A Cambridge Summer – at last
I t's not exactly news. Students having lunch together in Hall and socialising in the college gardens and working collaboratively in the library and what we would regard as business as usual, but it is the novelty of all this being possible again after two years of the pandemic which is really grabbing our cover photo. It’s part of a photographic essay on Selwyn this summer which you can see on pages 8 and 9 of this edition of our magazine.

But there is plenty of real news too. We begin with three articles about Selwynites who have been at the centre of global events, and the first is our fellow Jessica Gardner’s account of the biggest story in the university’s history as measured by the impact it made worldwide across a multitude of different platforms. It was quite a thing for the University Library to announce that it had lost one of its historic treasures, but the happy ending more than justifies the decision to launch a public appeal.

The two subsequent pieces show the grimmer side of 2022. We have watched with horror the devastation of Ukraine after the Russian invasion, and our alumnus Francis Scarr was in Moscow when the tanks rolled into the neighbouring city. Francis’s work for BBC Monitoring has generated a number of scoops about the way the Kremlin is thinking, and it is all the more striking that his scrutiny of Russian television is based on learning the language from scratch when he came to Selwyn. I have been impressed by seeing someone I know as a recent undergraduate now give his analysis on BBC Television to an attentive John Simpson.

And the happy ending more than justifies the decision to launch a public appeal...
Russia invades Ukraine

There was shock and outrage when Russia launched its attack on Ukraine early in 2022. It is a war that has had appalling consequences for the people of Ukraine with a refugee crisis and devastation across much of the country. When the conflict broke out, Selwyn alumnus Francis Scarr (SE 2013) was in Moscow working for BBC Monitoring – which follows the Russian state media and analyses how the war is being reported. Francis had to leave Moscow after restrictions on the foreign media were introduced, but he continues to appear on BBC television.

As Russia continued to mass troops and armour on Ukraine’s border over the winter, one question from friends kept on appearing on my phone: “What is Putin up to?” With Moscow now accused of war crimes on an almost daily basis, it pains me to admit that I wanted the question away time and time again. Like all the other journalists I knew in Moscow, I was convinced the Russian president was just settling his suave. All he wanted, we agreed, was to force the West to hedge on security demands he had made back in December.

I’d been living in the Russian capital since 2018, working for BBC Monitoring, a division of the UK’s public broadcasters responsible for keeping an eye on the world’s media. One of my tasks is to spend hours submerging in the alternative reality of state TV, where Russia is the victim of Western aggression and is bravely defending its sovereignty that Vladimir Putin re-established after the 1990s, when the country was humiliatingly brought to its knees.

Daytime viewing on Russia’s main channels is dominated by so-called political talk shows, but they’re far from ‘Question Time’. They almost never discuss events in Russia, instead focusing on its ‘enemies’ – Ukraine, the US, and often the UK. Until the war began, each show would feature token Russian “Liberal” and Ukrainians – though of course never any real opposition figures – who provided a façade of genuine debate.

The real content were the target of loaded questions and interventions from the presenters, and even had the volume of their mics turned down so that they could be outshouted. As Western officials warned of an imminent invasion in mid-February, an editor in London asked me if the typical rhetoric had been rattled up. “No,” I replied assuredly. Even as western media and politicians insisted that Russian tanks would roll into Ukraine imminently, Russian state TV continued to laugh it all off.

After one such forecasted invasion date came and went, a prominent talk show host joked that Russia’s troops had “trachastically overshoot”.

Almost four years of exposure to the constant flow of lies, conspiracy theories and cynicism of Russian state media has made it impossible for me to trust anything I hear from its presenters and talking heads. Despite this, on the ground in Moscow, nothing had changed at all. I felt no sense of a country being mobilised for war with its neighbour.

But on 21 February, I felt a change in the wind. For days Putin’s spokesman had been rubbing rumours of Russian plans to recognise the two Russian-backed proxy states in eastern Ukraine, the so-called Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics. But that afternoon state TV reported that the president would make a televised address later in the day. After walking home from work in the February chill, I made sure to tune in.

As he began to speak, one thing struck me instantly. What was supposedly a spontaneous reaction to a recent escalation of fighting in eastern Ukraine had clearly been on the back burner for months. For the best part of an hour, he launched a fairy-dance from his desk in the Kremlin, appearing visibly angry as he railed against Ukraine’s “wandering and thal and neo-Nazi” government policies.

Since the autumn NATO’s eastern expansion had – at least publicly – been the target of his ire. But it was clear to me that the evening that his visceral hatred had a much more specific target – Ukraine’s “friends” who had actually never had stable traditions of real statehood,” he seethed, adding that the country had been “plastered under external control.”

In hindsight, it feels like Putin’s ultimate objective had been staring me in the face ever since I began watching Russian state TV in 2018. In fact, it began in 2014, when Putin’s pro-European expansion saw the country turn westwards.

In fact, it began in 2014, when the country was humiliatingly brought to its knees.

Russia responded by annexing the Crimea peninsula, subsequently bringing upon itself a raft of economic sanctions from the West. I was only in my second term at Selwyn then, still getting to grips with the Russian language’s verbs of motion and struggling my way through Mikhail Lermontov’s 19th century novel ‘A Hero of Our Time’. I hadn’t even heard of Vladimir Solovyov or Olga Skabeyeva, two of the Kremlin’s mouthpieces who are now under Western sanctions.

The demonstration of one nation in the eyes of another doesn’t happen overnight. Russian rhetoric about Ukrainian “Nazis” may be new to most people in the UK, but it is an old trope that has been amplified by Russian state media since 2014.

By then, on Russian TV screens, Ukrainians have been depicted as inferior at best and sub-human at worst. And of course I was concerned for my friends I had made, my newfound safety. “We’re in Kharkiv,” she replied, “and we’re just praying that it ends.”

Follow Francis Scarr on Twitter @francis_scarr

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Follow Francis Scarr on Twitter @francis_scarr
From Selwyn bar to Partygate

The more serious the news event, the more important it became for me to get it right and to give voice to those it affected.

And there were lighter jobs too – interviewing TV stars and working on the amazing Pride of Britain Awards. So I was the one asking the questions and willing reporters to answer in the affirmative as I was quickly promoted to work on the features desk.

My promotion to an editing role was a baptism of fire but I loved it. I covered court cases and did ‘death knells’ for a press agency – exactly what it sounds like: knocking on the doors of people whose family members had been killed, often in horrific circumstances.

I even penned a column for a women’s magazine called ‘The Sex Spy’, which required me to witness goods racket operating from a Cyprus brothel and then a call centre were working in a motorway service station and then a call centre were followed by several years scraping by on terrible money in entry-level reporting jobs, despite having completed the well-respected, post-graduate journalism course at City University.

While my friends were mostly on well-paid trainee schemes at law firms and investment banks, I was on little more than minimum wage, lucky to take the box room in a string of run-down but full-of-fun South London house shares with fellow Selwynites.

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But all along, I’d been drawn to the ‘Mirror’. It was the paper I grew up with, it reflected my values, my politics and my belief that journalism should be accessible to all, held power to account and give voice to those who have no new platform.

On my third minute of asking, then Editor of the ‘Sunday Mirror’, Alison Phillips finally said ‘yes’ and gave me a job. The advice from my previous boss, who had worked in the same newspaper was simple: “Now, you say ‘yes’ to everything.”

That was the power of a good glass of wine. That’s what Selwyn taught me was the thing. It’s in those tricky moments, I push the button on a story or deciding on a front page image, the decision is yours alone. It’s in those tricky moments, I think, that those magical years at Selwyn shine.

If you’re surrounded by people in a noisy environment and when it comes to pushing the button on a story or deciding on a front page image, the decision is yours alone.

And after we go to print at night, there’s no going back from a tough news day. It’s often my old Selwynite’s I turn to, to go for a drink or for some barter on our WhatsApp group. Because the other thing Selwyn taught me was the value of enduring friendships… and the power of a good glass of wine.
Summer is particularly special in Cambridge. There are exams, it’s true; but there are also the long days of sunshine, the punting trips on the river, and the outdoor drinks with friends - before the excitement of May Week and the creation of memories that will last a lifetime. All this was disrupted by the pandemic. The Easter term of 2020 saw the college closed for most students and our operations moved online. The summer of 2021 was definitely better, with most students back in residence - but many meetings were outside-only and they were limited to small numbers. There were no May Balls anywhere in the city.

So specially for this magazine, we asked the photographer Martin Bond to capture something simple but wonderful: the fact that Easter term 2022 has been entirely normal, with students free to enjoy themselves (as well as working, of course) and with all the pleasures of Cambridge available to them. Selwyn’s Hall has been packed - indeed, the queues for brunch have been a talking point - and the gardens have hosted impromptu picnics. Elsewhere on the site, the new Bartlam Library has offered an airy retreat when revision is needed, with friendly faces nearby. It has been time to breathe again; to enjoy what we have missed; and to realise how much it means to be together again.
Introducing three more Selwyn Fellows: the new chaplain and Dean of Chapel, Reverend Dr Arabella Milbank Robinson; Professor Grant Stewart - a surgeon specialising in kidney cancer and Dr Vicky Young - a lecturer in Japanese literature and culture.

Reverend Dr Arabella Milbank Robinson

Position: Chaplain & Dean of Chapel

You come from a family that combines the academic with the theological and religious – so was that always a direction in which you yourself wanted to travel? It is something that was always quite a different form. Where I am now may look like the academic world, but in some ways that background has made it more difficult to cope with. And did you always see yourself as a scholar or as a priest? That’s been lost, destroyed, reviled or recovered – through actual iconoclasm but also like the meaning of a particular marginal illumination or lyricism. And I had this legacy of my knowledge of the form and ideas of Christianity which unlocked some of it.

We noticed that you and your husband James were married by Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, is your godfather. So you seem always to have had strong Church of England connections? My mother, father and Rowan were friends in Cambridge in the 1970s, when they were all still in their 20s. A family friend recently gave me long-haired photographs of them all in a Westhouse portrait: Portraits of a Midsummer Night’s Dream? When Rowan and Jane became my godparents Rowan had just moved from being Dean of Clare to take up a chair in theology at Oxford. I remember visiting them at Christ Church when I was a small girl, being shown pictures of dodos and getting him and Lewis Carroll, the real and the fantastical Oxford thoroughly mixed up. I join with so many in my love for the natural world, which I believe is a public embodiment of holiness, and as an academic in theology I can really draw on that for theological brilliance that the Church needs.

You had some contrasting experiences in your schooling – Nottinghamshire and the United States? Yes, that’s right. I’d have to say that St Albans R.C. Primary School, Cambridge, so you cannot imagine the culture shock! I had a proper US Middle and High School education, with chauffeurs, an American football team, jocks, nerds, and drama class drop-outs.

Your academic specialism became medievalism – what was it that attracted you to that time? Milan. My New College, Oxford was in English and French, which included studying Old French and Anglo-Norman, and a paper in Medieval Scottish literature. It’s a time that draws you in through all that endures, that can still be touched and seen – like medieval cathedrals and vellum manuscripts. And everything that’s been lost, destroyed, reviled or forgotten – through actual iconoclasm but also like the meaning of a particular marginal illumination or lyricism. And I had this legacy of my knowledge of the form and ideas of Christianity which unlocked some of it.

You spent quite a lot of time in the academic world, both in terms of being quite far away from where I am now, but also like the meaning of a particular marginal illumination or lyricism. And I had this legacy of my knowledge of the form and ideas of Christianity which unlocked some of it.

When you got to ‘who wants to be a professional shepherd of the people and place you serve very much. I want us to be a college where the name suggests a Scottish background? Give us a couple of key developments during your career. It is an honour to be a key person in the management of initially localised cancer. The name suggests a Scottish background? Give us a couple of key developments during your career. You have an interest too in the opportunities to explore questions of good to the team going. It is an honour to be a key person in the management of initially localised cancer.

And did you always see yourself as ending up as a surgeon? Well, I really wanted to be a pilot. But when I failed the colour blindness and asked what that meant, I was told, ‘not much, you just cannot do certain jobs like a pilot’. I was devastated. But following these experiences of going to theatre I wanted to do something where I could really make a difference. Surprisingly I managed to get a last minute place to study medicine at the University of Edinburgh (Cambridge Medicine was not an option when I realised that through hard work and persistence I could be good at something and that something was running. I went from the last pick at football or rugby to being the best in the country at 80m and cross country. I applied the same ethos to my school work and was amazed to find myself towards the top of the year. My father was interested in mining, so I showed him X-rays I recall asking who put the hip replacement in, and that seemed the interesting part to me. I spent some time with a different sort of people and place you serve very much. I want us to be a college where the name suggests a Scottish background? Give us a couple of key developments during your career. It is an honour to be a key person in the management of initially localised cancer. You have an interest too in the opportunities to explore questions of good to the team going. It is an honour to be a key person in the management of initially localised cancer.

It must be tough – dealing with people and place you serve very much. I want us to be a college where the name suggests a Scottish background? Give us a couple of key developments during your career. It is an honour to be a key person in the management of initially localised cancer. You have an interest too in the opportunities to explore questions of good to the team going. It is an honour to be a key person in the management of initially localised cancer.
Anyone who’s met you, or seen you and the Oxford-Cambridge boat race I remember being around six years old. At what point in your younger life did you decide to apply to a college in Cambridge? I was most excited because it offered architecture and the atmosphere, and how that impressed me. I fell in love with the culture and the architecture, and made up my mind that night to apply.

And why Japanese? People who don’t know about me, say, why did you choose Japanese? It’s a very difficult language to learn - let alone3 study. At first it was the writing. This sounds very surprising, but I was fascinated by the connection between text and speech - why do we pronounce a letter ‘a’ as we do? Japanese looks beautiful, of course, but as a non-native student I was most interested because it offered a different logic. Japanese grammar is very challenging and one never stops needing to learn vocabulary, but it’s not impossible, and it is so rewarding to be mid-flow in conversation with friends and colleagues, or to reach the end of a novel.

There was a time in your life when your academic work and your home area came together - when you were working for Nissan. Can you tell us about that? In the final months of writing up my PhD thesis I was teaching a few hours a day for Nissan, so I really understood the language and culture. I remember sitting at the Anatomage table. I was fascinated by the way in which the body was presented. I was always fascinated by the way in which the body was presented in the Japanese culture.

I was always fascinated by the connection between text and speech and why do we pronounce a letter ‘a’ as we do? What is the most important thing you learnt from Selwyn? The best answer I received allows me to repay this to any member of my family.

There is a feeling of pride you feel when you come back to Cambridge. I am proud to be a part of that. I was on an interview panel recently and my contract at Nissan was fixed term and at the end of it I decided to continue trying to find more interesting work because I enjoyed it so much. I also believed that I had learned to learn and to academic and honour those people who had supported me. My PhD. I took up a Teaching Fellow position at Newnham in February 2017 then came to my current post in Cambridge in September that year. I sometimes miss the idea of “Chairing off” - that doesn’t really happen as an academic and undergraduate tutor - but I am passionate about my research and teaching and feel extremely privileged to lead the life that I lead.

Tell us about your research, and what you’re planning to publish? I am currently finishing the manuscript for my first book, which is about contemporary Japanese literature and translation. We have published translated literature in Japanese and the literature is a window into another world - Japan. This literature can allow us to see what is happening in Japan, and how that can distort or what it neglects. For example, I am especially interested in Japanese-language fiction by Okinawan and ethnic Korean writers, which is not often read with the dominant vision of Japanese literature. These texts can be very important to translate into English because they use multiple scripts and promote different ideas to the mainstream, but they are also exclusionary to the wider story of Japanese literature.

Your favourite topic about Selwyn? Selwyn has a phenomenal sense of community. I have seen so many wonderful examples of everyone pulling together and we do not do it for one another. I should also give a shout out to the Breakfast Club, which is where all the Fellow students and Fellows and students - turn up for breakfast at Hall am.

What is it that brought you back to academia? My contract at Nissan was fixed term and at the end of it I decided to continue trying to find more interesting work because I enjoyed it so much. I also believed that I had learned to learn and to honour those people who had supported me. My PhD. I took up a Teaching Fellow position at Newnham in February 2017 then came to my current post in Cambridge in September that year. I sometimes miss the idea of “Chairing off” - that doesn’t really happen as an academic and undergraduate tutor - but I am passionate about my research and feeling extremely privileged to lead the life that I lead.

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The short answer is that Why Didn't They Ask Evans? is a thriller of a story that contains characters I fell in love with as a college student, and still love as a college old man. Perhaps that's enough. If you have to business to attend to on other pages, you should move on. If not, let me expand.

Agatha Christie wrote a lot of stories: 66 detective novels and more than 100 short stories, of which she has sold two billion copies. That's more than there were human beings on earth when she published The Mysterious Affair at Styles in 1920. The only statistic that comes close is the number of articles that have been written since then, seeing to explain the enduring fascination of Agatha Christie. Not all the explanations came from admirers. In The Happy Valley, Poirot points out that the English crime-writing school of the 1930s was general and Agatha Christie in particular, which shook me. I loved both Chandler and Christie, so this was like listening to my parents argue. Oh that mine did that very often. I had a lucky childhood, which I suspect Chandler didn't.

The sub of his complaint was against the genteel, parlour-game nature of the English tradition, in which effete amateurs are forever curtseying the bumbling fools at Scotland Yard. He seems to have disliked Dorothy L. Sayers's Lord Peter Wimsey intensely, and was availing about AA Milne's Anthony Gillingham, hero of The Red House Mystery. "Chandler to think of what the boys down at the homicide bureau in my city would do to him." That "boys" lets you know that Chandler was one of them; in the league of men for whom "hard" is a high compliment. Hard-boiled, hard-drinking, hard-bitten and, comonomist of all in the description of Chandler's school (which, incidentally, was Dulwich College), hard-boiled.

Well, Agatha Christie was not one of the boys, and her stories are not hard in the same sense. "Chop suey and Chinese restaurants" is not much bourbon drunk, not many snub-nosed .38s jammed into kidneys. Christie's soft hybrid domain was of the more typically female kind as it obtained in her lifetime; the interior, the domestic, the millpond surface where even a water boatman's sneeze can catch the eye. But the containment -- boat, train, island, snowbound manor -- is more or less the point. Without them there can be no more. You've just hitting balls for the dog.

But why should a detective story be a game at all? When did murder become something to be toyed with for the sake of amusement? There are no board games based on rape or torture, as far as I know. No one's selling country house assault and battery, of all in the description of Chandler's school (which, incidentally, was Dulwich College), hard-boiled.

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which brings me to the central conclusion: it’s a change of heart. Old Nick was, like I say, 13 and he was wild. He was passionate, bold, and unpredictable. But, at the same time, he was also a bit immature. I remember him telling me, a few years ago, that he was going to become a pilot. At the time, I thought it was a bit of a pipe dream. But, as he always says, ‘when you set your mind to something, there’s no stopping you.’

I decided to follow my passion, and I started by taking flying lessons. It was a bit daunting at first, but I soon found my rhythm, and I fell in love with the feeling of freedom and control that comes with flying. It’s a feeling that’s hard to describe, but it’s one that I would never exchange for anything else.

But, as with everything in life, there are challenges. I had to overcome several obstacles, both personal and professional. But, with determination and hard work, I was able to overcome them all. And, in the end, it was all worth it. I’m now a commercial pilot, and I spend my days flying around the world, exploring new places, and meeting new people. It’s a life that I love, and I’m grateful every day for the opportunity to do what I do.

I hope that my story inspires you to follow your passion as well. Whether it’s flying, or something else entirely, don’t be afraid to pursue your dreams. And, most importantly, never give up, even when the going gets tough. You never know what amazing things you can achieve if you just believe in yourself.

Nick Morrish
I arrived at Selwyn in October 1950 with my ration book. I was fortunate in being allocated a room on a staircase; one of only two staircases that had hot and cold running water with rooms elsewhere receiving their hot water by jug. To take a bath, you had to go to the bath house located near the present kitchen. Hard-living it may seem today but in 1950 nearly all the Selwyn undergraduate entry had just come from at least a year of National Service. The college in the early 1950s was careful with money; the college prospectus I received ran to two small pages, mainly devoted to College Regulations, but nevertheless it carefully recited the phrase ‘Cheques are payable to the Bursar’ no less than three times. Unknown to undergraduates in the early 1950s of course, the Fellows were spending a good deal of their time drafting new statutes to replace those based on a Victorian charter. The master at the time, Dr Telfer, was far from keen on fundamental change; and he most particularly valued the formal links Selwyn had with the Church of England. To the extent that he arranged a transfer of an undergraduate from Selwyn to Fitzwilliam when the man concerned became a Roman Catholic. Owen Chadwick was the last master to be elected under the old statutes but by the time he arrived in 1956 the amendment was in place, making Selwyn constitutionally the same as all other colleges. This change opened the door for the University to elect Owen as Vice-Chancellor in 1965. Selwyn in the early 1950s felt itself to be rather ‘on the edge’ of the rest of the university. The college’s annual records for the 1930s devote a significant amount of space to the fine exploits of the Boat Club; as if to say ‘we may be on the edge but we are there on the river’. There were no university buildings in Sidgwick Avenue; it was the Corpus cricket ground complete with pavilion. However, from the 1950s onwards a few

The college is celebrating 140 years since its foundation in 1882. Remarkably, Sir David Harrison has been associated with Selwyn for more than half that time. He joined as an undergraduate in 1950, and went on to become a fellow, then senior tutor – and finally the master. Now 92 years old, he looks back on the Selwyn he has known and loved.

Witness to half our history

Thanks to generous support from alumni and friends, the much-loved Old Library has been given a new lease of life as part of Selwyn’s 140th anniversary appeal. While the new Bartlam Library in Ann’s Court has provided wonderful, modern facilities for our students, it did raise the question over how best to use the old Library. An imaginative transformation has taken place over the past 12 months – largely paid for by alumni and friends – providing the college with a range of new facilities, some of which are unique amongst Cambridge colleges.

Together they will provide a new level of provision which are unique amongst Cambridge colleges.

Study Centre

Four seminar rooms - two with a shared folding wall that allows the creation of one larger space - will be invaluable for students requiring supervisions and group study facilities. In the vacations they will further enhance the college’s conference business.

Alumni Parlour & Development Office

The upper floor has a cozy and comfortable alumni parlour, where some of the original library shelving has been retained, allowing us start collecting books by alumni – the Alumni Book Depository. Alumni and friends are more than welcome to drop by to have a cup of tea or coffee, to use the space as a meeting point, or to chat with members of the development team.

Archives & Rare Books

Tucked away for many years in the attics above the kitchens, the collegue’s growing collection of archives, rare books and special collections has now been provided with an accessible and spacious new home in the Old Library. For the first time, all archive materials and rare books will be stored together and conserved in a climate-controlled environment. A display space has been allocated for temporary exhibitions that will be open to college members, alumni and others to visit.

Medics & Vets Resources Room

A brand new facility for Selwyn, a resource specifically for medical and veterinary students. In addition to the collection of skeletons and 3D models, Selwyn is the first Cambridge college to have a state-of-the-art ‘Anatomage Table’ for our students to learn new skills. This table uses augmented reality (AR) to give students access to virtual models of human and animal anatomies. Selwyn’s Medical and Vet students use use innovative technologies to dissect virtual cadavers. Our Director of Studies in Veterinary Medicine Dr Stuart Evans explains: ‘Anatomy never changes - right’. This is said within both human and animal medical circles. True enough

and supervisors of Selwyn the opportunity to combine these with the latest advances in technology. The Anatomage technology is a touchscreen table that allows for ‘virtual dissection’ of preloaded human and animal models. Three-dimensional images, built from CT scans, give access to a range of virtual humans and animals with a degree of accuracy to 0.2mm. The technology allows for examination of levels of detail which can be removed, but also crucially reapplied - allowing for ‘reverse dissection’ where layers can be built up over underlying structures. This allows for the study of structures in relation to one another, while everything remains in situ and undamaged regardless of the number of times it is removed and reapplied. The system shows the flexibility in teaching we envisage - covering both animal and human anatomy, intuitive use and the ability to highlight and save sections. We believe there will be great benefits in the use of the table in structured teaching sessions, such as supervisions, but also in the development of self-directed and peer-to-peer learning. In light of this, we have taken advice from institutions using the Anatomage technology as their primary source of anatomy demonstration and identified the need to develop specific resources to allow our students to make the most of the system and not be overawed by the detail it offers. Thus, the aim is to provide pre-prepared directions for dissections, saved and annotated images, quizzes on sections and practice exams modelled on those used in Tripos.

It is arguably a subject where there has been little new to report in hundreds of years. What is generally considered the core text in medicine, ‘Gray’s Anatomy’, is now in its 42nd edition but even the earliest remains serviceable.

Teaching anatomy is of course of paramount importance to the medical professions, both human and animal orientated. The subject may not advance, but we have become increasingly aware of the progress in technology that would benefit delivery of structured information. Essentially, in teaching anatomy educators are describing a 3D map but with the challenge of terminology almost entirely new to our first-year students. Even once these early concepts are mastered, it is a world comprising layers of detail and interactions. The traditional methods of teaching the subject fall into two different camps – the framework of regional anatomy which highlights the relationships between structures, or a systems-based approach which focuses on components with a shared function or role (such as the nervous system). The strength of either approach often comes from the skillset of the educator, something we have undoubtedly been blessed with in both the medical and veterinary fields for many years with Dr Robert Whittaker and Dr David Chever being within the Fellowship at Selwyn. With the development of the Selwyn Old Library building into a study centre, and the opportunity

Our Appeal goes on...

The 140th Anniversary Appeal will continue until the end of the year and we’re now concentrating on raising funds for the Three Hestes project, which will offer our graduate students some of the most energy efficient and environmentally-friendly accommodation to be found anywhere in the city. Your support of this project would be much appreciated.

Please contact our Senior Development Officer Susannah Clarke, for further details. Telephone 01223 763937 or email her at: development@un.cam.ac.uk.
Two new eights keep Selwyn afloat

Selwyn has a strong rowing heritage. The boat club has maintained a prevalent feature of the college over the years. The largest sporting society in college, with around 70 members at any given time, the boat club is unique in that the vast majority of participants first learn the sport after arriving at university. It is thanks to the incredible generosity of alumni, facilitated by the Friends of Selwyn College.

The positive impact of this investment cannot be overstated, providing funding for coaching, equipment and competition entries, beyond the obvious benefit of the improved performance of the top crews. After boats were recycled down to lower crews, the entire membership of the boat club experienced an improvement in the standard of equipment they were using. The new equipment is far less likely to break, leading to reduced cost, both financially and in lost training time associated with damage. In the event of damage, replacement parts are far easier to obtain than in the case of old equipment produced by defunct manufacturers.

With these benefits being provided to Selwyn rowers, and strong performances in competitions throughout the year, the future of the boat club appears bright. However, in order to ensure that the current success continues, it is crucial that the Friends of the Boat Club can afford to continue to replace older equipment on a regular basis. Establishing a consistent cycle of equipment use and replacement is a far more cost-effective long-term strategy than holding onto the existing fleet until it is on its very last legs, at which point multiple emergency purchases would be required to keep the boat club afloat. Moreover, regularly replacing the top boats, and recycling the lower boat down between crews, ensures that Selwyn rowers, who might not otherwise have an opportunity to try the sport, have access to quality equipment and can compete against other top rowing colleges.

If you would like to support the boat club, you can become a member of the Friends of SCBC, or make a one-off donation through the college development office, or by completing a donation form and ticking the Boat Club box to allocate the funds. Alternatively, you can contact the Friends of SCBC chairman Brian Hornsby at brianhornsby@gmail.com. All donations are greatly appreciated.
When I talk about wildlife in Brazil, most people think of the Amazon rainforest, with its immense trees, huge diversity of plants and animals, and deep tropical greenness. In reality, Brazil is a massive country with many different ecosystems, each with its own unique and special community of plants and animals. For the past four years, I have been working in a lesser-known ecosystem called the Caatinga, in the northeast. This is a dry scrubby landscape with sand dunes and dunes, which is home to unique and special species of plants and animals.

Our project, ‘Sustainable Fruit Growing in the Caatinga (SUFICA),’ was funded for its combination of community and ecosystem development under the Newton Fund, and contributed by the Government of China. We have been working directly with a major international fruit supplier, Primahut Ltd. Ten farms from across the Southern River Valley joined the project, all willing to grow fruits to UK supermarkets. If you buy grapes of Brazilian origin, they were likely grown and sold by one of these farms.

During the project, despite major Covid-related setbacks, our team of researchers from Brazil and China have developed new datasets on birds, mammals, reptiles, insects and soil quality in the partner farms. We have discussed with farmers how they might improve biodiversity without compromising on productivity, and conducted pilot experiments on the effectiveness of two practices that they chose, to conserve biodiversity while growing the grape vine, and pecan trees to enhance pollination.

We have documented a huge diversity of wild species living in and around the farms, including globally threatened mammals such as the Northern Tiger Cat (above the area called the ‘Gato de Mató’), and bird species found nowhere else but the Caatinga, like the Cactus parakeet and the Caatinga cacti. We can see from our data that some species use both the farmed areas and the natural vegetation, restricted to the nature habitat, depending on the species. Either way, the fate of these species lie in the hands of the farmers in Brazil, but also in the hands of everyone around the world who chooses to sell, or buy, their produce.

Our Sufica partner farms are proud of their wildlife. The good news is that the global food industry, through projects like ours, is sending a signal to farmers that international markets also value their wildlife and want to see it protected. However, we do not yet know what is needed to secure the upland habitat, biodiversity, of expanding agriculture, or if that is even possible. There is so much work still to do. At the end of the SUFICA project, we have only one local species of which species are found there. We do not know how they are doing over time. The Northern Tiger Cat population could be declining. Threatened by diseases from domestic dogs (also seen in our case) and without enough native vegetation to support its population, or it could be thriving. Detecting and monitoring and conservation work are needed in the future to see how they are doing over time.

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A conservation biologist, I worked in different contexts in Argentina, from studying the behaviour of zoo-housed lesser ant-eaters to searching for grizzly bears in America’s forests. Knowing this, I believe there is no better opportunity for someone eager to make a significant impact in conservation than taking part in the MPhil in Conservation Leadership at the University of Cambridge. Seriously, it is an incredible opportunity for any conservationist no matter their level or age.

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Congratulations

Students

New College Nurse & Welfare Officer – Lucy Turnell

We welcome Lucy Turnell who has now taken over as college Nurse and Welfare Officer. This represents a further expansion in the nursing and welfare provision within the college. Until relatively recently, the nurse was a part-time role and during term only; and it has become full time and year-round. This is possible because of the generous benefaction of Peter and Christina Dawson. We also have, thanks to them, the Dawson Fund which provides support for students and specialist expertise on mental health.

Ayesh Karim named as Scouts’ Youth Commissioner

Congratulations to Selwyn engineering student Ayesh Karim (SE 2020), who has been named as the new UK Youth Commissioner by the Scouts. She will be supporting local youth commissions all over the country and encouraging the scouting organisation to listen to and represent the voices of young people in Scouts. She has been in the Scouts since she was 6, and now takes on this national leadership role.

Bury and Beyond: A new look for the college’s events diary

Welcome to the new edition of our events diary. The college has elected James Helm as a Fellow. James is the new director of external affairs and communications for the University of Cambridge, and he is taking on responsibility for all of Cambridge’s external and internal communications, public affairs and public engagement. James, a Cambridge alumnus, is a former BBC correspondent and he was previously director of communications for the Metropolitan Police. He has also worked in Whitehall. On his appointment he said: “I’m extremely pleased and honoured to be taking up this post, and I am really looking forward to working with colleagues and helping this world-leading university to tell its brilliant story.”

James Helm spreading the word

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James Helm

Fellows

James O’Sullivan and her new book

Congratulations to Dr Janet O’Sullivan, Law academic and Vice-Master of Selwyn, who has published the 50th edition of her textbook on ‘The Law of Contract’.

Landmark achievement for Sarah MacDonald

Sarah MacDonald has been appointed University Organist. She explains: “The post dates from 1670, and over the centuries it has been held by the (male) directors of music at King’s, Jesus, and Trinity only. The post-holder is responsible for providing music for all university occasions, including university sermons, honorary degree days, and other ceremonies, as well as overseeing the upkeep and maintenance of the university organ, the historic instrument in Great St Mary’s, which I am alleged to have played by Mozart and Tchaikovsky. I am sharing the post with Sam Hayes, the director of music at CMS. Sam is in charge of events in CMS and the organ, and I am in charge of music for ceremonies in the Senate House.”

Janet O’Sullivan

Robert Stembridge

Events Diary

Events Diary 2023

Jan 9 MA Congregation & Christmas Eve Supper

Feb 3 MA Dinner Evening

Mar 3 Ramay Murray Lecture

May 17 MA Dinner Evening

Jul 8 140th Anniversary Gala Gardens

Jul 28 Choir Concert, Selwyn

Aug 11 1920 Reunion

Aug 19 Choir Concert, Winchester

Sep 18 Sedgeley Lodge

Sep 22 Alumni New 2022 Reunion and Commemoration of Benefactors

Oct 27 MA Dinner Evening

Nov 1 Oxford & Cambridge Club, London* Drinks & Talk

Dec 6 CMS Service, Selwyn

Dec 6 CMS Service, London

For further information about events and to book: www.sel.cam.ac.uk/alumni/forthcoming-events or telephone +44(0)1223 335843.

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WHAT’S NEW AT SELWYN

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Selwyn Issue 29 Summer 2022

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Extra swan for seniority?

We used to joke in the BBC about the point at which we were described by the press as a ‘veteran’. It happened to one of my colleagues when he was in his forties, and he was mightily cheesed off to be called ‘a veteran broadcaster’ by the Daily Mail. I seem to remember it happening to me when I was in my fifties, which was fair enough given that by then I’d been in the corporation for 30 years. But I am now contemplating being a Cambridge veteran, even though it still feels like I’ve only just arrived and my tenure here hasn’t yet reached nine years. The reason is that turnover of heads of house seems to have accelerated. Susan Smith, the Mistress of Girton, retires this summer after 13 years at the helm; and it’s relatively recently that we said farewell to John Eatwell of Queens’ (President 1997-2020) and David Yates of Robinson (Warden 2001-2021). From this autumn it will be those of us who arrived in 2013 who are the longest-serving: Mike Proctor at King’s, Richard Penty at Sidney Sussex – and me. Both Professor Proctor and Professor Penty retire next summer, so if the veteran status will be nailed on by then.

I kept myself busy during the tail end of the pandemic by writing a book about broadcast news. It’s called 20 Things That Would Make the News Better and it started from a lecture I gave for Selwyn alumni in 2018 titled, less ambitiously, 10 Things That Would Make the News Better. The expansion of the list is thanks to alumni, colleagues and friends who have chipped in with their ideas about what could make the traditional bulletins more helpful in an era of hysterical social media and damaging disinformation. It’s a book that strongly supports public service broadcasting, but also examines where it has gone wrong in recent years. Partly that has been about an agenda which is too metropolitan and which doesn’t reflect enough the geographical and demographic diversity of the modern UK. This is acknowledged by Tim Davie (SE 1986) who is now director-general of the BBC, but the book throws some other challenges in his direction too – if only to keep a doughty Selwynite on his toes.

There is competition from some colleges about proclaiming that their students can walk on the grass – thus differentiating themselves from the stuffy lot who retain “do not walk on the grass” signs. Well, at Selwyn students have always been welcome to walk on the grass anywhere except Old Court; and that is not about archaic rules but simply to stop paths being worn diagonally from the F gate to the bar. However, there have been signs of change in the Court. When the marquee was on the lawn, some tables and chairs moved outside too. We rather liked the social use of the space, and we have retained some outdoor tables near the bar. But we intend to maintain the line that socialising is better done in the lower gardens than at the foot of the hall steps - which means that the lawn is preserved for special occasions such as graduation. It could hardly be more special than this year, when we will be doing our first ceremonies with guests since 2019. So then, rightly, anything goes – and there is nothing to beat a General Admission day with the graduands lining up in front of an excited, grass-trampling Old Court crowd.