Our escape to freedom
Sir David's legacy
1930–2023

The association of David Harrison (SE 1950) with Selwyn may never be equalled. Here are just a few of the tributes we received for him. His memorial service will be held on Saturday 21st of October at 2pm, at Great St. Mary’s, Cambridge.

“Sir David was synonymous with Selwyn and embodied all that the college represents — scholarship, generosity and unstinting service to the young. I consider myself especially blessed and privileged to be a member of a college led, guided and inspired by Sir David.”

John Harcourt (SE 1966)

“Although I was a History undergraduate and understood not an atom or molecule of Chemistry, David Harrison often asked, on meeting him around the main court, how I was getting on at Clacton in my course, and in life in general. Marvelously warm, empathetic voice and overall manner”

Andrew Berriman (SE 1969)

“David’s work for the college and its community for so long has been simply exceptional. We are so fortunate to have such great and good people leading our college over so many years.”

Simon Hughes (SE 1970)

“I will never forget his humanity, his sensitivity and his generosity at admissions and when I was at Selwyn. The world will be a poorer place without him”

Sian Foster (SE 1978)

“Thank you for changing the course of my life in December 1977, with that most precious letter admitting me in one of the early cohorts of women to Selwyn.”

Karen Williams (SE 1978)

“I was one of several people who came to Selwyn from Clacton County High School, Sir David’s old school. I’m pretty sure Sir David had some influence in my gaining a place at Selwyn — and for that I have been forever grateful.”

David Evans (SE 1965)
A loving husband, three children, a dream job, friends, a local church, a house near the sea and a small hotel business. My life can be divided into two parts: before and after. Things will never be the same again, no matter where I am. It was too good to be true, too fragile to last too long.

The Before
I lived near the sea in Berdiansk, a charming coastal town situated in the south-eastern part of Ukraine, surrounded by pristine sub-tropical beaches and steeped in a rich cultural heritage. As a result of our shared history most people in our region spoke Russian. But this never meant that the occupants we were welcome the last time I visited.

In 2021, I had just been promoted to a remote job at the main office of the Fulbright, after over six years of service as a deputy branch manager in Berdiansk. I had long dreamt of working in the main office, but I didn’t pursue it because it would have taken me away from home. I was now able to fulfil my dream through an unexpected silver lining of post-COVID work flexibility, without having to compromise on the life I’d built already.

We did not want to believe that a full-scale war would begin. Of course, it was hard to ignore warnings. Anxiety began to grow in January 2022 when schools all over the country began receiving false reports, almost every day, of landmines being planted. We started to wonder where we could seek refuge in the worst-case scenario. My only sister had been living in Cambridge in the UK for nearly two decades — she was the closest possible option for us.

It was on 24th February — a date we will never forget — at 4:42 a.m. that the first explosions woke us. The powerful crashing sounds and bright lights left no doubt — it had started! My boys recall hearing other explosions later, but it is always the first ones that they remember most vividly.

I started packing impulsively, but my husband insisted we would leave our occupied town.

Three weeks of uncertainty and despair
On 27th February 2022, Russian tanks entered Berdiansk. Piercing air raid alarms rang throughout the city while we spent the nights sleeping in cold basements, bomb shelters and protected corridors. Empty supermarkets, long queues for bread and cash, no petrol, no heating. It was so difficult having my children experience the war like this. I did not want to watch my two-year-old daughter hiding her dolls under a blanket playing ‘air raid alarms’, or more substantially, witness the mental pain of my children’s physical and mental health.

I found myself in the hope of leaving the town, and country, that I loved so dearly.

The decision to leave our hometown of Berdiansk was not an easy one, but when a great串联 was finally opened up for Mariupol residents, we knew we had to take it. With no knowledge of how long we would be gone, we packed immediately, leaving behind our summer clothes — a sign of the uncertainty that lay ahead of us. Yet, despite the urgency of the situation, my husband’s parents refused to leave. It was then that my husband faced an impossible decision.

We finally arrived in Cambridge on 20th April, having departed Berdiansk on 16th March and driven over 4,000 kilometres.

Adapting
While I was certain that leaving my hometown was the right thing to do, it took months to accept this fact. Adaptation was not easy.

My boys recall seeing other families, groups and organisations. We were fortunate to have the assistance of our Romanian friends, the warm hospitality of our hosts in Germany, a generous voucher from AirBnb, and free ferry tickets from Stena Line. Their kindness and generosity were a beacon of hope during a time of difficulty.

Every day, we pray for the restoration of Ukraine’s freedom, a cause that will lie close to our hearts forever.

Since February 2022, millions of Ukrainians have crossed the border to neighboring countries and beyond. This graph shows the scale of the exodus in numbers, accurate as of late May 2023.

Data is from the UNHCR. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/solutions/
Ukrainian Refugee Situation (UNHCR.org).

Selwyn College, 17-19 King’s Parade, Cambridge CB2 1RZ, UK
Tel: +44 1223 333 600
www.selwyn.cam.ac.uk

Selwyn is a friendly and caring community. As I delved into the history of Selwyn College, I was struck by its ethos of modest living and its strong connection to the local community. From that moment on, it became my home, and I am now a proud member of its friendly and inclusive community. I transferred to the Bursary in January this year, and I utilise my skills to make an even more effective contribution to the college.

Together, we must create migration principles. The phrase, ‘Selwyn College is a flicker of its former self: more than 70% of the population, like us, have migrated away.’

As we left Berdiansk, the full weight of that decision became too clear. We were leaving behind our loved ones, church, and business. And perhaps most difficult of all, we were leaving behind the country where my husband had once served in the army. The gravity of the situation was overwhelming, but we knew that we had to go.

The journey out was a harrowing experience for our car of six, including my mother and her beloved dog. The roads were treacherous, and we encountered countless disruptions along the way. However, the first day was by far the most challenging. We had to traverse 200 kilometres, passing through 17 occupied checkpoints and across the frontline.

That night, we took refuge in a church building and continued our journey the following day, driving through Ukraine until we finally crossed the border.

Every day, we pray for the restoration of Ukraine’s freedom, a cause that will lie close to our hearts forever.

Today, Berdiansk is a flicker of its former self: more than 70% of the population, like us, have migrated away. For the restoration of Ukraine’s freedom, a cause that will lie close to our hearts forever.

Selwyn
Issue 30 Summer 2023
Wes Streeting (SE 2001) is destined for government if the opinion polls are to be believed. But what has driven him from Selwyn undergraduate less than twenty years ago to a potential job as a cabinet minister — and among the favourites to become the next party leader? His new book gives some clues, and another Selwyn alumnus, Shehab Khan (SE 2017) deploys his expertise as a political correspondent for ITV News to fill in more of the story.

Tipped for the top

Sitting at an ambulance station in Essex, I’m in the audience as the Labour leader Keir Starmer walks on stage to outline his party’s vision for the health service. Beside him, Wes Streeting — who could very well be the Health Secretary and the man tasked with running one of the most complicated government departments.

Typically well-dressed, Streeting took to the podium — clearly very comfortable — and gave an introductory speech, emphasising the sense of duty he feels towards the NHS, mentioning his cancer treatment and how he watched the health service kick into gear as soon as he was diagnosed. We spoke briefly after the event where he was adamant there is more to his political convictions than his personal gratitude to the NHS, pointing to various experiences in his life which have shaped his politics.

When we sat down a few days later in Westminster I asked him if Selwyn was one of those moments. There is a sense of fondness as he talks about Cambridge, which he describes as his “great escape” — his ticket out of the council estate in East London that he grew up on. “It was pure escapism; I was living my best life when I was at university and then out of term time I was back to my humdrum life.” It’s a sentiment I can somewhat relate to. I, like Streeting, grew up on a council estate in the East End of London in the exact same area in fact — and I...
too was fortunate enough to study at Selwyn. There is of course a stark difference between the council estate and an Oxbridge college, but did that experience influence Streeting’s current politics? He was after all very active at Cambridge serving as the JCR President, CUSU President and the President of the NUS.

There’s a long pause after I ask that question – he sips his coffee, compliments my line of questioning, and says, “it changed my perception of a lot of things. I had never spent time with anyone from the upper classes before or anyone who was privately educated but they are normal, nice people. But I also saw education inequality and I want to spend my life and career in politics tackling this sort of injustice.” A politician’s answer.

Streeting is clearly very proud and fond of his time at Cambridge, he mentions, “there’s a chapter on it in his autobiography, One Boy, Two Bills and a Fry Up: A Memoir of Growing Up and Getting On. But I put it to him that for someone who hasn’t served in government or as a party leader, it’s surely too soon to be writing such a book. There will be many who believe this autobiography is nothing more than self-promotion; I mention that one of his Labour colleagues told me that they think this is his pitch for No. 10. He is however adamant that this is not him selling his vision for the country, and it absolutely isn’t an attempt to sell himself as a future leader. “When people read it, they’ll see it’s not an attempt to sell myself as a future leader. “When people read it, they’ll see it’s about the politics comes in right at the end, in the conclusion,” he says. But, I press, does he want to be Prime Minister?

While Streeting is unapologetically ambitious, I am still slightly struck by the stark honesty in his response to this question: “If you really want to make a difference, the top job is the one to have.” Streeting qualifies further, saying: “he is fully behind Starmer and that being the Health Secretary would be a dream job – but, aged only 40, there’s still a long way in his career to go. That frankness is a rarity in politics and is likely to be a curse as much as it is a gift. Streeting says he runs towards political danger, wanting to tackle it head-on. It’s an unusual strategy and there are many within his party who aren’t a big fan of his as a result. “Naïve and grossly inexperienced” were the words used to describe him when I asked one of his Labour colleagues about him, while another rather ominously said “I have nothing to say, make of that what you will.” There is also a significant contingent of Labour MPs who believe Streeting went too far against Jeremy Corbyn. Many viewed him as the former Labour leader’s most critical voice within the party, and one Labour MP told me “some of us got sick of the constant undermining”. Streeting is acutely aware of the opposition to him, although “everyone’s civil”, he tells me. He says he doesn’t regret his actions, arguing it was a moral issue to oppose the then-party leader.

But with those who dislike him, there are plenty of Labour MPs who believe he is the future. Several told me they are adamant he will hold one of the big offices of state, while another rather ominously said “I have nothing to say, make of that what you will.” There is also a significant contingent of Labour MPs who believe Streeting went too far against Jeremy Corbyn. Many viewed him as the former Labour leader’s most critical voice within the party, and one Labour MP told me “some of us got sick of the constant undermining”. Streeting is acutely aware of the opposition to him, although “everyone’s civil”, he tells me. He says he doesn’t regret his actions, arguing it was a moral issue to oppose the then-party leader. But with those who dislike him, there are plenty of Labour MPs who believe he is the future. Several told me they are adamant he will hold one of the big offices of state, while others tell me he will be party leader one day. But if we’ve learned anything over the years, making predictions in politics is a fool’s game and for now ambulance stations seem to be where Wes Streeting is happy.

In an extract specially chosen from his forthcoming autobiography, Wes Streeting shares a chapter of his life. He tells the story of the start of his first gay relationship, with a Clare College student called Ed, and the pivotal moment of winning the elections to become Selwyn’s JCR President.

A lmost stumbled through the square court of Class, happiness and relief were my chief emotions. But that was along with every other emotion that had run me locked in the closet for so long. Guilt. Shame. And most of all, fear. The fear that I would lose friends and family. The fear that I was a bad Christian. The fear that I would be jeopardising my future career. As I crossed Clare Bridge, tears flowed faster than the current of the river below, I knew I couldn’t hide anymore. I was exhausted. There was no going back to being someone I wasn’t.

The next morning, my head was pounding - from the booze as well as the tears. It took a few seconds to orientate myself and then it hit me. I’m gay. One of the most powerful feelings I had ever felt in my life. Liberation. I was smiling, I couldn’t stop smiling. As I made my way over to the mirror on the wall of my pyramid room in the top of the house, I started laughing. It was the uncontrollable laughter of relief. As I looked at my reflection, I finally recognised the person staring back at me.

Being gay isn’t a choice, but I had spent so many years choosing not to be. I hadn’t realised how truly exhausting it had been. I felt as if the weight of the world had lifted from my shoulders. Having the courage to come out to myself had been the hardest thing I had ever done. Coming out to others proved relatively easy, not least thanks to Ed and my friends at Selwyn. But one by one, as I told people and word got around, I couldn’t have wished for a better reaction.

That was I was elected unopposed as the Selwyn JCR president, we had underlined the point. To the extent anyone cared about my sexuality, it wasn’t an issue. I was a fully fledged student politician by this point. The campaign against university top-up fees was building, and I wanted to play a more active part in it. So we continued to organise student stunts and protests and built towards the National Union of Students (NUS) national demonstration in London. Apart from the demon, the politicking and drunken nights out with my mates, I spent most of the rest of my second year in a relationship with Ed. Although it lasted just seven months, twenty-five or so ‘Cambridge weeks’, the warmth and intensity made it one of the most meaningful relationships I have had. But as the ball ended, so did Ed’s time at Cambridge. As a finalist, he was moving to London to start a new career and, wisely, upon reflection, decided that keeping a relationship in Cambridge wouldn’t allow him to make the fresh start he needed and would distract from my final year.

As the last weeks of the year approached, the usual joy of the Cambridge summer, with May balls, end-of-year garden parties, and drinks out with the college bar was tinged with sadness that a relationship with someone I loved was coming to an end.
A revolution at work

Is a four-day working week the future? Andrew Barnes (SE 1978), banker and entrepreneur turned campaigner, was behind the group that brought the idea to the forefront. Here, he reveals the personal motivation behind his mission to advocate a shorter working week.

O ne of my enduring memories is of a 24-year-old junior executive in a UK merchant bank who was watching my 50-year-old boss break down in tears in front of me due to the pressure of work. Some three years later, a colleague, fearful he was about to be demoted, had a mental breakdown in my room during a bank conference. These are just two casualties of the brutal work regime we willingly subjected ourselves to in the name of career progression, higher salaries and bonuses.

I could claim these memories drove me to launch 4 Day Week Global, how the world’s leading advocacy and research organisation on the benefits of reduced-hour working. But in truth, it all started 35,000 feet in the air. At the end of July, 2012, during a flight to London from my home in Auckland, I read an article in The Economist which reported that UK workers were, on average, productive for just 2.5 hours a day. Further research indicated in general, three hours: a day of true productivity was the norm. I wondered if the same was true of my own 240 employees.

I calculated if my staff were only productive, as opposed to busy, for three hours a day, then I only needed 45 minutes of additional productivity on each of four days to compensate for the lost day. I conceived of the 100:80:100™ model, where workers get 100% of the pay for 80% of the time, in exchange for a commitment to maintain (at least) 100% productivity. And I tested this idea in my own business.

The results of the trial were extraordinary. Using the qualitative and quantitative data gathered in the research, which included extensive self-reporting by staff and managers, we found that not only did staff engagement improve by over 40%, but stress levels dropped, and more people said they were better able to do their job working four days instead of five. They eliminated unnecessary meetings and worked together to ensure everyone could receive the gift of more time off. Productivity rose by 25%.

Despite the success of the experiment, I had no expectation this would be more than a local news story. My astonishment, upon our announcement of what we were trialling, thousands of stories appeared in print, online, TV and radio all over the world.

Our 4 Day Week results announcement was the second most-read story on the ‘New York Times’ site when it was published; the top story was the 2018 Trump-Putin summit. Then the traffic started to flow towards us, as organisations around the world made contact to ask how we did it and whether we could help them introduce a 4 Day Week or similar.

This was when Charlotte, my partner, and I created our not-for-profit 4 Day Week Global, through which we started to run six-month trials matching organisations with a cohort of similar-minded businesses to undertake concurrent trials.

It was clear the idea of reducing work hours while maintaining productivity had touched a common nerve. There was, I think, a general recognition that productivity improvements as a consequence of the introduction of technology had not been shared equally, and the price of long hours and more pressure was being paid by workers while businesses and shareholders benefited disproportionately.

There are organisations in manufacturing, retail, utilities, and services both across the globe. Many of these organisations are manufacturing, retail, utilities, and services.

Various informal 4-day week trials found:

- 40% staff engagement improvement
- 38% improvement in productivity
- 67% reduction in sick days taken
- 22% more time Dads spent with their children

The questions that remain

Chander Velu, Selwyn Fellow and Professor of Innovation and Economics, raises the questions we need to answer before a four-day week is seen as a universal solution.

Andrew’s evidence has certainly made a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion around improving work-life balance, but it is important to address some crucial questions before embracing the four-day workweek as the definitive solution for enhancing office productivity across the board.

I personally think there are two major questions that really need to be explored further. First, it is important to understand why some firms have pulled out or not volunteered to participate in trials of the four-day workweek. This is important to investigate how these differences impact the effectiveness of a four-day workweek and whether some industries or occupations are better suited for such an arrangement than others. This evidence provides a strong starting point for exploring the potential of a four-day workweek. However, further research is needed to fully understand the implications of this idea and to address any concerns that may arise. By taking a thoughtful and evidence-based approach, it may be possible to create a work environment that is more balanced, productive and fulfilling for all employees.

Andrew’s evidence has certainly made a valuable contribution to the ongoing discussion around improving work-life balance, but it is important to address some crucial questions before embracing the four-day workweek as the definitive solution for enhancing office productivity across the board. I personally think there are two major questions that really need to be explored further. First, it is important to understand why some firms have pulled out or not volunteered to participate in trials of the four-day workweek. This is important to investigate how these differences impact the effectiveness of a four-day workweek and whether some industries or occupations are better suited for such an arrangement than others. This evidence provides a strong starting point for exploring the potential of a four-day workweek. However, further research is needed to fully understand the implications of this idea and to address any concerns that may arise. By taking a thoughtful and evidence-based approach, it may be possible to create a work environment that is more balanced, productive and fulfilling for all employees.
There was a time when Selwyn sport was all about men, and concentrated on rugby and cricket and boats. These days there’s a much broader portfolio of sports at which our students excel, along with welcome news of a revival in fortunes for women’s rowing. We’ve gathered some of the highlights here.

This year, Selwyn’s Women’s 1st VIII won their races after bumping Lucy Cavendish, Girton, and Murray Edwards on the three days that their races ran, an achievement made greater by the fact that their bow four all had only learnt to row at the beginning of the year. Pictured (left to right) are Captain Marisse Cato (SE 2020) and new co-captain Charlotte Layfield (SE 2020).

**Sailing**

Timothy Hire (SE 2021) is part of the Cambridge University Cruising Club, which entered two teams in the recent British University Sailing Association National Championship, capturing both the 1st and 5th spots.

**Powerlifting**


**Speed climbing**

Matthew Fall (SE 2020), an undergraduate student reading Chemistry, is also a Team GB speed climber currently in the qualifying season for the Summer Olympics, Paris 2024.

**Women’s Rowing**

**Table Tennis**

Captain Roshan Pandey (SE 2020) and Oliver Dai (SE 2022) are part of the newly founded Selwyn table tennis team, which currently has around 10 active players. They have 2 teams playing in the division, with both teams securing promotion in Michaelmas. The first team is now in Division 1.

There was a time when Selwyn sport was all about men, and concentrated on rugby and cricket and boats. These days there’s a much broader portfolio of sports at which our students excel, along with welcome news of a revival in fortunes for women’s rowing. We’ve gathered some of the highlights here.

This year, Selwyn’s Women’s 1st VIII won their races after bumping Lucy Cavendish, Girton, and Murray Edwards on the three days that their races ran, an achievement made greater by the fact that their bow four all had only learnt to row at the beginning of the year. Pictured (left to right) are Captain Marisse Cato (SE 2020) and new co-captain Charlotte Layfield (SE 2020).

**Sailing**

Timothy Hire (SE 2021) is part of the Cambridge University Cruising Club, which entered two teams in the recent British University Sailing Association National Championship, capturing both the 1st and 5th spots.

**Powerlifting**


**Speed climbing**

Matthew Fall (SE 2020), an undergraduate student reading Chemistry, is also a Team GB speed climber currently in the qualifying season for the Summer Olympics, Paris 2024.

**Women’s Rowing**

Matthew Fall (SE 2020), an undergraduate student reading Chemistry, is also a Team GB speed climber currently in the qualifying season for the Summer Olympics, Paris 2024.

**Table Tennis**

Captain Roshan Pandey (SE 2020) and Oliver Dai (SE 2022) are part of the newly founded Selwyn table tennis team, which currently has around 10 active players. They have 2 teams playing in the division, with both teams securing promotion in Michaelmas. The first team is now in Division 1.
Meet the Fellowship

Professor Robert C Tasker
College Position
Postgraduate Tutor, College Lectureship in Medicine
University Department
Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine
University Medicine (Boston Children's Hospital & Harvard Medical School)
University Position
Professor of Anaesthesia (Paediatrics) & Founding Chair in Paediatric Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine
University Department
University of Cambridge
University Position
Professor of Neuroscience and Critical Illness Medicine
Research interests
mental health and modelling of integrative systems physiology and homestasis

You’ve worked in medicine in England and America - but where did it all start? I’m 1950s Commonwealth: my English/ Indian/Chinese mother in Hong Kong where I was born. My family story was disrupted by frequent family postings to different British and American military bases in Germany, so my education didn’t really start until I was sent to boarding school in England aged nine.

Did you always see yourself in paediatrics and child health? Not at all. From the age of 11 I wanted to be an Army surgeon. After qualification I was pre-registration internships I was feeling quite changed. My ambition interview was with Dr Edward Ford, Selwyn’s Medical Tutor at the time. Dr Mike Young (SE 1975) who became the second Doc was my Pharmacology supervisor – I became unemployed when he retired. Dr Rodney O’Donnell took over from me when I went to Harvard. I’d been on my team at Great Ormond St Hospital before clocking up early in the 1990s and was a colleague at Addenbrooke’s Hospital. Over much of this period, people will fondly remember being taught Anatomy by Dr Robert Watson (SE 1957). He was a very great support of me, the Selwyn and Self-research.

How do you see the future of Medical Science at Selwyn? The pandemic brought to the forefront modern medicine and the necessity for rapid advances in diagnostics, medical technology and the use of biopharmaceuticals. We now need clinicians-scientists who can prepare students for future practice using skills in applied molecular biology, genomics, precision medicine, medical informatics and information technology. Selwyn is at the forefront of this challenge. Our next rounds of summer school will be quite a healthcare landscape. The college has put together an impressive team of Medical Fellows and Directors of Preclinical and Clinical Studies. All four – Dr Anita Balakrishnan, Rodney O’Donnell, Grant Stewart, and Lotte Summers – are PhDs in biological sciences and work at the highest level of NHS medical and surgical practice. It’s the dream team for any prospective medical student.

What are some of the highlights of your own career in medicine? I’ve witnessed extremes of disease – sometimes with survival, resilience, and loss; learning from patients and families has been one of the most important parts of my professional life. I’m lucky to have worked in pioneering movements in medicine in the world’s best institutions. I was at Groote Schuur Hospital (1965–1968), and the Johns Hopkins Hospital (1989–1992), at the start of the new Paediatric Intensive Care Medicine (PICM) specialty. After GOSH I was part of another person of my age in the new (potential) field of Neonatal Care, at Cambridge Clinical School (1992–2011). In 2011 I was invited to combine those two specialties and be the Founding Chair of Neonatal Care at Harvard Medical School (HMS), where I helped introduce this new paradigm at Boston Children’s Hospital (BCH).

What are you doing in Cambridge? Although I’m based in Cambridge, I have a varied portfolio of national and international work. I am Editor-in-Chief of a Chicago-based journal in PICM, delivering 1000 manuscripts per year. I provide consultations for MHIC and the American College of Surgeons in Africa and Asia. I’m on UK and US national committees for ‘brain death’, and have online teaching and research commitments at BCH. I also do face-to-face teaching. I help with College Part II (Home Science) and Part III (Physiology) supervision. I also teach GOSH Clinical Fellows in PICM about the integrative systems clinical physiology.

Is there time outside work for other passions? My wife will tell you that I’m not good at work-life balance. But when I was in Boston, I took up Real Tennis again and now play at the Grange Road courts – which is why I’m often around College in my kit. At home, I love to cook and plan Asian fusion dishes for family and friends. I have ambitions to take up painting again and get more involved with the University Museum when Museum when (or if) it reopens.

What were your research projects at Cambridge University? As an experienced member of both Grange Road colleges, do you enjoy most about Selwyn? Dr Lotte Reinbold

I’ve witnessed extremes of disease - sometimes with survival, resilience, and loss...

I was interested in looking at the ways that landscape was depicted in a wide array of different dream poems. Most medieval dream poems are set in spring, for example, so when the dream poem Pearl begins in August at the start of the season, it’s unusual. I think dream poetry can tell us a lot about what fourteen and fifteenth century writers thought about imagination and creation.

Where does Alexander Pope fit into your research interests? I love Pope! I was interested in Pope when I read The Temple of Fame, which is the version of his dream poem, The House of Fame. Historically, critics have underestimated that a revival of interest in the Middle Ages didn’t really occur until the sixteenth century, but looking at Pope’s work, it’s clear that this isn’t the case. I’d always enjoyed Pope’s early eighteenth-century literature, especially ‘The Rape of the Lock’, but I discovered how joyful, hilarious, and human his work is – perhaps I’m not so much of it – especially Pope!

What projects are you working on currently? I recently finished two long pieces of writing – a chapter on Thomas Gainsborough’s painting for a new collection of essays on him, and an article on Alexander Pope’s ‘The Rape of the Lock’ for the Chaucerian poetry.

Outside literature, what are your hobbies? I’m very interested in tabletop role playing games and in video games, especially Dark Souls and The Elder Scrolls. I like games which feel as if they are part of a larger world, and I love the way that landscape is depicted in these games. I’m very interested in tabletop role playing games and in video games, especially Dark Souls and The Elder Scrolls. I like games which feel as if they are part of a larger world, and I love the way that landscape is depicted in these games. I’m very interested in tabletop role playing games and in video games, especially Dark Souls and The Elder Scrolls. I like games which feel as if they are part of a larger world, and I love the way that landscape is depicted in these games. I’m very interested in tabletop role playing games and in video games, especially Dark Souls and The Elder Scrolls. I like games which feel as if they are part of a larger world, and I love the way that landscape is depicted in these games. I’m very interested in tabletop role playing games and in video games, especially Dark Souls and The Elder Scrolls. I like games which feel as if they are part of a larger world, and I love the way that landscape is depicted in these games. I’m very interested in tabletop role playing games and in video games, especially Dark Souls and The Elder Scrolls. I like games which feel as if they are part of a larger world, and I love the way that landscape is depicted in these games.

As an experienced member of both Grange Road colleges, do you enjoy most about Selwyn?
It was a result of circumstance. My partner had to relocate for work in Dubai, and when I moved to join him there I realised that the exciting music career I had started in Damascus was not replicable in the UAE. Instead, I worked as a bilingual copywriter for a branding agency. Later, we moved with the same company to Qatar, I saw that Qatar was starting a nationwide ‘education reform project’ which I found quite exciting because academic environments were where I felt most at home. So, through my recent development of experience in corporate communications, I became Qatar University’s Director of External Relations. It was a time of extraordinary adaptation and exceptional challenge, both in the professional scope and family life: I had just become the mother of two babies only 15 months apart. I took that job thinking I would oversee a three-year project, but I ended up working at Qatar University for 11 years, first as Director of External Relations and then as Assistant Vice-President for Strategic Communications and Outreach.

Life in the Middle East during the early 2000s must have been complicated, especially with family in Syria. Did these events play into your decision to transition into sociology? When the Arab revolutionary uprisings reached Syria in 2011, like most Syrians, I became completely absorbed. I felt as if I was living two parallel lives: one, in real life, going about the mundane business-as-usual, and another, virtual, in this explosive poético-revolutionary realm that was the Syrian uprising.

In 2013, I decided to channel this troubling dissonance into a degree...
The great news is that we've just started the journey to make sports kits at Cambridge more sustainable! Martin Hawthorn, captain of the men's Cambridge University Football team, was immediately engaged. He was driven knowing that his kit alone would recycle the equivalent of 30 post-consumer half-litre PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic bottles. The process for this is simple. We first shred those plastic bottles into small pieces at a recycling plant and then melt them. The shredded plastic is then melted down, and the resulting mass is extrusion pressed into yarn, which is then woven into the fabric. This is what we make into clothing. Recycling one ton of PET waste saves 3.8 barrels of oil, with 86% less water consumption and 75% less energy consumption than conventional PET manufacturing. Importantly for sportspersons, due to recent advances in technology, they will not have to compromise on the breathability and stretchiness that they have come to expect from ordinary fabrics.

Nonetheless, changing consumer habits in favour of buying more sustainable garments will take time. As we have learned from the customers of our ready-to-wear collections, it is not enough just to make sustainable clothing. We must also communicate the benefits of our fabrics, such as our dresses not requiring dry cleaning and having 'wash, hang and wear' convenience, just like a T-shirt. We've also realized there was no sense in trying to produce responsibly if the product loses its colour or shape after a couple of washes and ends up in the bin. Again, we worked with the R&D department at Procter & Gamble (P&G) to validate our 'wear and care' practical longevity. P&G verified that our clothes last in excess of 35 washes, but statistically, it appears that few of us experience even 30 years use from our clothes, with around half of all clothes purchased being thrown away within a year.

If we all choose to buy a few select items of clothing that we really care for, imagine the dramatic reduction we could make to the 35 billion pieces of waste that are made annually. Of course, all of this is a small contribution to the sustainability mission; there are still enormous challenges ahead of us for making every part of the manufacturing process more sustainable. We can't pretend that deciding how we become more sustainable is not fraught with debate. I'm one of those numerous electric car owners on the roads, but I intrinsically know that their positive impact is dependent on how the electricity is generated. How responsibly the cars are made, how easily the cars can be recycled, and so on. Clothing is no different, but by making a start we get closer to figuring it all out.

I am certain that things will continue to change. Like the university football team, many companies are changing their purchasing decisions. Across the sporting industry, there can be a range of investment in more responsible products to meet corporate social commitments, at the demands of stakeholders; nowadays, many of the premier league football club shirts are produced with some form of recycled fabric.

It has been an honour to be part of this journey with the Cambridge University Football teams. If the oldest football club in the world is still the best football team, then we have a special responsibility to ensure that it is also the greenest football team ever. To the converse arguments on euthanasia. The University football team, the cars can be recycled, and so on. Clothing is no different, but by making a start we get closer to figuring it all out. I am certain that things will continue to change. Like the university football team, many companies are changing their purchasing decisions. Across the sporting industry, there can be a range of investment in more responsible products to meet corporate social commitments, at the demands of stakeholders; nowadays, many of the premier league football club shirts are produced with some form of recycled fabric.
Alex Turner, the Head Gardener at Selwyn, is revolutionising the garden’s landscape by adapting to climate change and introducing exotic plants from diverse corners of the globe. He explains how this could be the future of gardening.

When talking about climate change, it’s easy to focus on the very obvious and simple truth that the world is heating up. Every year, we are shown more and more images of Australian towns burning in forest fires, farmers in Suffolk pointing at failing crops and central Europe burning up in record temperatures over 43°C Celsius. But the heat is just one part of climate change. Climate change also encompasses a general increase in the extremes that our weather can dish out – it’s why we no longer say “global warming”. I think 2022 was a great example of how unpredictable our weather has become and how difficult it is to cope with. The Selwyn College gardens experienced what I would describe as a horticultural nightmare. For over 100 days across late spring and early summer, we experienced near-constant high temperatures of 25-35°C, with temperatures of 40°C for a handful of days. It was Europe’s worst drought since the 16th century.

Many of the plants on our Dry Border originate from southern Africa, so they happily continued to flower during the nearly 40°C temperatures of mid-July 2022. But while they can naturally endure around -4°C on their native mountains, they struggled to last through the late December freeze. Many of the plants on our Dry Border originated from the northern hemisphere, which were killed. But since the Student Border was well adapted to colder climates, the temperature drops posed no trouble for them. They simply hunkered down under the snow and waited for it to pass. It’s not just the unpredictable weather that we’re dealing with, but also the shifting attitudes towards what a garden should look like. Gone are the days of simply watering everything in sight. Nowadays, people are more conscious of water usage and expect gardens to be sustainable. Yet, this mindset overlooks the purpose of a garden, especially at our college. We can’t just let everything wither away during droughts. Besides, that’s far from visually appealing. My team and I have simply become more creative with our approach to creating gardens that can withstand these weather extremes.

We are going to continue to look towards regions in Central Europe and Eastern Asia that also experience these weather conditions as sources for new gardens. The Japanese Woodland Garden is very important because even within the confines of college courts, in areas as small as a few square meters, various microclimates can be created. These microclimates can have a powerful impact, as I learnt at King’s College, where I found that the plants situated against the south-facing brick wall of Clare College were subject to scorching temperatures of up to 53°C in the hottest day of the year. This was due to the wall slowly being superheated by the relentless sun, showing the impact of even the tiniest details on the local climate.

The effects of climate change won’t end any time soon, so we assess the damage from 2022’s extreme weather we’re determined to replace the plants we’ve lost with ones that can thrive in these new conditions and to place them in better-suited locations too. We have to keep actively adapting to ensure that we continue to meet the needs of today while honouring the designs of the past. Who knows, these new gardens could be the future of gardening!
Your financial help, friendship and engagement provide a bedrock of stability upon which Selwyn thrives. Here’s just a glimpse into various ways donor funding has been used recently.

### Events resurge

As our events diary at Selwyn returns to full swing, here’s a quick look at some events we hosted recently, and some upcoming dates.

#### Pitch perfect

A generous gift from Professor Eric Nye, a friend and neighbour of Selwyn, will sustain two Lay Clerks in the Selwyn choir next year. These posts support two postgraduate students singing with the choir, where the example set by their vocal maturity and experience is much appreciated by the other choristers. In addition to an annual stipend, Lay Clerks also benefit from free weekly singing lessons. We are enormously grateful to Professor Nye for supporting the choir.

#### The impact of your donations

Selwyn students will benefit from two new funds this summer, both designed to help students to pursue their academic interests to the full.

**Summer opportunities**

**Legacies show the way**

The transformative impact of legacies at Selwyn will be ever more obvious in the coming months across Selwyn. A generous legacy from Peter Stone (SE 1944), who read Geography here, will provide new, clear signs to point the way to wherever members and friends need to be across Selwyn’s much-changed site.

**Why not include Selwyn in your Will?**

If you have kindly included Selwyn in your Will and have yet to let us know, or would like to make sure we are aware of your intentions, please contact Sam Davis, Selwyn’s Legacies Manager, at sjdd2@cam.ac.uk who will be delighted to answer any questions you might have.

---

**Selwyn students will benefit from two new funds this summer, both designed to help students to pursue their academic interests to the full.**

**PETER STONE (SE 1944)**

---

**PROFESSOR ERIC NYE**

---

**Summer 2023 will be the first year that Maths and Computer Science students can apply for the new Tim Langley Bursary for Science and Maths. Generously supported by Tim Langley (SE 1996) these provide another avenue to support students who want to take part in summer research in Cambridge. These research projects are an important stepping stone for our students who want to continue their academic studies, especially in Maths.**

James He (SE 2019) has set up an innovative scheme to encourage undergraduates to explore their interdisciplinary interests. Offering up to £2,500 for each applicant, this vital support will help students to stay in Cambridge over the summer to carry out research. James told us he was doing this because “in the UK, we have too little undergraduate research funding, too little interdisciplinary funding. Back in 2021, a summer research fund supported me when I failed to get into internships, and has made possible everything that followed as I’ve built my career in behavioural data science”.

---

**Why not include Selwyn in your Will?**

If you have kindly included Selwyn in your Will and have yet to let us know, or would like to make sure we are aware of your intentions, please contact Sam Davis, Selwyn’s Legacies Manager, at sjdd2@cam.ac.uk who will be delighted to answer any questions you might have.

---

**A selection of recent events...**

**A generous gift from Professor Eric Nye, a friend and neighbour of Selwyn, will sustain two Lay Clerks in the Selwyn choir next year.**

---

**Events planned for later this year**

---

**For further information about events and to book:**

www.sel.cam.ac.uk/alumni/forthcoming-events

or telephone +44 (0)1223 767846.
How Selwyn College prepared me for life as a bestselling author

Annabel Steadman has had a rapid journey from Selwyn undergraduate to globally recognised author. Writing as AF Steadman, she has won seven-figure deals for her children’s books about unicorns as well as for the rights to future movies. Here, she shares snippets of her own brand-new reality.

When I graduated from Selwyn in 2013, having studied Languages and Law, I naively thought my future was certain. I would undertake a professional training course; I would qualify as a lawyer; I would love it. Fast forward to my mid-twenties, though, and I was in chaos. I left law behind. I bounced between different jobs, trying to shut my eyes to the truth: I wanted to write fiction. Until that point, I’d successfully squashed my teenage aspirations to be an author and chosen the more ‘sensible’ path. After my parents’ divorce, I had become a practical child, and thought becoming a lawyer would get me the financial security that I’d lacked and thought becoming a lawyer would get me the financial security that I’d lacked. But when I left the legal world, my future was muddied and unclear — I was unmoored, though not uninspired — and my future was muddied and unclear — I was unmoored, though not uninspired — and the kind of situations, I draw on various audience I had ever encountered. In these kinds of situations, I draw on various kinds of different backgrounds. My friends at Selwyn ranged from medics to classicists to musicians, and although I attended a private school on a full scholarship, the majority of them were from state schools. Some were from poorer single-parent families like mine, others had families spread out across the globe — but we were all Selwynites.

We discussed politics and art and literature and legal systems and history and film over Basics gin in Cripps Court, and there was a beauty in our differences that I have tried hard to capture in the diversity of the cast in Skandar. We didn’t all agree, but we learned so much from each other, and that is an experience that has shaped my approach to life, to learning and to writing. And it’s helped whilst working with my editorial team too. When your friends encourage you to argue your points, you have to get very good at taking criticism and feedback. Sometimes I wonder: if we’d all been the same, what on earth would we have talked about?

Conquering the fear
Recently, I arrived at an event on the schools’ tour for the launch of my paperback. It was the last day of a week of two events a day and different hotels every night across the North of England. I turned up at the host school and realised that this was a combined event with a further 13 schools. I would be speaking to 850 children that morning — the biggest audience I had ever encountered. In these kinds of situations, I draw on various adrenaline-filled experiences that Selwyn gave me the opportunity to be a part of. Each year, the Selwyn lawyers took part in a mooting competition — and I remember that same kind of fear entering my bloodstream when I stood up to speak in front of Professor Spencer. I also have a memory of being against Oxford in the Blues fencing final at BUCS, giving myself a talking-to inside my helmet. “You can do this, Annabel”. And at graduation, I was asked to give an address in the Chapel, I remember clapping together my shaking hands as I tried to deliver something worth remembering. Those are the experiences I rely on to help me through when I get scared — whether it’s hundreds of children or tricky questions on live television.

Keeping perspective
My life is very busy now, perhaps even busier than it was when I was at Selwyn. It’s filled with writing the Skandar series, touring in the UK and abroad, attending book launches and going to publisher meetings. I learned from being at Selwyn, however, that it is important to keep everything in perspective and to take the time to see the beauty in the world. For me, it was singing in the chapel choir that helped. I particularly noticed its benefits during exam term: I felt myself connect with the world again as I sang Evensong in a Chapel that had seen many a stressed student over the decades. It helped ground me — and I still sing in a choir now. In fact, I solve most of my plot problems when I’m singing — during the rest it gives my brain, I almost always come up with the answer I need.

Synchronicity
I’ve found that it’s often those seemingly unconnected elements of our lives that come to aid us in moments of change. Much of what makes me me and has helped me write books I’m so proud of happened at Selwyn College, Cambridge.