

Selwyn

The magazine
for alumni and friends
of Selwyn College,
Cambridge



2023

Issue 30 Summer 2023





Editorial

We take pride at Selwyn in being a global community: our alumni are to be found all around the world, and today's students come from scores of different countries. This edition of the magazine reminds us that our staff are from many different nations too, and the cover story focuses on a member of our bursary team Dasha Zhurat and her terrifying journey from Ukraine to the safety of Cambridge. We are honoured to have Dasha and her family as members of our community, and Ukraine is also represented in college by our current JCR president Elina Smith who is half-Ukrainian and still has family in that war-ravaged country. Later in this magazine, you can meet one of our fellows who has experienced turmoil in their home country: Zeina Al Azmeh is from Syria, and she lived through the Arab revolutionary uprisings. Zeina's academic work has included looking at how displaced people adapt to the loss of their home, and hers is another voice within the college explaining the complexity of the world we inhabit.

In UK affairs, I am delighted that we're featuring an extract from Wes Streeting's new book, published this summer. Wes, a former Selwyn JCR president, is often identified as a future Labour leader and a possible prime minister. Given those high expectations, we asked another alumnus – the ITV political reporter Shehab Khan – to talk to Wes and some of his critics to find out more about his path to power. I can disclose that Wes wrote some of his book while staying in college last autumn, and his Selwyn connections mean a lot to him.

Another alumnus visitor in the past year was Andrew Barnes, the entrepreneur who made headlines internationally through his advocacy of the four-day working week. Andrew took part in a spirited audience session in the Quarry Whitehouse Auditorium, and for this magazine he writes about how his campaign began and where it goes next. My colleague Chander Velu outlines the questions that still need to be asked.

I hope you will also be interested in some of the reports about research being done by college members. Andy Wright won't mind me describing him as one of our mature students who brings the bracing air of the outside world to Cambridge, and has come up with a novel use of plastics to create football shirts for the university teams. Josie Brooks compares what it's like being a vet in Cambridge with a radically different perspective from a clinical placement in India. And we round off this edition of *Selwyn* with a notebook from Annabel Steadman, who we've seen transformed from law graduate to best-selling author with her book published in 47 languages.

So plenty of fascinating people to read about from a college which is supported by the extraordinary generosity of its alumni and friends who enable its ambition for the future. Can one small Cambridge community change the world? We think it can, and this magazine shows how.

Roger Mosey, *Master*



Jeff Owers

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NEWS

IN MEMORIAM

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, generous 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 College in my course, and in life in general. Marvellously 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 had such great and good people leading our college over so many years."

Simon Hughes (SE 1970)



Above: (left to right) **Geoffrey Liptrot (SE 1950)**, **David Harrison (SE 1950)** and **Chris Johnson (SE 1950)**.

Centre: Sir David with Cleo the Camel after a sponsored walk from Oxford to Cambridge, organised by (left) **Rt Revd Dr. Graham Kings (SE 1979)** and (centre) **Rt Revd Professor Joseph Galgalo (SE 1997)**.

Right: As Master, David was responsible for commissioning a masterplan for the development of the college.



"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)



Sir David Harrison at his installation as High Bailiff of Ely Cathedral by the Bishop of Ely Rt Rvd Stephen Conway (SE 1983).

"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)

"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)

Jeff Owers



Finding hope in the midst of war

Escaping the ravages of war in Berdiansk, Ukraine, Dasha Zhurat and her family found themselves on a journey to safety across Europe last year. Along the way, she encountered strangers who became lifelong friends, leading her to a new home in Cambridge, where she now works in the college's bursary as our accounts manager.



A loving husband, three children, a dream job, friends, our 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 occupiers were welcome.

In 2021, I had just been promoted to a remote job at the main office of the FUI Bank, 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 land mines being planted. We started to wonder where we could seek refuge in the worst-case scenario. My only sister had been living in Cambridge for nearly two decades – she was the closest possible option for us.

It was on 24th February – a date we will never forget – at 4:50 am, 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 it would be three weeks before 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 alarm', or more substantially, witness the decline of my children's physical and mental health.

I found myself living in 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 green corridor 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.

“My heart aches for my native country and our occupied hometown. Today Berdiansk 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 all 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. A few nights later, after taking shelter in another church, we finally arrived in Bucharest. Thankfully, friends of my sister kindly offered us a place to stay while we waited for our UK visas, which took one month to process.

During our journey from Romania to the UK, we traversed through Hungary, Austria, Germany and the Netherlands, a four-day trip that was only made possible due to the invaluable support of various 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.

We finally arrived in Cambridge on 25th 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 sister helped fill out and submit documents to various authorities and schools. The local community church welcomed us with open arms, going as far as to raise financial aid to ease our burden. Not coincidentally, just before we arrived, they had received permission to rent out a house they owned. We did not have to look for housing, nor did we need a deposit. Unfortunately, the compensation I was receiving from my remote work



Since February 2022, millions of Ukrainians have crossed the border to neighbouring 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/situations/ukraine> Ukraine Refugee Situation (unhcr.org).

– my island of stability as I moved out of Ukraine and found my roots in the UK – was insufficient for life in the UK. In June 2022, I decided to quit. It felt like letting go of a part of myself, and it was a final farewell to the life I had once known.

So, I began looking for a job.

Selwyn

Miraculously, I came across an advert for a tutorial administrator vacancy at Selwyn College, half an hour before the application deadline.

As I delved into the history of Selwyn College, I was struck by its ethos of modest living and its historic commitment to fostering Christian values – both of which strongly resonated with my own principles. The phrase, 'Selwyn College is home to students of all

backgrounds from the UK and across the world,' which I came across frequently, only served to reinforce my belief that this institution could become my new home.

At my interview, the Senior Tutor's sincere inquiry about my family's settling-in process immediately made me feel welcomed into Selwyn College's friendly and caring community.

From that moment on, it became my home, and I am now a proud member of its friendly and inclusive community. I transitioned to the Bursary in January this year, where I utilise my skills to make an even more effective contribution to the college.

The After

I count my blessings every day. I have a fulfilling job, and we are fortunate enough to call a beautiful house our home. However, my heart aches for my native country and our occupied hometown. Today, Berdiansk is a flicker of its former self: more than 70% of the population, like us, have migrated away. Every day, we pray for the restoration of Ukraine's freedom, a cause that will lie close to our hearts forever.

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





© Shehab Khan

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



Peter Byrne / PA Images

“ Streeting says he runs towards political danger, wanting to tackle it head-on. ”

A FAIRER, GREENER FUTURE

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 unlike any political memoir they've read... 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



Wes Streeting's C.V.

2003-04

Selwyn College
JCR President

2008-10

President, National
Union of Students

2010-18

Councillor, Labour,
London Borough of
Redbridge

2015-present

Member of
Parliament for Ilford
North

2020-present

Shadow Secretary
of State for Health
and Social Care

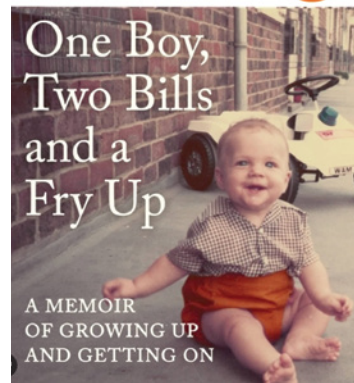
ambitious, I am still slightly struck by the stark honesty in his response to this question: "If you really want to make a difference, the top job is the one to have." Streeting qualifies further, saying he is fully behind Starmer and that being the Health Secretary would be a dream job - but, aged only 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 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.

Wes Streeting



'One Boy, Two Bills and a Fry Up: A Memoir of Growing Up and Getting On' was published in 2023 by Hodder & Stoughton.



As I stumbled through the square court of Clare, happiness and relief were my chief emotions. But that was along with every other emotion that had kept 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. 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 poky pyramid room at 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 part of the journey. 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 I was elected unopposed as the Selwyn JCR president weeks later underlined the point. To the extent anyone cared about my sexuality, it wasn't an issue. I was a fully-fledged student politico 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.

Aside from the demos, 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 when the year 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 on the college grass, was tinged with sadness that a relationship with someone I loved was coming to an end.

“ 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. ”

Graeme Robertson / The Guardian



Nicolas Chade / Getty Images

Andrew Barnes



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.

One of my enduring memories as a 24-year-old junior executive in a UK merchant bank 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, now the world's leading advocacy and research organisation on the benefit of reduced-hour working. But in truth, it all started 35,000 feet in the air. At the end of 2017, 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 maintaining (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. To 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 this 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 benefitted disproportionately.

There are organisations in manufacturing, retail, utilities, education and healthcare all doing a reduced-hour week with no loss of

productivity or decline in customer service standards. Even more significant is the fact that multiple governments are now engaging with 4 Day Week Global to conduct their own reduced-hour experiments.

I have seen the social benefits accrue within my own team, of course. Dads are able to walk their children to school in the morning; grandparents can spend precious time with grandchildren; working mothers – often working four days a week already, but at 80% pay – are now being paid a full week's wage, helping to reduce the gender pay gap. They have more time for volunteering, exercise, and sleep – both the latter have direct correlations with longer life

expectancy. The benefits are endless because it is, in reality, merely common sense. Healthier, happier, more engaged staff are more productive.

For far too long we have focused on getting more, having more, and working more. We should be looking for better, not more; and that 'better', in terms of reduced-hour working, is not just better for business – it's better for the climate, for public health, for children and families, and for society as a whole.

I didn't set out to catalyse the future of work. I still pinch myself when I look back at the last five years. But then again, you don't get many chances to create a world-changing movement.

This just happens to be mine.



Chander Velu

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 information could provide valuable insights into the potential barriers to implementation and help to address concerns that may arise among employees and employers. Additionally, it would be helpful to explore the reasons why some employees may have struggled with a shorter workweek, such as difficulties in adjusting to shorter working schedules.

Second, there are important differences between different types of occupations that need

to be taken into account. Some jobs require more complex work programs, such as those involving team co-ordination or problem-solving to create innovative solutions, while others involve stand-alone process-oriented tasks. In this context, it would be helpful to better understand the impact of new digital technologies on the work patterns of these job types. It would be 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.

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



“ There is now wider acknowledgement we should be looking for better, not more... ”

A revolution at work

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 oars 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).



Women's Rowing



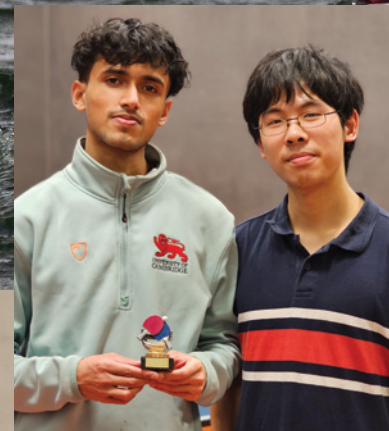
Speed climbing

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.



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.



SPORTS

Powerlifting

Raghul Parthipan (SE 2015) represented Team GB in the European Bench Press Championships, 2019 – 1st place. Varsity 2023 – Best Lifter.



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.



Profiling three Selwyn Fellows, new and old: Professor Robert C Tasker, Professor of Anaesthesia and paediatric specialist; Dr Lotte Reinbold, Director of Studies in English; and Dr Zeina Al Azmeh, Lecturer in Sociology and our Centenary Research Fellow.

Meet the Fellowship

Professor Robert C Tasker

College Position
Postgraduate Tutor, College Lecturership in Medicine
 University Department
Anesthesiology, Critical Care and Pain Medicine (Boston Children's Hospital & Harvard Medical School)
 University Position
Professor of Anaesthesia (Paediatrics) & Founding Chair in Paediatric Neurocritical Care
 Subject
Clinical Neuroscience and Critical illness
 Research interests
Computational modelling of integrative systems physiology and homeostasis

You've worked in medicine in England and America - but where did it all start?
 I'm 1950s Commonwealth: my English/Italian father met my Indian/Chinese mother in Hong Kong where I was born. My early childhood 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 and pre-registration internships I was set on General Practice, but I couldn't

Professor Robert C Tasker (SE 1976)



get onto a training scheme. I spent the first six months as a registered doctor unemployed. Then, I got my break at St. Mary's, London; a year working in Paddington Green in paediatrics and community child health started my career.

And Selwyn, when did you come here?
 I came as an undergraduate, 1976-1979. I returned 1999-2011 as supervisor in Physiology and became Director of Studies (DoS) in Medical Sciences. Now, since 2020, back again as a postgraduate tutor.

So, spanning nearly 50 years of Selwyn Medicine. What makes Selwyn special to you?
 I love being part of Selwyn's medical history. When I was 17, I stepped

through the main gate for an undergraduate interview in the Tower Room and Selwyn felt right – that feeling hasn't changed. My admission interview was with Dr Edward Ford, Selwyn's first DoS in Medical Sciences. Dr Mike Young (SE 1957) who became the second DoS was my Pharmacology supervisor – I became DoS when he retired. Dr Roddy O'Donnell took over from me when I went to Harvard; he'd been on my team at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) in the early 1990s and was a colleague at Addenbrooke's Hospital. Over much of this period, people will fondly remember being taught Anatomy by Dr Robert Whitaker (SE 1957); he was always a great supporter of me, the students, and Selwyn Medicine.

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 clinician-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 frontier of this changing healthcare landscape. The college has put together an impressive team of Medical Fellows and Directors of Preclinical and Clinical Studies. All four – Drs Anita Balakrishnan, Roddy O'Donnell, Grant Stewart, and Charlotte 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 am lucky to have worked in pioneering movements in medicine in the world's best institutions. I was at GOSH (1985-1998), and the Johns Hopkins Hospital (1989-1992), at the start of the new Paediatric Intensive Care Medicine (PICM) speciality. After GOSH I was part of another pioneering speciality, Neurocritical Care, at Cambridge Clinical School (1998-2011). In 2011 I was invited to combine these two specialties and be the Founding Chair in Pediatric Neurocritical 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, handling 1000 manuscripts per year. I provide consultations for Médecins sans frontières (Doctors without Borders) Canada, and advise frontline clinicians 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 1A (Homeostasis) and Part 1B (Physiology) supervisions and I teach GOSH Clinical Fellows in PICM about '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 Fitzwilliam Museum when (or perhaps if) I retire.

Dr Lotte Reinbold

College Position
Director of Studies, College Lecturer
 University Department
Faculty of English
 University Position
Lecturer in English
 Subject
English
 Research interests
Dream poetry, Alexander Pope, literary imitation, convention and allusion

You are an East Anglian native. Tell us a bit about your early life.
 My parents moved to west Norfolk when I was a child and I grew up in the area, going to school in Ely, to Lincoln as a chorister, and then to Wisbech Grammar School where my mum taught. I like the Fens, though I am reliably informed that hills are quite nice, too. I walk up Castle Hill every day now, which is incline enough for me.

Was medievalism always something that commanded your interest?

Definitely not! I first did *The Merchant's Tale* at A-level and hated it. It was only after I came to Cambridge for my English degree that I discovered medieval literature was so much more than just 'translating' Chaucer into modern English. After Cambridge, I went to UCL to study for an MA in Medieval and Renaissance Studies. They also gave me a scholarship, which helped. It was only after my PhD work that my interests changed from 'medieval literature' to 'medievalism' – the study of how later readers and writers thought about medieval literature.

Tell us a bit more about your PhD.

My PhD was about a group of medieval poems called dream poems, which tend to fall into a tripartite structure: the dreamer is awake thinking about a particular problem or question, he has a dream which in some way seems to relate to his waking life, and then he wakes up and writes about it. 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 harvest time, the seasoned reader of dream poems knows that something is amiss. I think dream poetry can tell us a lot about what fourteenth and fifteenth century writers thought about imagination and creativity.

Where does Alexander Pope fit into your research interests?

I love Pope! I became interested in Pope when I read *The Temple of Fame*, which is his version of Chaucer's dream poem, *The House of Fame*. Historically, critics have tended to think that a revival of interest in the Middle Ages didn't really occur until the nineteenth century, but looking at Pope's work, it's very clear that this isn't the case. I'd always avoided eighteenth-century literature because I thought it was slightly staid and mannered, and I'm so pleased to have discovered how joyful, hilarious, and frequently very rude so much of it is – especially Pope!

What projects are you working on currently?

I've recently finished two long pieces of writing – a chapter on Thomas Gray's medievalism for a new collection of essays on him, and an article on Alexander Pope's *Temple of Fame* and Chaucerian obscurity, for a special issue of the *Chaucer Review*. I am working on a research-intensive book project called



Dr Lotte Reinbold

I was interested in looking at the ways that landscape was depicted in a wide array of different dream poems.

The Abstractionists, on the afterlife of Chaucer's dream poems from the fifteenth to the twentieth centuries. Recently, I've started to think about a book project on ideas of authenticity and forgery in medieval literature, looking at works by Thomas Gray, Alexander Pope, Horace Walpole and Thomas Chatterton. I'm interested in when an 'imitation' becomes a 'forgery', and why that matters, especially in a period in which the Chaucerian canon was starting to be established.

And most recently, you got married in Cambridge

Yes! In April, while the famous Selwyn cherry blossom was still out. I met my partner Chris at Robinson, and he's now a Fellow in Natural Sciences there. We got married at Selwyn, then went up the road to Robinson for the reception, so it was a very Grange Road-focused affair.

Outside literature, what are your hobbies?

I'm very interested in tabletop role playing games and in video games, especially *Dark Souls* and the *Zelda* games. I like games which feel as though they are happening in a world which exists beyond the player; that you're a participant in something much bigger than you, which I think is becoming increasingly possible as games become more advanced. I read a lot (especially Terry Pratchett), am a proud member of Selwyn College Voices, and spend much of my time tending to the every whim of my very opinionated rescue cat, Minnie.

As an experienced member of both Grange Road colleges, what do you enjoy most about Selwyn?

FELLOWS

(continued from previous page)

I love being at Selwyn! I love knowing everyone, and I love working in such a beautiful place. It's genuinely a pleasure and a privilege to teach our students, and I have really enjoyed being able to see whole groups through their university careers from admission to graduation. I consider myself very, very fortunate to have been so happy at two colleges. Also, what can I say, I'm a fan of red bricks!

Dr Zeina Al Azmeh

College Position
Centenary Research Fellow
University Department
Department of Sociology
University Position
Lecturer
Subject
Sociology
Research interests
Cultural trauma, forced migration, and the sociology of intellectuals

Your academic background is very diverse - you were initially a trained music scholar. Give us a few highlights of your early education.

I started learning piano in my early childhood, in Syria. At 18, I was selected to perform Beethoven's fourth piano concerto with the National Symphony Orchestra in Al Azm Palace in old Damascus. It was one of the most memorable nights of my life and certainly a formative experience. The recording of that concerto, and subsequent competitions, got me two scholarships to study in the United States: at age 19 I left my hometown to get my undergraduate degree from Queens University in Charlotte, USA. When I completed my BA in piano performance, I had become so homesick that I made the difficult decision to leave everything and go home to Damascus. I hadn't seen my family for years! Upon my return to Damascus, I took a job as a lecturer at the Higher Institute for Music in Damascus where I taught music theory for three years, but commuted to Beirut twice a week for a master's degree. During that period, I also worked on a music theory book that was subsequently published by the Syrian Ministry of Culture.

But after your Master's, you moved into the higher education sector as an administrative professional?

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 recently-developed 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 2010s 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.

Dr Zeina Al Azmeh



“**When the uprisings reached Syria in 2011, like most Syrians, I became completely absorbed**

”

I took a closer look at how displaced people adapted to the loss of home and belonging by espousing something close to what Rosi Braidotti, via Deleuze, refers to as 'nomadic subjectivity'. It was hard, but deeply comforting work for me. Thanks to Staffordshire's online Master's programme in Social and Cultural theory, I managed to complete the degree while continuing at my job and raising my daughters. When I finished in 2015, I still had lingering pressing questions. Encouraged by my Master's dissertation supervisor David Webb, I decided to embark on a PhD. I sent my proposal to a small number of universities in the UK, and when Selwyn's Professor Patrick Baert responded with interest, a new journey began.

Can you tell us a bit about your work today?

My work focuses on how intellectuals in exile interact with and contribute to revolutionary movements in their home countries, and what sociological phenomena, structures of meaning, and political subjectivities they shape in the process. In my PhD work, I based this inquiry on the Syrian case. Currently, I am working on a comparative study that looks at three Arab revolutions with very different outcomes (Syria, Egypt and Tunisia) with the aim to assess the impact of the outcome of a revolution on the formation and transformation of exilic political discourses and subjectivities.

In some ways, you've been linked to the Selwyn name for a long time. How have you found life at Selwyn?

Indeed, it's an endearing coincidence that my university in the US, Queens, was located on 1900 Selwyn Avenue! Life at Selwyn is fantastic. I feel so lucky to have received the Centenary Research Fellowship at the same college in which I did my PhD, because it's such a beautiful college with an intellectually rich, warm and supportive academic environment. I think what's special about Selwyn is that it has the best of both worlds: it's a college with history and stature but also small enough to feel cosy and fun. I especially love our diverse garden with shrubs from around the world.

How do you spend your free time these days?

I'm a bit of an obsessive reader! And family time and friendships are also so important to me. I find myself busy arranging hangouts or meetings with some of the many wonderful people Cambridge keeps attracting.

The melting point

Zaria Forman's magnificent artwork 'Lincoln Sea' will be on display at Selwyn from September. The artwork powerfully reveals the eroding ice sheets in Greenland. Mark Poynting (SE 2018), a polar researcher at the BBC, outlines the consequences of melting ice on global sea levels, water resources and people.

In the coming years and decades, many glaciers will disappear – crumbling apart as seen in Zaria Forman's artwork – irrespective of climate action. The Earth will continue to warm even after humans have stopped releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and glaciers will continue to shrink even after the Earth stops warming because of lags in the climate and glacier systems. We know that glaciers have retreated worldwide at a rate unprecedented in at least the last 2,000 years, and recent modelling suggests that around half of the world's glaciers outside the ice sheets will disappear even if global temperature rises are kept to 1.5°C

above pre-industrial levels. In real terms, Switzerland's glaciers lost 6% of their volume in 2022 alone, having already halved in volume between 1931 and 2016. The Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets have lost mass in the past three decades, from a state of near balance in the early 1990s.

These losses have real-world consequences for communities worldwide. Glacier shrinkage affects the local water resources of around 1.9 billion people who receive water from mountainous regions. As glaciers shrink they store less freshwater. This places communities like the estimated 800 million people in High Mountain Asia, who at least partly depend on meltwater from glaciers

for drinking and irrigation, at severe risk of long-term droughts. With some researchers noting possible links between water shortages and risks of social instability and mass migrations, this is a concern for all of us, regardless of geographical location.

On the other hand, some regions will have a water excess, which also has complicated consequences. The rising average sea levels in general as a result of glacial shrinkage will be superimposed by shorter-term fluctuations from storm surges or coastal high tides, which will affect millions of people close to shores. In fact, whilst we don't expect it to happen this century, the last time carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere were this high, sea levels were an estimated 5-25m higher than today.

Since starting as a climate and environment researcher at BBC News, I have seen how covering and engaging with climate and environmental issues is essential – audiences genuinely care deeply about these issues and want to know more. To which measure, there is reason to be cautiously optimistic. As the UN's climate body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change said in its recent report, there remains a "window of opportunity", but it is "rapidly closing". Scientists stress that by undertaking rapid, deep and sustained cuts to greenhouse gas emissions, humans can still have a material effect on the fate of the world's glaciers, as well as the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets which have much longer response times. Slowing down the rate at which ice sheets such as those depicted in "Lincoln Sea" melt will be crucial to limit the impacts of sea-level rise and water shortages.

Above: 'Lincoln Sea, Greenland' (2019), by Zaria Forman. Soft pastel on paper, 68 x 108 inches. Featured courtesy of the artist Zaria Forman, kindly on loan to Selwyn College from Kelvin Chiu (SE 2005).

Zaria Forman's artwork will be on view at Selwyn College in the Harrison Room from 4th September 2023. At 6pm, 12th October, Zaria Forman will join us online through Zoom from her studio in the USA to talk about the Lincoln Sea project and the inspiration she finds in polar landscapes.

ANDY WRIGHT (SE 2022)

The social thread

Selwyn College MSt student, Andy Wright (SE 2022), shares his journey towards introducing sustainable sports kits for the Cambridge University Football Club, spearheading positive change in the clothing industry.

“Shall we make our next clothing collection from salmon skin, pineapple or fishing nets recovered from the ocean?”

When I co-founded a clothing business with a sustainable mission in 2018, I hadn't anticipated that we would be asking ourselves this question. As it turns out, we've used all of those materials and more besides. In fact, we've tested more fabrics that I can count. The five-year journey has been an extremely steep learning curve. This was totally predictable when trying to do radically new things in an enormous, well-established industry. Such a shame that no one told me!

Unsurprisingly, this meant I was naturally interested in engaging with the sustainability efforts of the college when I joined Selwyn in September 2022 for my MSt. The college's current sustainability charter is bold – just as we would want it to be – yet I noticed that the area of clothing was yet to be explored. So, I reached out to the university sports teams to discover whether I could help. It proved to be a fruitful query: I discovered that most teams change their kit annually, and many are producing one-off Varsity match kits. Understandably, the athletes involved are honoured to take part and treasure these kits as souvenirs of their time playing, yet the totality of resources used for new sports clothing at Cambridge is significant when you consider the combination of colleges and sports.

“**Recycling one ton of PET waste saves 3.8 barrels of oil, with 86% less water consumption and 75% less energy ... than conventional PET**”

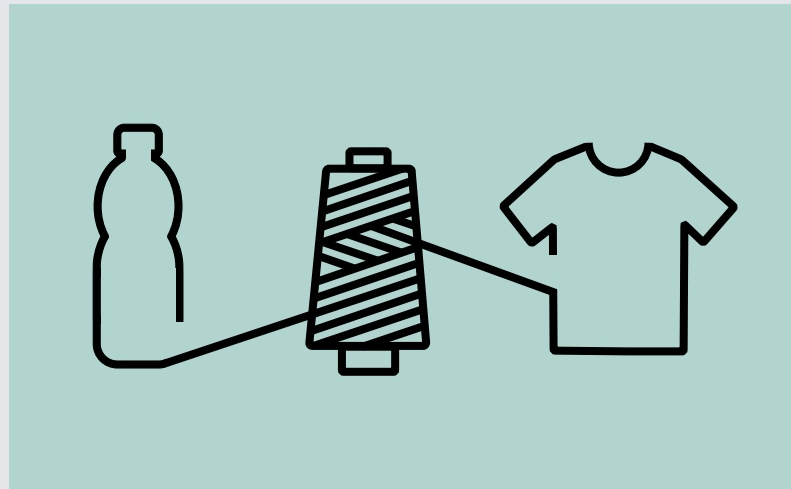
The great news is that we've just started the journey to make sports kits at Cambridge more sustainable! Matt Hawthorn, captain of the men's Cambridge University Football team, was immediately engaged. He was driven knowing that his kit alone would recycle the equivalent of 30 post-consumer

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 clean 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 than conventional PET manufacturing. Importantly for sportspeople, 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. People's purchase decisions still revolve primarily around whether the clothes look good on them. So, when marketing our clothes, we learnt to bring the focus to the practical

benefits of our fabrics, such as our dresses not requiring dry cleaning and having 'wash and wear' convenience, just like a T-shirt. We also realised there was no sense in trying to produce responsibly if the product loses colour or shape after a couple of washes and ends up in the bin again. We worked with the R&D department of Procter & Gamble (P&G) to validate our clothes' 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 wears use from our clothes, with around half of all clothes purchased being thrown away within a year.

If we all chose to buy a few select items of clothing that we really cared for, imagine the dramatic reduction we could make to the 80 billion pieces that are made annually. Of course, all of this is a small contribution to the sustainability mission; there are still



Smith / Adam Lapunk

enormous challenges ahead for us in 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 the 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, you can see a surge of investment in more responsible products to meet corporate strategic 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 putting its best foot forward, there's hope for us all.

JOSIE BROOKES (SE 2018)

Vets go global

Josie Brookes (SE 2018), a third-year veterinary student sponsored by the Jamie Netschert Fund, reflects on her clinical placement at Jivdaya Charitable Trust in India.

As veterinary students, our time at university revolves around learning the physiological, anatomical and clinical skills required from day one of our careers as competent vets. We are taught gold-standard approaches to caring for our patients but, at times, the constraints placed by finances, resources and time make it challenging to fully implement these approaches as intended. Clinical placements are crucial opportunities to grasp these realities. When in July of 2022 I was given the opportunity to travel to Ahmedabad, India, to complete a clinical placement at Jivdaya Charitable Trust, I discovered that veterinary care in India takes a rather different approach to what we are used to in the United Kingdom.

Access to veterinary care in India is very limited, so Gira Shah founded Jivdaya with her father in 2007 in an effort to provide free-of-cost treatment to stray animals ensuring that no living creature suffers unnecessarily. The clinic is run by a team of over 70 vets and volunteers who are responsible for the treatment of companion animals, wildlife and street dogs brought into their care.

Working alongside the clinicians at Jivdaya was both fascinating and, at times, slightly overwhelming. I found that a lot of the cases seen in this charity setting tended towards the extreme, but with multiple emergency cases at any one time, the vets were proficient at deciding which cases needed their immediate attention. I learnt that if a patient

in critical condition is rushed straight into surgery, the chances of them coping with the general anaesthesia are slim. Instead, the initial priority is restoring any fluid deficits they may have and correcting any electrolyte abnormalities. This helps the patient become much better equipped to deal with the general anaesthesia required for surgery.

Another aspect of practice in Jivdaya that I enjoyed being involved with was their approach to the care of wildlife, which was strongly influenced by Jain attitudes and beliefs such as the avoidance of harm to living things. Their rehabilitation of raptors injured during Uttarayan, the kite flying festival, was particularly memorable. Across the few days that the festival takes place, Jivdaya

admits thousands of birds with lacerations from kite strings and undertakes the laborious process of anaesthetising each patient to suture their wounds. Because Jainism prohibits euthanasia, when patients with little to no chance of recovery were admitted, Jivdaya provided them with supportive care until their diseases had run their course. However, with appropriate aftercare, most birds are often

able to be released into the wild within a week or two. It was fascinating to see this rather

different intersection of ethics and clinical practices, and it gave me a unique perspective to the converse arguments on euthanasia.

From the warmth of the welcome at Jivdaya, to their openness to discussion and willingness to teach, I could not have asked for a more enlightening few weeks. I have no doubt that my learning from this placement will echo down throughout my veterinary career.

I would like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to Donna Netschert for establishing the Jamie Netschert Fund which provided funding for this placement, as it has been invaluable to me.

Above: A day at Jivdaya: performing surgery, and rehabilitating a working donkey.



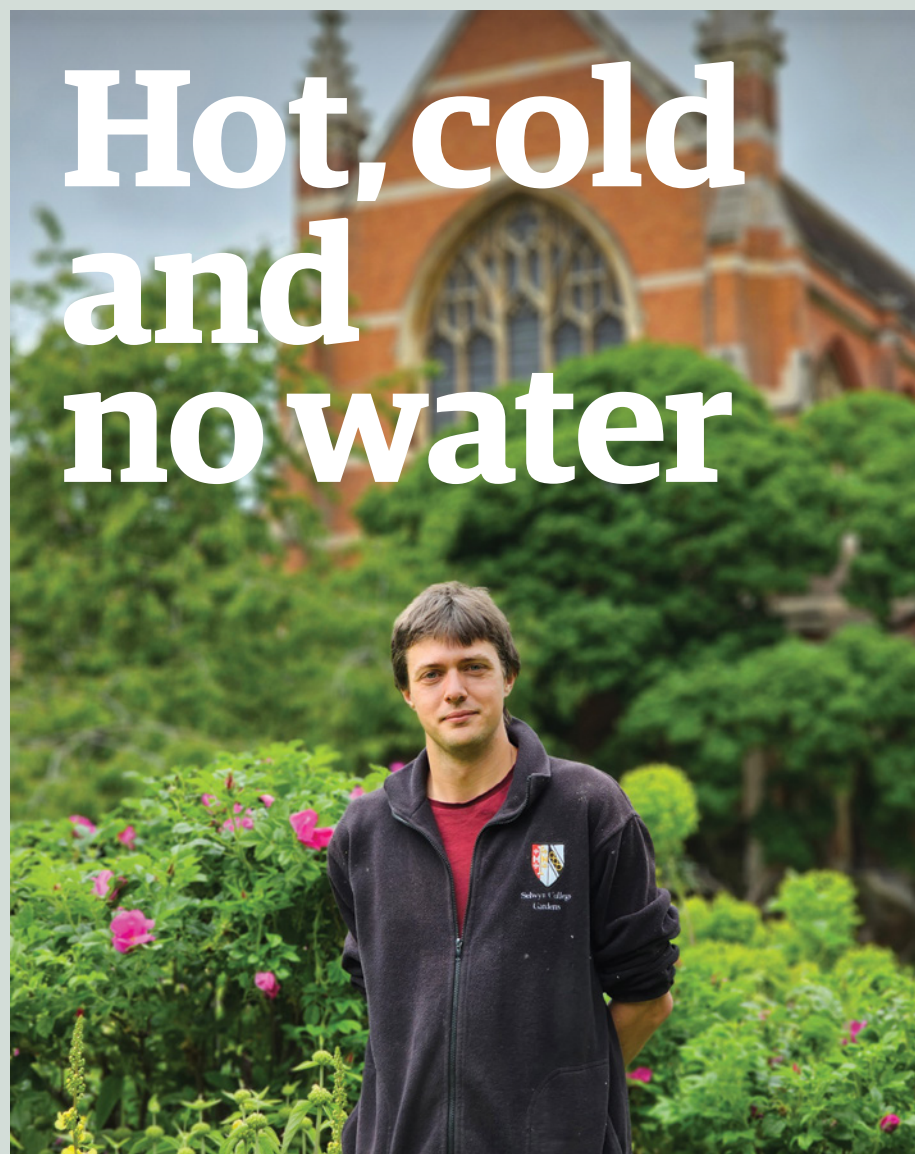
Unknown

The Jamie Netschert Fund

Jamie Netschert (SE 1975), a US student, studied veterinary science at Selwyn between 1975 and 1980. Following his death in 2016, his family generously created a permanent fund to provide support for vet students at Selwyn – providing financial help to undergraduates undertaking their electives and work experience. The fund has since been augmented by others who knew Jamie. Student vets face many challenges – some leaving college with debts approaching £100,000 – so we hope that other vets and alumni might donate to this fund to help our future vets.



Jamie Netschert and his wife Donna pictured in 1975.



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° Celsius.

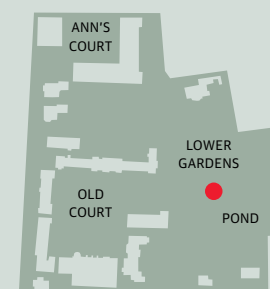
But the heat is just one part of climate change. Climate change also encompasses a general increase in the extremes that our weather can dish out – it's why we no longer say "global warming". I think 2022 was the greatest example of how unpredictable our weather has become and how difficult it is to 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 on a handful of days. It was Europe's worst drought since the 16th century.

“ Not even the hardiest of plants can adapt to the extreme fluctuations that we are seeing. ”

Changing gardens

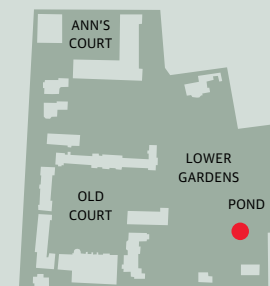


The Dry Border



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.

The Student Border



Our Student Border currently has Alpine Geraniums, Delphiniums, and giant desert candles and peonies, all from European and Far Eastern climates. They do well in the cold but are not suited for the intense heat we've come to expect.

The Prairie Garden



The Prairie Garden in Ann's Court, by the Quarry Whitehouse Auditorium, consists of North American plants that are accustomed to the Central Great Plains, with its long periods of heat, low rainfall and heavy snow. Despite limited watering, this garden thrived and continued to bloom a very varied flower bed throughout 2022.

The Japanese Woodland



The Japanese Woodland Garden installed just last year around the Old Library arch incorporates plants from East Asia to build a cooler, shadier area around college buildings. We've installed plants such as the the wheel tree, burning bush and the umbrella pine.

“ We adapt to meet the needs of today while honouring the designs of the past ”

While we are determined to craft a college garden fit for all seasons, using a range of plants from cold and warm environments around the world, we are rapidly discovering that not even the hardiest of plants can adapt to the extreme fluctuations we have seen recently. Our Dry Border, with its southern African plants, was crafted to survive intermittent rain and very high temperatures – so last summer, we only had to water the border just once! On the other hand, our Student Border, with its plants from the northern hemisphere, struggled to survive the 100 days of heat without weekly watering. Then, in December, when we were caught off guard by a week-long period of -5°C to -10°C temperatures, the temperatures proved too much for our Dry Border, and almost all the plants 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 on 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 as we assess the damage from 2022's extreme weather we've 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 they 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!



Donate to Friends of Selwyn Gardens

Friends of Selwyn Gardens is a new scheme, open to all. Scan the QR code or enter the link to read more: www.sel.cam.ac.uk/friends-selwyn-gardens



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.

The impact of your donations



Read more about the impact of your donations across college life in the Selwyn Annual Report by scanning the QR code.

TIM LANGLEY (SE 1996)
JAMES HE (SE 2019)

Summer opportunities

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

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 undergrad 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".

PETER STONE (SE 1944)

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.



PROFESSOR ERIC NYE

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.



Why not include Selwyn in your Will?

If you have kindly included Selwyn in your Will and have not yet let us know or would like any information about how to do so, please contact Sam Davis, Selwyn's Legacies Manager, at sjdd2@cam.ac.uk who will be delighted to answer any questions you might have.



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.

Events resurge

A selection of recent events...



June 2023

Shashi Tharoor
in Conversation on
B. R. Ambedkar



May 2023

Ramsay Murray
Lecture:
Lyndal Roper

© Henry Moore Studio



Henry Moore Studios visit

May 2022



Choir Concert
at Halifax Minster

March 2023

...and events planned for later this year

Please note: all events are subject to change. Please check event details prior to booking to ensure that dates are correct. All events listed above will take place at Selwyn College unless otherwise noted, and have limited capacity. Guests are encouraged to book in good time to avoid disappointment.

2023

Sep 2	1882 Society Lunch	Oct 19	Talk by Professor Sir Adrian Smith FRS
Sep 6	1958 & 1963 Reunion	Oct 24	Selwyn visit to Fry Art Gallery, Saffron Walden
Sep 9	1993 & 2003 Reunion		
Sep 13	1968 Reunion		
Sep 23	Alumni Day, 2013 Reunion		
Sep 23	Anatomy Unleashed: Talk by Dr Stuart Eves		
Oct 12	Live Talk with Zaria Forman, artist of 'Lincoln Sea'		

For further information about events and to book:
www.sel.cam.ac.uk/alumni/forthcoming-events
or telephone +44 (0)1223 767846.

Save the date!

ANNABEL STEADMAN (SE 2010)

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.



RCW Literary Agency

When I graduated from Selwyn in 2013, having studied Languages and Law, I naïvely 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 growing up.

But when I left the legal world, my future was muddled and unclear – I was unmoored, though not uninspired – and I began to imagine previously unimagined horizons. Perhaps now was the time to write that book I'd dreamed up walking along a street in Oxford? The one with the bloodthirsty unicorns...

Now, entering my thirties, I'm living a very different future from the one I imagined. *Skandar and the Unicorn Thief*, the first in a five-book fantasy series, is a *Sunday Times* and *New York Times* bestseller, sold in over 47 languages. And although I don't have much reason to think about the finer points of tort law or the Spanish subjunctive, I truly believe my experience at Selwyn both inspired and prepared me for life as an author.

The importance of community

Throughout the *Skandar* series, there is a central idea that – although we are each made up of lots of different visible and invisible pieces – together we are always stronger. And I think that is one of the

key aspects of Selwyn that has influenced both me as a person and my work as an author: the strength of a community built from people with all 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 moot 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.

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