Speaking to the *Cambridge News*, a spokeswoman for ARU explained that the change in figures was in part a result of the "reclassification" of many students following NHS-funded courses from 'de-

gree' students to 'diploma' students. She also cited the relatively large number of students who switch degree course midway through their studies.

"This reclassification has distorted the non-completion rates as they have only included degree students, as opposed to degree and diploma students. It therefore seems that the figures make the assump-

tion that our reclassified students have dropped out - which is not the case," the spokeswoman said.

The study also showed that the University of Cambridge has one of the lowest non-completion rates in the country at 3.1 percent, with just over 1 percent of students choosing to leave higher education entirely.

Got a good picture? Email it to mayweek@varsity.co.uk



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John's, Downing & Queens'
All of last night's Balls are reviewed on these pages. We still haven't had any sleep.



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Ed Cumming says goodbye to Cambridge.

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Yesterday's drama
As ever, May Week is a time to see some wonderful outdoor productions.



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Sport Quiz
We round up the sporting year the only way we know how, with a quiz. Let us see if you have been paying attention to the *Varsity* Sport pages.

Corrections

In Issue 697, we referred to a ceilidh at Jesus May Ball, which was cancelled after we went to press. Also, in the same issue we called the Cambridgeshire County Council Elections the 'Cambridge City Council Elections', and failed to mention that George Owers was also a student candidate.

NEWS FEATURE

Cheating the system

Jamie Pollock

Regulations to prevent cheating in Tripos examinations have become progressively more strict over the past several years. Recently, for example, a fine of £50 was introduced for possession of a phone in an examination hall.

First year land economists were left questioning the intentions of their fellow examinees after an exam, sat earlier this term, was interrupted by an invigilator querying the find of a set of revision notes in the toilets.

One student recalls how “the invigilator came into the exam room and asked if anybody had an innocent explanation to come and tell him after the exam”. The invigilator then proceeded to query the presence of a student whose name is believed to have been found on the notes.

Despite this questioning, no students were seen to come forward in the exam hall - it is believed that the name found on the notes was that of a supervisor whose advice and guidance, it is hypothesised, may have been written down and hidden by someone seeking to capitalise on toilet breaks in order to cheat.

In spite of the public nature of the event, those innocents who sat the exam know no more about the incident. Commenting on the episode, one land economist proclaimed that “The University could have done more to make it clear how the incident has been dealt with and though it could have been an innocent mistake, without knowing what happened, we’re the ones who feel cheated.”

Though the University’s Board of Ex-

aminations comes across only a ‘handful’ of cheating incidents each year to be passed on to the Senior Proctor, the number of cheaters who go uncaught is unclear. How the few foiled cheaters are dealt with and whether deterrents are proving sufficient is also uncertain. Though it is outlined in the University’s guidelines for candidates and for “the prevention of misconduct in examinations” that “no candidate shall take into an examination room or have in his or her possession any book or paper relevant to the examination”, it seems that certain students have pursued this tactic in the hope of surpassing the invigilators.

As evidenced by three anonymous interviews obtained by *Varsity*, a proportion of Cambridge students still find the concept of cheating both attractive and feasible. One English student tells of how she wrote ‘nifty quotes’ hidden in her bra in order to reassure herself of her capacity to impress in the exam. Other techniques, particularly the writing of inconspicuous prompts on hidden body parts, are deployed by students seeking an unfair advantage.

These interviews demonstrate how students trying to cheat may not do so purely on the basis of achieving a grade deemed sufficient for merely passing exams, but rather, that illegitimate techniques are pursued in order to compete for higher grades. According to an Archaeology and Anthropology student, ‘the expectation...that you’ll achieve a respectable grade’ is a motivating factor in swaying students to cheat.

Beth, Trinity Hall



I don’t really see the big deal about cheating - not for English, anyway. It’s not like you’re writing down one specific fact for one specific answer; it’s more for reassurance. During the Part I Tripos exam I wrote down nifty quotes on a small piece of paper and stowed it down my bra. I wrote dates I wanted to know on my thigh, and made sure I wore a skirt, and there is always all sorts of blurred bits and bob scrawled across my hand. No one ever commented because it is not like these hints are necessarily helpful, or definitely going to come up.

Roger, Peterhouse



Exam term is clearly very intense and the expectation is that you’ll achieve a respectable grade. I’d worked pretty hard for most of the papers I was taking and felt that if I went into one of my exams as unprepared as I felt then my grade wouldn’t fully reflect my ability. Though I wouldn’t try to defend cheating, the circumstances led me to believe that it was a reasonable thing to do. I tried to predict which questions were likely to come up and write a few names and dates in between my fingers. To be honest, they weren’t a great help and I doubt it would have altered my mark.

Charlotte, Magdalene



I knew of people at my old school who had written quotes on cigarette papers or on their arms. I’d also heard of people writing notes and leaving them in the toilets. These were all things that I had considered but came to seem ridiculous. By the time I’d started writing stuff on my arm, it started to feel like I had learned it. If you’re at Cambridge, you probably shouldn’t need to cheat.

Punt “wars” on the Cam

Beth Staton

Information released by Cambridge police has revealed a culture of “war” in the Cambridge punting business.

Last year police responded to 21 clashes between touts as they competed to attract customers. One female tourist, caught in a fight between touts, fell and broke her hip, punts were cast off from their moorings, and one was sunk. Verbal confrontations between touts and ice-cream sellers were commonplace, and in one confrontation a man taunted touts with a knife, and one threw a mug of tea over a rival.

Figures released in the Freedom of Information Act showed that incidence rate in 2008 had increased from

nine the year before. Of the events last year seven resulted in criminal charges, ranging from harassment to common assault, theft and GBH.

Cambridge City Council has appointed a ‘Punting Enforcement Officer’ to deal with the unrest. Alistair Roberts, the Council’s safer communities manager, said there had been a reduction of complaints this year, but that the council had taken a strong line. “Punting is third on the list of attractions to Britain and we want to keep the image of Cambridge as a pleasant place to visit” he said.

The City Council has been criticised, however, for exploiting anti-terrorism laws to monitor the punting trade, including the use of hidden CCTV cam-

eras authorised under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act.

Around 60 touts will be working the river this summer, netting customers for self-hire at £80 a day, or chauffeured trips at £12 per person for one hour.

Scudamore’s manager Rob Ingersent said the beginning of the season had been calm, but that he was expecting an influx of touts, and expressed discomfort with the rivalry.

“I feel ashamed to be associated with it sometimes,” he said. “It all depends on how many touts there are. Usually there are five or six, but the worry is that we will see a free-for-all with as many as 60 touts on the streets, which is just going to be horrible”.



MASONS NEWS SERVICE

University Library to digitize incunabula collection

Natasha Pesaran

The University Library’s collection of early printed books will be published online thanks to the receipt of a £300,000 grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

The collection consists of 4,650 volumes printed before 1500. Books from the second half of the fifteenth century are often referred to as ‘incunabula’ (which means ‘swaddling clothes’), because they are the very earliest Western printed texts.

Among the books in the University’s collection is a copy of the Gutenberg Bible, the first book to be printed in Europe from moveable metal type (c. 1455). The Bible is one of only eight copies in the

United Kingdom. The collection also includes a copy of the first printed edition of Homer’s collected works.

Until now, only a small selection of the University’s pre-1500 books works have been available online. The collection of incunabula was last catalogued in 1954 in a printed volume, which has subsequently become rare in itself.

William Hale, a librarian at the University Library, said, “The new catalogue will enable the collection to be explored in ways not envisaged fifty years ago but which modern scholars now expect, for example by providing more details of the subject, provenance, illumination and binding of the books.

“Putting the books on Newton is a move towards democratisation.”



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

In Brief

Famous Cambridge vista at risk

The view along the Backs of the River Cam is undoubtedly one of the city’s most famous views, featuring on many a postcard and countless tourists’ photographs. However, over 100 horse-chestnut trees, making up ten percent of the area’s tree population, lining the banks are now at risk from disease – both bleeding canker and leaf miners.

The damage to the trees’ leaves will ruin their appearance in a matter of weeks. Though the Backs are actually under the ownership of Cambridge City Council, officials from the University have undertaken an 18 month “master plan” to combat the problem, logging the infected specimens and replanting them.

11 year old writes opera

Ginny Leigh, an exceptional 11 year old from Meldreth, has written an opera to be performed in Cambridge later this month. Ginny began writing the music for ‘The Tale of Peter Rabbit’ at the age of five but left it unfinished as trumpet practice dominated her packed diary. However, rediscovering the music on holiday last year, Ginny immediately set herself to completing the opera which lasts 25 minutes and is to be performed by a cast of 26 seven to thirteen year-olds in Cambridge. The 11-year-old’s talents are countless, from playing 4 instruments to writing fiction and singing.

Death on the River

The aggressive swan nicknamed ‘Mr Asbo’ by students has struck again after the death of its baby. The cygnet is thought to have been killed by rowers, and a post-mortem is currently being conducted. The death of the baby is believed to have generated a fresh burst of violence on the river from the adult swan, who has snapped at boats and even caused some to capsize. The threatening behaviour of the bird led to the appointment of a swan marshal, who used a loudspeaker to warn rowers to watch out for the swan during Bumps. RSPCA inspector Chris Nice issued a firm warning to the rowers responsible for the cygnet’s death. “The swans are the residents and the rowers the visitors, and it is they that have to accommodate the swans”, he said.

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Cambridge Spies



Fitzwilliam

Family Values

Inviting an innocent younger brother to Cambridge is always quite a fun thing to do, especially when he can see how much of a mess you really are. It is good, for example, to demonstrate your stud-like ability for bagging members of the opposite sex to the extent of forcing your brother to sleep in the bathtub “cos I’m going to get some tonight”. Make sure, however, that you actually do live up to your self-styled poon-fiend credentials, otherwise it’s just embarrassing.

Fitzwilliam

Summer in the City

The return of alumni for traditional Suicide Awareness Weekend celebrations descended into farce as one venerable member invited a friend along from the corporate world for “the Cambridge experience”. The City boy quickly got more than he had bargained for when, having lost a tense game involving guessing the number of coins in people’s hands, he found himself having to do the wet and grisly initiation ceremony. Proudly donning club colours, he then stumbled around the sun-burnt garden party crowds, hurling invective at various females. When his original host, however, after a day of failed lechery, told him it was time to be back for work on Monday, he shook his head and headed Cindieswards, mumbling “You can go. These guys are my friends now”, leaving his previous companion to make the long trip back to London all by himself.

Homerton/Johns

A Comfortable Lodge

A slumbering partygoer underwent an unexpected teleportation after an overly relentless bout of outdoor revelry. Stirring herself after some well-deserved shut-eye in one of the University’s more ostentatious gardens, she was perplexed to find her surroundings upgraded to the dwelling place of the presiding official of the college in question. Our heroine didn’t linger to explore further, but fled toward surroundings less entwined in the heart of the establishment.

Welfare trumps tradition

Cædmon Tunstall-Behrens

Changes to how students receive their Tripos grades at Cambridge indicate that exam results posted at Senate House, a 300-year-old tradition, may become a ritual of the past.

Traditionally, students’ exam scores have been posted publicly on boards outside Senate House. The results for the Mathematics Tripos, the oldest at the University, are read out from a balcony in Senate House in order of result.

From June next year however, students will be informed of their marks 48 hours before they are published at Senate House and will then have the option to not appear on the class lists. Complaints from undergraduates about how they receive their grades have increased over the last few years, *Varsity* has learned.

The previous system was criticised by students who felt that the public system of result publication would cause distress, especially among students who had done worse than expected, and those who found out their results second hand. Under existing regulations, students must apply to have their names removed from the class list, and must prove that there is a “compelling reason” such as mental illness that justify their application.

A survey carried out by CUSU earlier in the year revealed that most students want to receive exam results privately. CUSU President Mark Fletcher said: “We get a lot of complaints every year about the stress of finding your result out in such a public manner, and specifically the fact that other students can find out your result before you.”

A University spokesperson claimed that the exact means of informing students of their marks had not yet been decided. The options are emailing students or making the grades available on the University student information system CamSIS.

Students at Oxford receiving results this year will get results for both individual papers and an overall degree classification solely through the Oxford Student System (OSS), a web-based student record system that is password protected. Oxford undergraduates have historically been able to opt out of public results listings without explanation.

Last year Cambridge students had the option of looking online or go to the Examination Schools where lists were published, from which students had the choice of opting out.

Fletcher told *Varsity*, “In comparison to most universities, we are incredibly behind the times in delivering results.

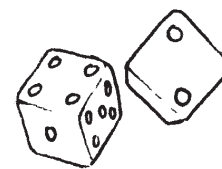
“The announcement by the University was welcome in many respects, it will at least guarantee that students can find out their own result first, but I still feel that the University needs to take a long, hard look at the withdrawal of names and how to make this easier for students,” he added.

CUSU Education Officer, Ant Bagshaw said “e-mailing doesn’t completely solve the problem but it would stop other people finding out your results first and allow those who do badly to have some time to adjust.”

Second year SPS student Soosan Lolavar welcomed the changes, “It really stresses me out because I don’t know whether to start at the top or the bottom.”

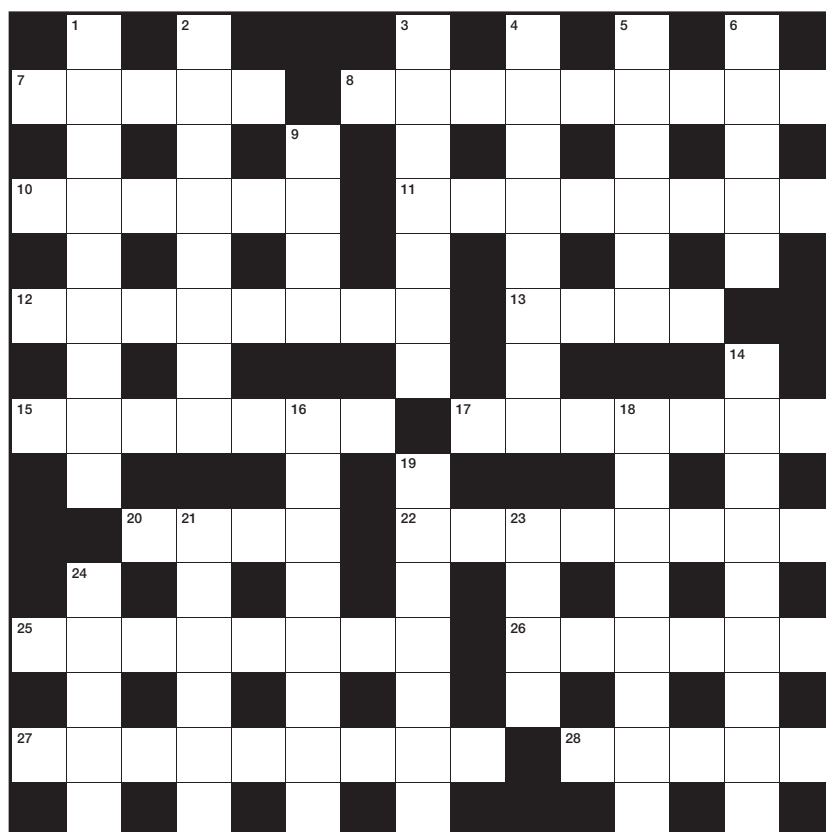


Games & puzzles



Varsity Crossword

no. 506



Across

- 7 Conclude parody not begun (3, 2)
- 8 Suction device, at particles, trips away (9)
- 10 Drains drink after function (4, 2)
- 11 Monkey around small French question of taste (8)
- 12 Manic bee ruined the atmosphere (8)
- 13 Intimate covers tea (4)
- 15/24/1/17 Cliff’s hit by loyal surgeon general whom I’d aim to rank differently (4, 3, 5, 2, 1, 6, 7)
- 20 Gymnast unimpressed with contents of surprise (4)
- 22 E-coli cultivated by parallel community finally makes delicious seasonal treat (3, 5)
- 25 Inert condition comes to a criminal (8)
- 26 Children’s plaything, notice, has sharp blade (6)
- 27 Usually in a high-ranking position (2, 7)
- 28 What bees make to improve the unknown (5)

Down

- 1 See 15 Across
- 2 Clemency is thin, topless and in a tabloid’s employment, initially (8)
- 3 The German comes after Spanish for ‘festivals’ (7)
- 4 Spanish food much like revenge? (8)
- 5 Views concerning permits housing Taliban leader (6)
- 6 Annuity twice reduced and renewed as a whole (5)
- 9 Love instrument not kept a secret (4)
- 14 Rubbish outside competitive sports? (4, 5)
- 16 City resident the solitary type around Corleone, say (8)
- 18 Bold declaration Olive curiously expressed by letter (1, 4, 3)
- 19 Loud complaint leads to ban on trendy nightclub (4, 3)
- 21 Shirt on composer to go far (6)
- 23 Some escape a synagogue, like a Sunday morning? (4)
- 24 See 15 Across

Set by Hisashi

Answers to last issue’s crossword (no. 505)

Across: 7 Noise, 8 Ice cream, 10 Mallard, 11 Diploma, 12 Robotic, 13 Gleeful, 14 Breathalyse, 19 Xenopus, 21 Urethra, 23 May week, 25 Toronto, 26 Falsetto, 27 Crepe. Down: 1 Sillabub, 2 Pedant, 3 Vindicates, 4 Feed, 5 Frippery, 6 Day off, 7 No more, 9 Balls, 13 Graduation, 15 Espresso, 16 Enhanced, 17 Exams, 18 Galore, 20 Nay-say, 22 Enrich, 24 Kite.

St John's May Ball

Balls in Brief



ZING TSJENG



Downing: Peter Pan's Neverland

Bathing the College in a suitably timber-shivering green, Downing made the most of their neo-Classical architecture for the 2009 Ball. The College's quadrangles were suitably transformed in the Cambridge style for a truly magical treasure chest of festivities living up to the Ball's 'Neverland' theme.

The Ball was split into four areas. Most guests headed first to the dining section, where there was a surprising amount of enthusiasm for falafel and bangers and mash.

Funfair attractions were to be found in another section of the Ball, the 'Pirate Cove', where the name 'Pirate Ship' was loosely applied to a vomit-inducing 360-degree upside-down ride. Guests were also pleased by the requisite dodgems.

There was a palpable sense of excitement for the DJ set by Pendulum, who aimed to whip the crowd away to Never-Neverland with their pulsing beats. In the 'Lost Boys' Den, Utah Saints and Far Poppadaddys also pleased attendees.

Elsewhere in the ball, various entertainments, including foot massages featuring Lush products, lent an air of luxury to the night. What more can I say? If X marks the spot, tonight the X lay firmly on Downing.
Laurie Tuffrey

Queens': The Beautiful and Damned Queens' stylish 1920s-themed Ball was a hit. The undisputed highlight of the night was the headline act, Florence and the Machine. Florence herself looked fantastic, dressed in '20s garb with numerous strings of pearls. (The highlight of the set itself was its final number, a breathless cover of 'You've Got the Love'.)

Remarkable among other ents was a swinging silent disco, and I would be remiss to leave out the excellent fireworks.

Queuing was surprisingly efficient, and the decorations were pleasing, conceived in an effective art deco style. One of the most original and inspired activities was a vintage dressing-up box filled with distinctive 'mod' garb.

In terms of food and drink, the usual May Ball fare - hog roast, champagne reception, etc. - was complemented by such additions as a bustling pudding tent.

In summary, the theming was extremely effective, and the event impressively well-planned. I enjoyed myself thoroughly!

Vicky Sparrow

20
number of bars

2,000
number of paying guests

270
number of handmade cupcakes

0.5
number of miles the Ball occupied

4,000
number of Origin8 canapés

St John's was my first May Ball. In the long stuffy hours spent staring at my books, and even throughout the long Cambridge application process, I had daydreamt about what Balls might be like: Jeeves-like figures twirling around me with silver trays, serving champagne in crystal goblets, as I swept through a fantasy world of swirling couples in their handsome suits and frosted frocks.

Although I admit my expectations for Balls were lowered over the course of my first year at Cambridge - in the cold winter months I began to wonder how I ever could have believed that the events of my dreams could be real - it turns out that I wasn't too far off after all.

In terms of food, at John's I was offered more than my stomach could accommodate. The traditional hog roast, chocolate fountain, burritos and fish and chips were complemented by more elegant offerings, including canapés provided by Origin8, paella, and delicious handmade cupcakes.

One criticism I would offer has to do with the distribution of champagne. I have heard from older friends - and I had always imagined - that a glass of champagne was the first drink quaffed by ball entrants, but at John's the champagne was not served until about 10.30pm, fifteen minutes before the fireworks began. No doubt this timing was a clever ruse on the part of the Committee, designed to conserve supplies of the precious but popular beverage, but it did make me pause to wonder whether I was getting my money's worth.

But after the fireworks I laughed at my previous petty-mindedness. What fireworks! As I sank down on the grass in my heels I felt like a child again. The 'choreography' of fireworks and music was beat-perfect, the music slowing and speeding up in precision time and proportion with the volleys of sound and heat above. It never lost momentum, never dragged, but worked like a cox cheekily telling her crew only ten more strokes with hundreds of metres left. And then, finally, like the last burst of energy when the crew can see the finish line and know they're no longer being lied to, the grand finale burst apart the sky to the evident awe and appreciation of all my fellow attendees.

I never realised how great an impact my choice of attire would make on my experience of the Ball. My long-sleeved number obscured my wrists, and the grim security men ruined the magic a little with their frequent requests for its display. As for my friend, her white dress, while aesthetically hitting the spot, prevented a joint visit to the Laser Quest.

There is one question plaguing your mind as your hand signs away two hundred and fifty-five precious pounds. What headlining act could justify a term of eating nowhere but hall? Last year it was Dizzee Rascal that did the trick. This year John's bagged his partner in crime (purely a metaphor, one hopes) Calvin Harris. And if a headliner like that couldn't single-handedly justify two terms of never wearing new outfits without the price tag grating at the nape of your neck - it's true that he

might not appeal to those with tastes ranging beyond the mainstream - guests could bide their time with the ol' favourites: fairground rides and ubiquitous booze, in addition to performances by lesser-known artists in the College's various nooks and crannies.

As for the 'rivalry' between this College and the one next door, I am unqualified to comment. My friend, absent from yesterday's proceedings but able to view them from her window, said the fireworks "pissed over" Trinity's performance last night - but I'll let those lucky few who attended both Balls be the judge of that.

In summary, it was a triumph, almost in the classical sense: a tour de force, an exercise in hedonism, decadence, opulence, magic and any other May Week word you want to throw at it.

I now wonder whether it was an error making John's my first Ball, making the seventh-best party in the world the benchmark against which all the Balls I attend in future will be forced to cower. Have I blurted out the punch line before I've drawn out the storyline? Have I read the last page before I'm done with the Prologue? Have I knawed off the tip of the Cornetto cone before I've broken through the chocolate sprinkles? I'm planning to attend Magdalene on Wednesday night, and all the hype about it makes me think it will be enchanting. But it will have to be worthy of all my Fitzgeraldian schoolgirl daydreams in order to hold a place next to John's in my estimation.

Avantika Chilkoti

What I love about May Week



Conventional wisdom has it that May Week's all about the hedonism. For those on the outside, and with papers to sell, it's 'Shamebridge'. We, on the other hand, imagine ourselves modern Sebastian Flytes, kept in champagne and black tie for a week, boozing and socialising without a care in the world.

But it's hardly hedonism if you're told when to do it. Hedonism is turning up to a supervision in Michaelmas term slurring and sleepless, grabbing your supervisor's left tit and throwing up on a bust of Plato. That's a victory for Epicurean libertinism. The organised fun of May Week balls isn't. May Week activities are organised with the grim determination of a Five Year Plan, with no room for spontaneity. I've seen May Week timetables, highlighted and treasury-tagged, which are nigh-on indistinguishable from revision plans. Putting the Excel into an excellent May week.

The seriousness with which May Week is taken is entirely characteristic of Cambridge. We work hard all year, and we play even harder. May Balls are astonishing achievements - budgets up to a million pounds, headline performers of a stature and blandness that only the V festival can match. The Cantabrigian culture of overachievement spills over into the one week a year allotted to enjoying ourselves: the goals change but the approach remains the same. We want a First in fun, a Blue in bibulousness.

This isn't necessarily bad - organised fun can still be fun. But for me, it's the unscripted moments that make May Week great. Staying up late playing board games. Pints in the Pickerel. Hiding a hangover with sunglasses and Diet Coke every morning for a week. Walking back home at the end of a Ball, as the sun comes up and birds start their song, dishevelled and disorderly, and realising that the people you're stumbling along with are your best friends.

I'll stop before I get any cheesier, but also because these are my favourite things, and everyone will have their own. It's these moments of quiet glory that make May Week special. They come in the interstices amidst the official fun, unannounced and unplanned. The danger is in being so intent on enjoying ourselves, so determined on sanctioned debauchery, that we miss them when they occur. Don't take May Week too seriously and you'll discover how seriously great it can be.

Tom Cheshire

Ed Cumming



The end of the party

I'll miss Cambridge, but I have grown up a lot here

Just less than three years ago my father dropped me off at Clare in the old family Ford Galaxy. He had studied here himself, and seemed nostalgic as we unpacked my belongings into my set in Memorial Court. I asked him if he'd have done anything differently were he to have his time again. "Worked less," he replied, looking around a court almost unchanged in thirty years.

As I come to the end of my time here, it's tempting to ask myself the same question. If I were to start again is there anything I'd do differently? It is difficult to answer. It is hard not to equate the suggestion of alternatives with regret for the present, and I'm quite uncomfortable with the idea of regretting anything so early in life. Regret is a melancholy for life's lost possibilities; the roads less travelled littering all our pasts, and university a place where this sense is acutely felt. I hope the self-absorption of all this is excused; no one perspective will be the same.

For such a permanent place, founded on glacial academic progress, the undergraduate experience at Cambridge has seemed overwhelmingly speedy. Though I have a sense of an awful lot having happened in the past three years, there is also the feeling I haven't been here very long at all. Lurching from supervision to supervision, essay to essay, exam to exam, with a thousand other things in between, the modern Cambridge undergraduate degree has an unequalled intensity: life here

is condensed into eight-week paroxysms, followed by lengthy vacations of exhaustion.

It might be argued that this is preparation for real life, but it isn't really. Life isn't like Cambridge at all. Life is imprecise, unpredictable, more evenly stressful. Many jobs are less intense than a degree, but then few

playground; an assault course for the mind and the character.

Before I came I wasn't sure what to expect, and now I'm not quite sure what has just happened. But looking around the debris of three years I can draw a few conclusions. I certainly haven't worked too hard. I have gained a band of loyal if disreputable allies, a taste for

counts as growing up.

The quality of a party is determined finally by its guests, and it is the people at Cambridge that have made it great. What I will miss are conversations. Conversations with great minds about great poems, conversations where I disagree with everything being said, conversations had blind drunk with friends just made, conversations to hatch wild schemes for the future, conversations with people brighter, funnier, more brilliant than myself. These have taught me, and it is these I will treasure most. The constant sense of vibrant, engaged exchange. No library could have given me this, no number of hours passed poring over books, but equally no other university.

Defending drug use, the comedian Bill Hicks said, "I had a great time doing drugs. Sorry. Never murdered anyone, never robbed anyone, never raped anyone, never beat anyone, never lost a job, a car, a house, a wife or kids, laughed my ass off, and went about my day." This is perhaps close to my Cambridge experience. I haven't done anything to change the world, but it has been addictively exhilarating and played out at break-neck speed. It is time to do something else, however. Like any party, it has to end eventually, but equally it is closest to the end that you least want it to stop. I'm not sorry to leave. Maybe there are some things I would have done differently. This is not regret, this is simply the way of education.



degrees make you get up at seven in the morning every day. Cambridge lets you know exactly what you're going to do, well in advance, but then encourages you not to do it, or at the least to make sure you have fun doing it, and doing other things as well. It is a structured

the good life, a limited understanding of English literature, and a much greater understanding of how to do things effectively at short notice. I have lost a great number of illusions, particularly that life might always be an endless horizon of opportunities. Perhaps this

Charlotte Runcie



Really, like, relevant

The BBC's poetry season is desperate in every way

Just think: this time next week, you'll be watching TV on an actual TV. The internet's great and all, but it doesn't quite replace the full experience of a sofa, a plate of nachos, and some time alone with Dave ja vu.

Still, I have a lot to thank iPlayer for; it's got me through plenty of late nights when my usual sources of procrastination (pub quiz machine, Glamour magazine, straightening out paperclips) have been exhausted. Unfortunately, it has also introduced me to the BBC's poetry season, which I have watched with the kind of horrified fascination you get from picking a scab.

It started so innocently. Ooh, Griff Rhys Jones, he's funny, I like him. And he's talking about poetry, and I'm doing an English degree. This is revision! Brilliant! It was not brilliant. It was the beginning of something terrible: the BBC's decision that it has a solemn duty to educate the British public about poetry. This seems to have been sparked at least partly by the shock discovery (by, er, Boris Johnson) that children don't learn poetry off by heart in school any more.

I was touched by his 'rage and despair' because I was one of those deprived children. Not to worry though, because the BBC has jumped, uninvited, to your rescue and mine. They'll have the whole country recit-

ing sonnets before the year is out.

The aim is commendable; a lot of people I know seem to have dismissed poetry because it was badly taught to them at school, and then ever since associated it with impenetrability and pretension. But the BBC is not going to be any help, because their solution is to be appallingly patronising and simplistic; whichever commissioning editor thought that getting DJ Nihal off Radio 1 to recommend William Blake's 'London'

actually seem to believe it themselves. To them, poetry was just something people did to pass the time before TV came along. But if the presenter doesn't trust poetry to be exciting enough to talk about on its own merits, then we're not going to either.

This desperation also extends into a strange section in most of the poetry programmes, the purpose of which seems only to be to justify the licence fee.

informed and entertained - badly.

I'm being unfair. Armando Iannucci's documentary on Milton was genuinely interesting - and so it should be, as Iannucci studied for a PhD on Paradise Lost. And Robert Webb's programme on Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' was very personal and very moving. But these were rare; they were the programmes that formulated a proper response to the poems themselves, rather than just cultivating a touchy-feely emotional reaction to the poets' lives and then making grand and unsubstantiated claims about how they were the greatest, the rudest, the most modern, and the most relevant writers, like, ever.

None of these poets are allowed to be just good. They have to be shoehorned into a modern setting, and the relevance of their work to modern life forced through your screen and into your eyeballs.

Anyway, if they want people to learn more poetry then their aggression is misdirected. The only way to do it is to get Phil Mitchell to recite 'The Waste Land' in full, five times in a row, every night on BBC One for a week, and then test everyone at the end. And if you get the lines the wrong way round in 'The Fire Sermon' then he'll come round your house and get you.

"The programmes cultivated a touchy-feely emotional reaction to the poets' lives"

because it reminds him of The Verve has some serious issues. Nihal even offers the insight that 'you could have someone beatboxing to it.' Great.

This desperation to make poetry edgy and up to date is the main problem with the BBC's poetry season. I've lost count of the number of programmes that contain this phrase: 'So, back then, poetry was the equivalent of a TV show or rock concert!' The presenter is trying desperately to convince us that poetry is both important and exciting, but they don't

It involves the presenter running around on the Millennium Bridge asking random passers-by if they've ever heard of the person the programme is about. Invariably they haven't. And all that running about makes me think Gok Wan's going to appear any minute and grab someone's breasts, and nobody wants that. But there you have it - a validation of the programme, all wrapped up in a neat two-minute montage with a bit of excitement and some direct public contact. Now sit back and be educated,

Talissa



Isabel

Pilar

Isobel

Joanna

Katie

Maria

Hail, bounteous May, that doth inspire
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire!
Woods and groves are of thy dressing;
Hill and dale doth boast thy blessing:

Victoria

Gaabriella

Christiana

Harriet

Zenobe

Cementine

I only know that you may lie
Day long and watch the Cambridge sky,
And, flower-lulled in sleepy grass,
Hear the cool lapse of hours pass

Derica

Sienna

VIII

Anna

Kate

Grace

Natasha

She walks in beauty, like the night,
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes



Cease, Britannia, cease to weep!
Hark to the peals on this bright
May morn!
They tell you that your future Queen
is in born.

Slavica



Lo! where the rosy-bosomed Hours,
Fair Venus' train, appear,
Disclose the long-expecting flowers,
And wake the purple year!

Cleo



Lingering—and wandering on as
Loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness
Yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortal-
ity.



Matti



VARSITY MAY WEEK

Theatre

Ongoing

Gigi
History Boys
Cambridge Comedy Festival
The Comedy of Errors
Trojan Women
Fair Youth
Wishful Thinking - Footlights Tour Show 2009

Dreamboats and Petticoats: The Musical

Corn Exchange: 2.30pm matinee (£16/£20/£27) and 7pm (£18/£24/£27.50)
One of the fastest-selling albums last year, *Dreamboats and Petticoats* inspired this feel-good musical, written by the duo behind *Goodnight Sweetheart* and *Birds of a Feather*. If that's not enough reason to go, they've got some chap off X-factor.

Sense and Sensibility

Fellows' Garden, Christs College: 5pm (£5-£7)

Much Ado About Nothing

Fellows' Garden, Clare College: 6.30pm
One of Shakespeare's most popular comedies with a 1920s interpretation and music and dance to bring out the darker elements of the play.

Balls

Pembroke May Ball: Moonlight Masquerade

It's midnight, you're eight inches left of your party mask, you're ten inches right of your Ball gown, that's right, it's masquerade time.

Magdalene May Ball

This is a quiz: what's very much like black tie but white instead of black? That's right: white tie. If you don't have one you could borrow one. Magdalene's the one near the bridge.

King's Affair: Hedonopolis

An ancient exiled city (how can you exile a city?), banished by the Gods for the decadence and debauchery of its citizens, reappears for one final fling before it is cast away once more into the dark depths of limbo. Fact of the day: Clare College was originally built where King's now stands but was demolished and moved when King Henry VI flexed his feudal, royal muscle and ordered a college to be built in his name on this central site.

Trinity Hall June Event

The land of the rising sun, the passage to India, the ancient kingdoms of China, that's right, this is the place to experience the lure of the East.

Art & Classical

CUMS Concert:

West Road Concert Hall: 7pm (£8 concessions - £10 other and £5 on the door for students)
The distinguished CUMS II orchestra are conducted by undergraduates. Their May Week performance will feature some Wagner, Bruch, Villa-Lobos and Stravinsky with cello soloist Sophie Gledhill and conductor Daniel Hill.

Dragonsblood: A far fetched tale about a far fetched artist's pigment

Fitzwilliam Museum: 1.15pm (free)
Hamilton Kerr Institute's scientist Spike Bucklow explores the myths behind the paints used in medieval art and the cloak-and-dagger secrets that went into their creation. If you're hoping that those Middle Age inkflickers actually used dragonsblood, prepare for disappointment.

Gandhi's Children

Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology: 10.30am - 4pm (free)
This exhibition by David MacDougall includes a film and 20 video stills studying a shelter on the outskirts of New Delhi that houses and feeds 350 boys. The routines and lives of the boys are presented in an innovative light.

Garden Parties

Debating Garden Party

Peile Lawn, Newnham Gardens: 12-3pm (£2.43; to buy on the door you must e-mail wswd27@gmail.com to confirm your place or pay directly to the Director of Debating's pigeonhole at the Union). The Directors of Debating have promised a debate-free afternoon.

CUTAZZ Garden Party

Peile Lawn, Newnham Gardens: 3pm-5.30pm
Head down for cocktails, chocolate fountain and a limbo competition.

Lecture from John Micklethwait, Editor-in-chief of The Economist

The Union: 8pm (£5 for those not members of Queen's College or The Union)
This lecture, entitled, "God is back: What the revival of religion means for politics", is co-presented by the Cambridge Union Society and the Queen's College Politics Society. Though an Oxford graduate, Micklethwait is one of the most interesting and reputable figures in the worlds of politics, journalism and business and is the 16th editor of *The Economist*. Copies of Micklethwait's most recent book "God is Back" will be available for purchase at the event.

Film

Looking for Eric

Arts Picturehouse: 12.00 (daily except Wed), 14.20, 18.50, 21.20
Vue: 12.00, 14.45, 17.30, 20.15
Steve Evets plays a down-and-out postman who seeks existential advice from Eric Cantona, obviously. Shot in Manchester, and filled with good-natured humour, Ken Loach's latest film could well be worth a watch.

Terminator Salvation

Vue: 11.45, 12.30, 14.30, 15.15, 17.15, 18.15 (Wed/Thurs) 20.00, 21.00, 22.45 (Wed), 23.45 (Wed/Thurs)

Christian Bale is repeatedly thrown against things by robots, while looking angry and shouting at nearby humans. If you enjoy LOUD NOISES and boredom then why not try walking next to a motorway for two hours instead.

Red Cliff

Arts Picturehouse: 13.30, 17.00, 20.15
John Woo's latest is the most expensive Asian film ever made. Centred on the epic battle of Red Cliffs at the end of the Chinese Han Dynasty, it has been praised for its epic scale and tight choreography. Thankfully, it's finally made its way to the UK.



The Mays 17 launches on 19 June 2009. Find the best new student writing and visual art from Oxford and Cambridge in all good bookshops next week. Guest-edited by poet and musician Patti Smith.

£8 for students when ordered direct: www.varsity.co.uk/themays

God and Globalism

SELF-STYLED "PARANOID OPTIMIST" AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE ECONOMIST JOHN MICKLETHWAIT SPOKE TO LIZZY TYLER LAST WEEK ABOUT THE CRISIS IN PRINT JOURNALISM AND HIS CONTINUED DEFENCE OF GLOBALISATION

Anyone who's ever read *The Economist* knows that the personalities of its contributors are somewhat shrouded in mystery. However, the magazine's editor, John Micklethwait, is no media wallflower. He has run this warhorse of a libertarian journal since 2006, and before becoming editor he was in charge of its Business and US sections. And he must be doing something right: *The Economist* is one of the few publications reporting increased profits and circulation in this troubled time for printed media.

Despite this achievement, Micklethwait was the essence of British self-deprecation when I spoke to him last week about his first years in journalism. Micklethwait says he started off working for Chase Manhattan Bank as an "OK-ish banker in the City". His "lucky break" came during the frenzy of the 80s boom, when a friend at *The Economist* mentioned that the magazine was hiring. Micklethwait jumped at the opportunity and fled the manic City with hopes for a career in economic journalism.

This move proved wise, as 1987 saw

making a "fundamental mistake".

His response to anti-globalism is relatively well supported. What is to blame for the economic crisis, Micklethwait believes, is a "failure in finance" – and it is a "huge mistake to jump from that to saying that the whole of globalisation has failed".

"The fact that globalisation has pulled a billion people out of abject poverty is one of the most remarkable economic achievements ever," Micklethwait says. As a liberal paper, *The Economist* will "fight to the last man on the issue that economic liberalism is good for the world". But he also notes, "as journalists, we must also report the real world, and in the real world, at the moment, that cause is not doing well".

When asked for a prediction about the outcome of our economic predicament, Micklethwait refers to himself as a "paranoid optimist". He believes that we will come through the crisis in "some shape or form" in another year or so, but that there are "too many bad things to go through" before we can start talking about "green shoots".

We must not expect "the new normal

issue at present.

With the shock of the European Election results still fresh in my mind, I asked the editor if he saw possible distancing from the European Union (EU) as dangerous for Britain.

"The European Parliament is a somewhat failed institution, so it deserves everything it gets," he remarked. Added to his rejection of the Lisbon Treaty and the prospect of Britain's conversion to the euro, this statement seems to highlight similarities to a certain Kilroy Silk. But Micklethwait's Euro-scepticism is tempered by real respect for some "worthwhile" EU institutions, and the success of the euro since its introduction in 2002 and the European Central Bank. He sees the Lisbon Treaty as the "big sleeping issue in British politics".

As our interview ticks to a close, I bring up Micklethwait's new book, *God is Back*, in which he sets out to

challenge the conception that religious belief has declined in modern times – "an assumption that has been with us since the 18th century".

"If you look around the world this assumption is conspicuously not true." Yes, there has been a decline in religious fervour in Western Europe, but this is the exception, not the rule. His aim in writing was not to make value judgements about such a trend, nor to add to the growing mountain of books on Islamic fundamentalism, but rather simply to explore an idea.

"The ability to choose your religion is a good thing," Micklethwait believes, stressing the importance of religious pluralism. He is careful, however, to recognise that religion can cause much violence and disruption – and that it has in the past. But he trusts that "God will come back in terms of personal faith," and be reinforced in politics. Micklethwait argues that Barack

Obama stands out as a shining example of this, a real "global salesman" of evangelical Christianity.

This brings our conversation to a close. Although at times guarded, Micklethwait was by no means uncooperative, and his frequent mentions of his own self-styled ineptitude were clearly not born of pompous, false modesty. His answers seemed to stem from genuine beliefs about the issues discussed – as well as some pre-emptive guidance from *The Economist* team. Micklethwait does very well in styling his personal beliefs with journalistic and commercial panache – a formula which has been enormously successful, and is evidently uncommon in the corridors of contemporary media and political power.

John Micklethwait will be giving a lecture entitled 'God is Back: What the Revival of Religion Means for Politics'

"IT WOULD BE WRONG FOR A BRITISH ELECTION TO BE FOUGHT ON MOATS AND DUCK HOUSES."

what was, until recently, one of the most severe stock market crashes that Britain has ever experienced. Micklethwait is very keen to stress that his change of career paths at this particular moment was merely a case of luck.

The Economist used to make use of a sort of "spy" on university campuses – a don who would spot worthy candidates and nudge them in the right direction. As a student, Micklethwait received no such nudge, but he has obviously been successful nonetheless.

"It is much harder now to break into journalism," he says, citing the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century boom of media production, and the resultant competition in every sector. It used to be that experience in the finance industry was a "back door to journalism", but now newspapers are much less likely to take a risk on an outside bet.

"Many of the best people have come from outside journalism," Micklethwait argues, but sometimes it is "much harder to plump for the person who has done something interesting and strange" rather than the "career journalist". As the saying goes in LA, he quotes, "You never get sacked for hiring Schwarzenegger".

Theatrical analogies aside, we moved on to discuss the current and perennially troubling economic crisis. A strong proponent of the benefits of globalisation, Micklethwait is currently in a much-maligned camp. It is no surprise, then, that he thinks those who claim globalisation led to the current crisis are

to be the same as the old normal": the world that we have grown so used to is not going to come back, as governments are either going to have to consume more of our money or spend less on us. Micklethwait says this is a clear but unpalatable reality, which Labour is being "patently dishonest" in denying.

This brought us on to discussing the lows and highs of the Prime Minister, who Micklethwait sees as "responsible for some of the pain". There was indeed a global financial problem, he says, but Britain would have been in a much better place had Brown not done "several things" during his time as Chancellor. As Prime Minister, Brown has done "all right", but he is foolish in his pursuit of gimmicky farces such as his appearance on YouTube. "Brown shouldn't play politics," he says; rather, the PM should stick to what he is good at – things like his highly commended leadership of the co-ordinated international response to the financial crisis.

When asked if he thought Brown's position was tenable, Micklethwait mentioned what he sees as the great lesson in British politics: that one should never say someone is either surviving or doomed. Brown's position may well have changed by the time this is printed, he jokes. *The Economist's* view is that Brown stay on until October at least, to push through the new expenses regulation before the next General Election. "It would be wrong for a British election to be fought on moats and duck houses," Micklethwait says, despite public anger (perhaps justified) on the



Great Works Of Art In Cambridge

#28: History Painting by Tom de Freston

Christ's College MCR

Art historians are rarely great artists. They are too in awe of their heroes, reduced to culling stylistic tricks from Michelangelo, Titian and Rembrandt. They are stifled by their own erudition, paralysed by a fear that we might mistake them for a garret artist, untutored, a splasher of paint, a follower of instinct. So they pepper their work with ponderous allusions: a nod to Caravaggio, a wink to Monsieur Manet. Academic authority cripples the art historian into becoming a servile copyist, digging through the remains of art history, resurrecting its choicest parts: a touch of Mannerism here, some Turner brushwork there. Their work degenerates into an elaborate parlour game of spot-the-quotation: it is all citation, and nothing new is created.

Tom de Freston, artist in residence at Christ's, is an artist/art historian who wears his academic laurels lightly. He has wit enough to recognise the choke-hold of the 'canon' of Western art and the dangers of remaining in the shadow of the great masters.

His latest commission, a colossal painting for Christ's MCR, is an extraordinary supermarket sweep through the highlights of Western art. De Freston's re-imagining of the great heroic nudes of Classical antiquity and the Renaissance are handled with all due reverence for tradition but subtly tweaked and 'bastardised'. All those preening self-important Apollos and pious St Sebastians are rendered ridiculous by their day-glo boxer shorts and matching socks, which half-preserve their modesty whilst simultaneously reducing them to stock comedy buffo characters. His Venuses wear white Commedia dell'Arte masks, which strip them of all their come-hither allure. It's a pandemonium of figures - naked, nude, some abashed, some triumphant. The keen-eyed art historian can play the picture game to his heart's content: *The Death of Marat*, *The Oath of the Horatii*, Goya's *The Third of May*, and Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Mists* have all been redrawn and wittily trivialised by de Freston's brush.

These are slapstick cannibalisations of ponderous history paintings in fluorescent colours. The whole, however, is anything but trivial. Somehow the vastness of the canvas, the irresistible grand narrative of art history, the enduring power of the figures, however meanly recreated, add up to something



greater than the sum of its parts. De Freston observes that we can footnote his figures to our hearts content, build a catalogue of stylistic sources, perhaps divine that the artist has a penchant for Titian, but the painting stubbornly resists a pinning-down to meaning.

He admits that there are themes. The first is the male nude engaged in his 'heroic' pursuits: raping goddesses, swearing oaths to war, boozing. The second is the female nude, eternally passive, eternally reclining, locked in a stalemate with the questing eyes of the viewer. The third and final section of the theme addresses "fighters, murderers, martyrs and the dead". If we have been on a journey, it has reached a bloody climax. Art history's most violent, sadistic excesses are crowded together in claustrophobic proximity: Marat slumped, bleeding, in his bath; St Sebastian skewered with arrows; the survivors of the *Raft of the Medusa*, sprawled, hopeless on the decks; and, in the foreground, *The Dying Gaul*, suspended between life and death.

The procession opens with Adam and Eve reaching for the forbidden fruit and closes with their expulsion from Eden. Is this, then, a meditation on sin? On the moral depravity of the post-lapsarian world? De Freston maintains that the meaning of the painting is designed to be elusive: "as you piece together the codes, it falls apart". Tease out one strand of meaning and the others disintegrate.

Viewers have complained that painting is too heavy with sex, but de Freston points out that there is very little sex in the painting. There is nudity, yes, but only one couple, drawn from

the Kama Sutra, are actually engaged in a sexual act. The painting runs on psychological inversions, sudden volte-faces which leave you at a loss to explain the recurring female figure bearing her water jug, and wondering whether, in the beauty pageant of the central panel, a dumpy fertility idol can

hold her own against all those perfect-ten Venuses.

It is a sexually explicit painting with barely any sex, a violent diorama of images borrowed from the most-bought postcards of Europe's great museums. It is a desolate and barren painting, but crowded, stuffed with figures. It is

bloody and comic, luridly fluorescent yet blanced with a draining sci-fi light. The painting's greatest triumph is its transformation of scholarly allusions into something edifyingly rich and strange.

Laura Freeman

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Context



Midsummer Night's Dream

Camdram informs me that there has been a production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* performed in Cambridge every year for the past four years. A favourite for thespians taking a play overseas, Cambridge actors have toured this Shakespeare classic across America in 2003, and Japan in the summer of 2008. Evidently, *Midsummer Night's Dream* sells well in foreign parts as well as on home turf.

After this string of repeat performances, you'd have thought Cambridge theatregoers would be sick of Lysander, Demetrius and Helena's love-triangle and Puck's childish pranks. However, not only is there a production beginning today at Queens' College, but this Christmas it will be performed across Europe by the European Theatre Group, only to return to the ADC in 2010, tidily ensuring that 2010 will follow the trend of previous years.

So why is this play so popular with touring companies? Max Barton, due to direct the European Theatre Group production, argues that the play's appeal comes from its versatility: the fairies in the moonlit forest have magical appeal for younger audience members, whilst the often adult humour adds another layer for parents (a formula used time and time again by both Disney and Pixar). Additionally, whilst some of Shakespeare's plays have extremely complex storyline, *Midsummer Night's Dream's* plot is simple enough to allow the director scope for adaptation and addition. Barton plans to make the most of this, with a dark and twisted new version of the often light and sugary midsummer tale. He explains that *Midsummer Night's Dream* is also an excellent choice for touring, as it displays little of the boredom that can so often go hand in hand with Shakespeare's plays.

This May Week, BATS - Queens' Amateur Theatrical Society, will be performing *Midsummer Night's Dream* every day from June 17th-20th in Cloister Court, Queens' College. Co-director Steph Bain describes how this new adaptation explores the idea of finding truth and humour through discord. The most obvious example of this being the union of Bottom and Titania, which presents the audience with what happens when god meets beast; or Bain's preferred analogy of Lara Croft meets Homer Simpson.

Judging by the healthy ticket sales of previous tours, *Midsummer Night's Dream* is not just a Cambridge phenomenon. Loved the world-over, make sure you catch it this May Week. *Katy King*

THEATRE

The Comedy of Errors by William Shakespeare Caius Court, Gonville & Caius College, June 16th-18th Dir. George Greenbury; The Shadwell Society

★★★★★

Many things conspired against this play. The chatter of French tourists stood outside the Gate of Honour, succeeding in tarnishing Shakespeare where countryman Voltaire could not. Caius' own clock, over elaborately chiming the quarter-hour. An audience filled with bored schoolgirls whispering in front of a stage too far at the other side of the court and angled into the glare of the sun. Or worse, the summer heat beating down on fair skin, hangovers and humour to the point that post-interval the majority of the audience had deserted the benches for the shadows cast by the walls of the court. It could all have been tits-up, tears on faces and slapped wrists.

But it wasn't and this production, rough round the edges, shone a little

charm and a little entertainment through its unsanded exterior.

Where it shone particularly were its two Dromios, with James Barwise (Ephesus) and James Moreton Wakeley (Syracuse) providing a fantastic continuity between the two bondmen, to the point where they had so accurately captured each other's energies, mannerisms and physicalities that distinction between the two was difficult with anything except appearance. Edward Granger playing Antipholus of Syracuse also put in a fantastic turn, however his Ephesus counterpart Dónal Kearney suffered with projection across the court and veered wildly between raving melodrama and just mumbling. It unfortunately left the two plotlines feeling a little lopsided. Special mention must also

go to Hannah Crawford, her Luciana charming, funny and grounded in a way few performances were here.

All the above struggled to burst out of, what was, at times terrible. Lines needed to be prompted more than was forgivable. Thomas de Freston's exposition as Egeon at the beginning was simply one long shout, with a bit of moaning, where he would roll around on the floor for a bit. What it boils down to is direction. At no point did it feel as if there was an overarching creative vision. If this review has concentrated too much on individual performance, it is because that seemed to be the only driving force.

Don't expect to be blown away by something polished. Expect sunstroke and expect to forgive a little to get a little bit back. *Laurie Coldwell*



KAT WATERS



Trojan Women by Euripides Peterhouse Scholars' Garden, June 16th-18th Dir. Melissa Hussey; The Heywood Society

★★★★★

Two things were remarkable about this play: the first was that I managed to survive it without revisiting the previous night's ill-chosen burrito and the second is that I'm managing to write an article about it. May Week debauchery aside, it had some remarkable and interesting moments of its own. Not enough to make it spectacular, but enough to justify struggling out of my gin-soaked pyjamas.

The set raised an interesting dilemma. In marking out a stage for themselves, the production clearly wanted to create the requisite sense of closeness, but the attempt failed because of the palatial college grounds. And, in so doing, they undermined one of the most appealing aspects of outdoor theatre; the lack of boundaries between the audience

and the stage. Although Greek drama's declamatory style doesn't exactly lend itself to audience interaction, it still needs empathy to work. Everything felt a little bit too big, too remote.

The play's best moments were due to happy coincidences. When Cassandra rushes on carrying a torch, wearing a flame coloured dress, she is matched by the orange flowers behind her. Later, Hecuba calls the birds and the birds sing. It didn't always work out like that - there is no mention of HGVs in the original Greek.

Rachel Taylor's excellent costume design and the white tents that adorned the stage gave the play an Arthurian feel. The actors wore striking technicolour robes, but the acting was too often still

in sepia. Literalism led to long periods of prostration, as Hecuba and her daughters tried to physically communicate with the Underworld. This would have been nice if done with a little more conviction, and worked well when Cassandra mimed strangulation. But when Hecuba beat the ground, it was more like a slap. The characters didn't always seem that emotionally involved: when Andromache learned that her son was to be taken away from her, she handed the baby over and turned away as if it was the easiest thing to do in the world.

On the whole, the plaudits must go to Leona Archer for her gaunt portrayal of Hecuba, and to the grounds of Peterhouse for being so damn pretty.

Pascal Porcheron

A Winter's Tale Jesus College, June 16th-19th Dir. Isabel Taylor; The Alcock Players

★★★★★

Whilst Monday night saw Jesus' expansive gardens transformed into the wonderful world of Oz, they now play host to the Alcock players and their equally fantastical production of *The Winter's Tale*. This al fresco performance promises to transport the audience to the Sicilian court and Bohemian idyll through audience participation and an inspired use of space.

This production really does make the most of its setting and surroundings, with actors constantly wandering about, looking on, or draping themselves on surrounding trees. The play's dual landscapes are thus quickly and effectively established, with the Sicilian court resembling an upturned toy box presided over by an infantile monarch. The Bohemian scenes, meanwhile, take place under the

lush shade of a blossomy canopy, the rustic sensuality of the scene accentuated by the lethargic strumming of a guitar, and libidinous whoops of approval from this group of sexually precocious shepherds. Adding to this is improvised and eerie music provided by the cast and instruments ranging from a quarter size cello to a children's miniature keyboard.

As the action moves location, the audience are forced to move with it. This degree of involvement, enlivens the romance and spectacle of the piece. In the case of the play's ursine assailant, man and bear even disappear into the gardens before offering the audience what Shakespeare's most famous "exit" does not: the comic violence of a man being dismembered by a fellow-actor looking not unlike Winnie-the-Pooh.

This production showcases a variety of the University's acting talent. The shepherds are wonderfully realised, whilst it is probably worth going just to see Jemima Middleton's frantic *Autolycus*. The director uses a small cast to great advantage. It is an achievement, also, to do so, given that the production has suffered in rehearsal from an actor absented by illness.

This is a beautifully conceived rendition of the second latest of Shakespeare's romances. Reflecting its early modern heritage, this is a production heavy on masque that creates an atmosphere of alluring unreality, transforming the gardens once again and making for an evening of sensual intoxication. Which, after the alcoholic rigours of May Week, might be exactly the kind of immoderation that you need. *David Shone*



REVIEWS

Morrissey
Corn Exchange
May 15th
★★★★★

“Cambridge: Here’s your starter for ten. No conferring”
And we’re off. Morrissey launches into a rendition of ‘This Charming Man’ much to the delight of the Corn Exchange crowd. It was an incredible opener, albeit slightly marred by the lack of that guitar riff from Johnny. Instead his four-piece band of merry men drastically fleshed out the Smiths classic, giving this version an unprecedented power which filled each corner of the venue.
Recently having celebrated his 50th birthday Mozza remains immaculately quiffed, but stockier than the waifish northerner who became a cultural icon for adolescent melancholy over two decades ago. To the tune of ‘Irish Blood, English Heart’ he stalked the stage, furiously

ously cracking an infinitely long mike lead and casting a striking silhouette against the backdrop of a cigar-smoking sailor flexing his muscles with “Refusal” branded beneath.
The fast-paced nature of the set refused to lag, with a fine smattering of old and new material encompassing both his careers as solo artist and front man. Tracks from current album *Years of Refusal* were well received, in particular ‘Something is Squeezing my Skull’ and a soaring rendition of ‘I’m Throwing My Arms Around Paris’. But somewhat predictably it was ‘How Soon Is Now’, a killer punch cheekily dealt early on, that made for the most spectacular highlight. Reaching its brooding climax, the lights dropped as a enormous steel gong was

feverishly struck, sending pulsating vibrations through one’s body. It was a truly magical live moment.
Regrettably the bizarre heckling that broke out soon afterwards threatened to destroy the euphoria. When a punter ferociously voiced his objection to Morrissey wishing happy birthday to an American superfan in the front row, the evening took a strange turn for the worse. As the opponent was swiftly removed by security - a decision which had the crowd’s approval - the surreal atmosphere of a pantomime took hold. Notably shaken by the encounter, The Moz struggled on but seemed deflated and lacking his previous charisma. It wasn’t until he dropped a stunning ‘Some Girls Are Bigger Than Others’



that the night’s electric atmosphere was salvaged. A triumphant encore of ‘First of the Gang to Die’ was enhanced by a stage invader bounding on stage to momentarily hug her hero. Meeting a similar fate to her mouthy predecessor, her ten second glory was a fitting conclusion to a typically melodramatic Morrissey show. **Paul Smith**

Angels and Demons
Dir. Ron Howard
Starring: Tom Hanks, Ayelet Zurer
★★★★★

When a friend suggested several weeks ago that we take a break from revision and go to the cinema, I thought *Angels and Demons* sounded like an ideal choice for our evening’s



entertainment. Having read *The Da Vinci Code* years before I was schooled in the scepticism of the Cambridge Historical Tripos, I expected this film to be factually inaccurate but worth the £5.50 purely for its dramatic nonsense - and thus an ideal diversion from exam-related stress.
To my considerable disappointment, *Angels and Demons* was in almost every way the opposite of what I expected. I was hoping for a cheesy action film with fake facts and unrealistically attractive heroes; I saw a film that took itself too seriously, featured an unnecessary amount of graphic violence, and starred a rather pudgy middle-aged man.
The film was vague on factual details (and, unsurprisingly, predicated on a narrative not only historically but also

scientifically inconceivable). While this historical and scientific ambiguity could have turned the film into an amusingly ahistorical romp in the vein of *National Treasure* or *Indiana Jones*, in reality it merely prevented thinking audience members from investing themselves even superficially in the complex trivialities of an overly intricate plot.
I am hesitant to reveal too much of the actual storyline, because I struggle to see how anyone who read Dan Brown’s book or knew its plot could have enjoyed the film. The only thing keeping me in my seat was a vague curiosity about the plot’s conclusion; had I known the identity of the villain whose plot to hijack the papacy is the plot’s key point, I would have found the film truly unbearable.

The gratuitous violence that must have occupied at least half the film’s duration seemed to please other audience members, but forced my friend and I - not lovers of violence, it is true, but also not complete wimps - into hiding behind our cardigans several times. How anyone might enjoy watching a prolonged segment involving the crucifixion and live burning of a half-clothed cardinal, for example, is beyond me.
If the film did have a saving grace, it was born of one of its glaring flaws. Tom Hanks’s obvious confusion during the delivery of lines involving (supposedly) highly technical historical and symbolical phraseology afforded several instances of unadulterated hilarity. **Emma Mustich**

800 Anniversary Concert
Sir Peter Maxwell Davies, CUMS 1, CUMS Chorus
King’s College Chapel, June 13th
★★★★★

Cambridge’s image as an academic institution of global awareness was represented tonight by the thought provoking world première of Sir Peter Maxwell Davies’ piece *The Sorcerer’s Mirror*. This piece, especially commissioned for the University’s 800th Anniversary, covered the modern day issues of global warming through the setting of a north Londoner’s experiences in a nighttime garden. The ambiguous, creeping, brass beginning of this piece, representing the serenity of night, paved the way for this setting of the five stanza poem, ‘Lamentations’, written by Andrew Motion, the ex-Poet Laureate.
The five movements run into each other, exhibiting vague references to tonality by the use of quasi-cadences. The second movement clearly tropes a more tonal

idiom at times, with an apparent formalised rhythmic character developing as the poem personifies the traffic of the city. The chorus’ tuning in this complex piece was excellent, especially during some of the very exposed sections with thin brass accompaniment. However, there was a certain amount of tentativeness which detracted from the drama that could have been created in this piece. Another disappointing factor, due to the political importance of the text, was the clarity of words. At times this proved to be a slight issue, especially when “silence” was repeated contrapuntally. Unless ironic in meaning, the untidy endings of consonants did not create this ambience at all. Orchestral interludes near the end of the piece, which exhibited a Wagnerian feel in the music,

allowed the string section to show off their mature and expressive playing abilities. The brave, young, treble soloist Jon Wimpenny received an astounding applause along with the composer, whose proud expression portrayed the successful interpretation of his new work.
Next came the extremely contrasting Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9*, which began with very primitive and guttural string playing in the first movement; a foretaste of the spine-tingling performance to come. The second movement was, however, a little too on edge and taken at too fast a tempo. The lyricism and beauty of the string playing gave a heart warming interpretation of the third movement, and the chorus, if lacking drama in the première work, certainly made up for it in their

theatrical entry of the main “Ode to Joy” theme, part of the last movement of the piece. The solos in this last movement were outstanding, in particular those sung by the bass Gerald Finley, whose expressive and steely voice really set the scene for this work celebrating humanity. **Jessica Eccleston**



Food and Drink

Noodles: Battle of the Titans



94% of the restaurants in central Cambridge are Italian, but I can only order penne all’arrabbiata so many times before it stops being funny. Unfortunately, I also fear change, and therefore need something reassuringly close to pasta, but not pasta, to keep me calm. Noodles are the answer. OK, choice number one: Wagamama. Perched above St Andrew’s Street, Wagamama offers a slick noodle experience with reasonably attentive staff, big menus, big portions, and unusually decent desserts. Paying full price is completely unnecessary since they issue more two-for-one vouchers than Pizza Express. Overall, a reasonable choice, but you could have it so much better.

Dojo Noodle Bar occupies a tiny site near the Careers Service, right next to the Mahal, and clearly lives by the mantra of less (space) is more. Service is fast, portions are huge, prices are low, and the whole experience feels authentically speedy. Discounted take-aways are definitely worth a look for nights in with a DVD.

Teri-Aki is right behind Café Uno, near Magdalene, and pitches itself at the pricier, tastier end of the market. The food takes longer to arrive than at the other restaurants, and tastes fresher and somehow more premium (it might just be psychological). There’s a good range of noodles, and a devastatingly efficient owner who entertainingly rules over her staff with an iron fist. Teri-Aki’s power-move, as it were, is the (figuratively) killer sushi menu, which offers lots of options for both individual pieces and pre-chosen selection boxes. I would say that it’s at least 40 times better than Boots sushi, and perhaps 15 times better than M&S.

Finally, you could try Yippee Noodles. And by ‘could’ I mean ‘should’, and by ‘try’ I mean ‘gorge at’. Yippee’s is in many ways the best bits of all the others combined. It’s just about as tasty as Teri-Aki, but the same price as Dojos (and more comfortable), and with better service than Wagamama. The giant Indonesian prawn crackers are semi-compulsory, the jasmine tea is bottomless, and the promised twenty-minute wait for a table is never more than two. The apple juice is the best ever (evaar?), and the Mark Rothko prints make a strange kind of sense. Sweet and Sour Pork, or the house special Yippee Noodles are what the cool kids order, while the even cooler ones have the grass jelly for dessert.

If you’re in a Clint Eastwood, make my day, punk, kind of mood then there is one other choice. Order ‘Ants Climb Up Tree’ at the Jinsing Noodle Bar, but take a friend for back-up. **Tom Morris**

Sport

Tomorrow...

Preview of the remaining
Varsity matches, Cricket and
Tennis.

VARSVITY MATCH RUNNING TOTAL: CAMBRIDGE 21, OXFORD 19. NEXT UP: CRICKET, TENNIS

The Varsity Sport No-Prize Quiz

Email your answers to sport@varsity.co.uk. The first set of correct responses will be completely ignored, as will all subsequent replies.

1. Who is this and what did she do?



- a) I don't know but I'd like her number.
- b) Was that Wednesday or Thursday night?
- c) Lauren Cooney. She ran the marathon.

2. In October, Ben Riley-Smith interviewed Jacqui Oatley, MOTD's first female commentator. What subject did she study at Leeds before embarking on her football career?

- a) German
- b) Physical Education
- c) Economics

3. We have done our best to cover every single Varsity match against the Dark Blues, but what sport gave us our first victory of the year?

- a) Rock climbing
- b) Gliding
- c) Sushi-eating

4. Liam Gamble is the Light Blues polo captain. When speaking to Varsity, what did he say was the only prerequisite for joining the team?

- a) Blue blood
- b) Jodhpurs
- c) Confident riding ability

5. In their first of three meetings this year, St John's rugby team 'crucified' Jesus. What was the score?

- a) 95-0
- b) 31-4
- c) 31-3

6. The University of Cambridge has an eco-racing team. What speed can their home-made solar-powered bubble-car get up to?

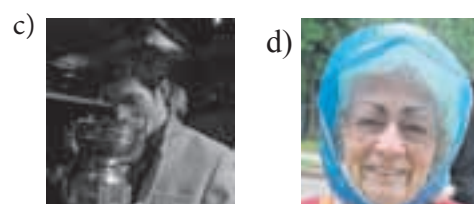
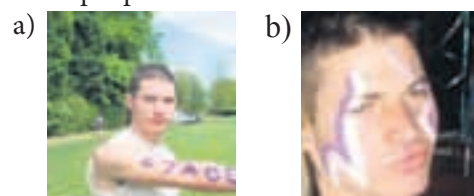
- a) This is nonsense
- b) 90mph
- c) Light speed

7. Matt Marley is a name you probably don't know, but he featured in the first sports section of the year. What did he and seven other students go to Japan last summer to take part in to achieve such fame?

- a) A sushi-eating contest
- b) A kendo course
- c) A 24 hour non-stop race in a Nissan Skyline

8. Will Rees captained his boxing team to an historic victory in March. Which of

these people is Will Rees?



9. Dan Vickerman is the new rugby captain, after taking part in last December's unfortunate defeat to the scum. What is he studying and at which College?

- a) Probably Land Ec at Teddy's. Isn't that what they all do?
- b) Or maybe Hughes Hall
- c) Medicine at Trinity

10. In January, Jamie Ptaszynski wrote a completely irrelevant article recommending some novel winter sports. What's the main problem with husky sledding?

- a) Huskies are rubbish. Setters are faster and stronger.
- b) The unremitting stench of dog shit is just unbearable.
- c) Both of the above.

11. Which day, according to Anna Stanley, was Judgement Day for the women's hockey team?

- a) Monday
- b) Tuesday
- c) Wednesday

12. Jenny Morgan investigated the shocking state of Cambridge sports facilities at great length in a detailed exposé. In what year did they start discussing the need for a new sports centre?

- a) 1995
- b) It was a good piece but I honestly don't remember.
- c) I was just looking at the pictures.

13. The Boat Race is one of the highlights of the Varsity calendar, but how much pasta does the average Blues Oarsman eat every day when he's in serious training?

- a) 1050 grams
- b) Lots
- c) None

14. What was on the back page of yesterday's Varsity?

- a) It's coming out daily!?
- b) It was an ad.
- c) Well, there aren't any sports happening at the moment, so I'd guess a load of pointless filler.



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