



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Michaelmas Term  
2016

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**The Field of Dreams: The Farm  
That Transforms Lives**

**Archaeology on the Front Line: Saving Cultural  
Heritage Under Siege**

**War and Precious Peace: How WWII Radically  
Changed Professor Hinde's World View**

**10-Minute Interview with the JCR President**

# Welcome to our new staff!



► **Image credits:** All photos - St John's College 1 **Chloe Beswick** – Library Graduate Trainee 2 **David Brown** – Skilled Gardener 3 **Zoe Cullen** – Skilled Gardener 4 **Elinor Moreton** – Accounts Assistant (Payments) 5 **Mark A. Newman** – Porter 6 **Kira Penney** – HR Manager (maternity cover) 7 **Ben Phillips** – Night Porter 8 **Nicole Reid** – Library Cleaner 9 **Corinne Rollo** – Accounts Assistant (College Members' Billing) 10 **David Wilkerson** – Postman 11 **Jo Ash** – Domestic Bursar's Secretary 12 **Lajos Vad** – Bedmaker 13 **Jose Jurado Fernandez** – Bedmaker 14 **Peter Cornwell** – Multi-discipline Building Trade Operative 15 **Ian Fleming** – Evening Porter 16 **Daisy Griffiths** – Property Archivist

## We would also like to welcome...

The Reverend Carol Barrett Ford, who joined St John's in September as the new Chaplain. Having worked for 20 years in education, Carol began training for ordination at Cranmer Hall, Durham in 2011 and served her curacy in inner city Newcastle upon Tyne. Carol enjoys reading, live music, art, theatre, film, and cooking for friends, as well as going to the gym and hiking in the countryside with her husband, Alun, and their wire fox terrier, Tonwen.



If you would like to contribute to Eagle Eye, or have ideas for future articles, please contact the Editor, Louise Hanzlik, on [lh445@cam.ac.uk](mailto:lh445@cam.ac.uk).

Welcome to *Eagle Eye*,  
the newsletter for staff,  
Fellows and students of  
St John's College

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### *Eagle Eye*

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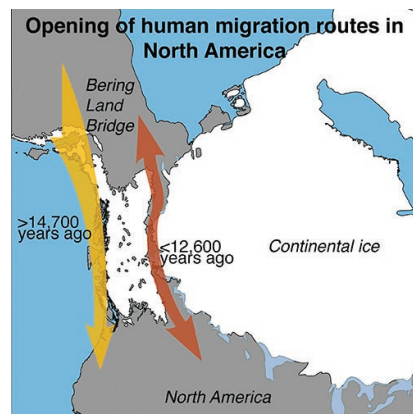
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Cover image: Ray Stevenson at the  
Field of Dreams farm - credit: St  
John's College, Cambridge

# News

# Round-up

## What's been happening around St John's



### Theory about how Ice Age people first reached the United States challenged by unprecedented study

Using ancient DNA, a research team, led by Professor Eske Willerslev, created a unique picture of how a prehistoric migration route evolved over thousands of years – revealing that it could not have been used by the first people to enter the Americas, as traditionally thought.

The study concludes that the supposed entry point was “biologically unviable” as although the ice corridor was open by 13,000 years ago, it was several hundred years before it was possible to use – so they must have taken a different route.



### 300-year-old shoe found in College wall was probably to keep “evil spirits” at bay

A 300-year old shoe was found by maintenance staff in the College walls while they were removing panels to install electric cables in the Senior Combination Room, and it is believed to have been left there to ward off evil spirits.

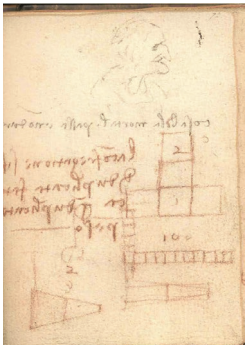
Shoes are sometimes found within the walls of old buildings because they were once thought to protect the inhabitant and prevent malicious forces from entering. The shoe found at St John's was the left shoe of a man, and measured 9 5/8 inches. Although well-preserved, it was also well-worn, with a large hole in the sole. It will be placed back in the wall once work on the Senior Combination Room is complete.



## Student treads the boards alongside Kenneth Branagh

Theology student Jonah Hauer-King was cast alongside Kenneth Branagh in the West End play *The Entertainer*, which opened in August at the Garrick Theatre, London.

Jonah plays Frank Rice, the son of Kenneth Branagh's character, Archie. *The Entertainer*, written by John Osborne, is set in a post-War Britain in 1956, against the back-drop of the Suez Crisis. Jonah got the part after impressing the director of the play, Rob Ashford, and Kenneth Branagh during nerve-wracking auditions earlier in the year. The play runs until 12 November.



## Study reveals Leonardo da Vinci's "irrelevant" scribbles mark the spot where he first recorded the laws of friction

Scribbled notes and sketches on a page in a notebook by Leonardo da Vinci, previously dismissed as irrelevant by an art historian, have been identified as the place where he first recorded his understanding of the laws of friction.

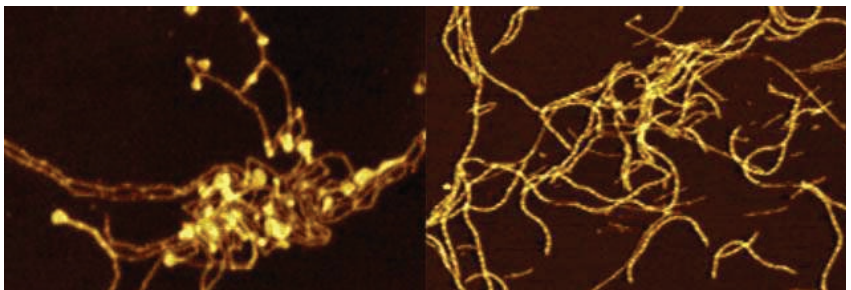
The research by Professor Ian Hutchings is the first detailed chronological study of Leonardo's work on friction. Professor Hutchings said: "The sketches and text show Leonardo understood the fundamentals of friction in 1493. His 20-year study of friction, which incorporated his empirical understanding into models for several mechanical systems, confirms his position as a remarkable and inspirational pioneer of tribology."



## Quincentenary of the opening of St John's

St John's celebrated 500 years of teaching students with a Quincentenary service with the Bishop of Ely, Stephen Conway, as a special guest. His predecessor, James Stanley (Lady Margaret's stepson), was instrumental in the College's foundation, resulting in an ongoing link between the College and the Diocese.

The College was actually founded in 1511, using funds provided by Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of King Henry VII, but the original construction work took another five years, so it was not until 29 July 1516 that the College was officially opened and the first students arrived to be taught by 31 founding academic 'Fellows'.



## Tiny changes in Parkinson's protein can have 'dramatic' impact on processes that lead to the disease

Specific mutations in the protein associated with Parkinson's Disease, in which just one of its 140 building blocks is altered, can make a dramatic difference to processes which may lead to the condition's onset, according to a study led by St John's PhD student Patrick Flagmeier and his team at the Centre for Misfolding Diseases.

The study shows that tiny changes in the amino acid sequence of the protein alpha-synuclein can have a dramatic effect on microscopic processes leading to its aggregation that may occur in the brain, eventually resulting in someone being diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.

► Image credits: American migration route map: Mikkel Winther Pedersen, Centre for GeoGenetics, Natural History Museum of Denmark, University of Copenhagen; Shoe: Cambridge Archaeological Unit; Jonah Hauer-King: Johan Persson; Da Vinci sketch: V&A Museum, London; Quincentenary: Paul Everest; Amyloid fibrils: Patrick Flagmeier

# The Field of Dreams: The Farm That Transforms Lives

Most people will know Ray Stevenson as the Buttery Manager at St John's, but four days a week he spends his time at a charity farm that supports underprivileged children. Now he needs some extra help to continue to transform lives.



**W**e are surrounded by chickens. There are around 450 of them, strutting around in free range heaven, and we are trying not to trip over them. We are also being followed around by two inquisitive goats. Welcome to the Field of Dreams.

We are in the Suffolk countryside, just outside Bury St Edmunds, on a charity farm called the Field of Dreams, being shown around by Ray Stevenson, Buttery Manager of St John's College and trustee of the Crack on Foundation. The charity's aim is to motivate, mentor and support young people under 25 who are struggling with issues such

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**“We don't get financial help from the government. A lot of the money we've spent came out of our own pockets.”**

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as anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and learning difficulties. The farm offers young people the opportunity to work outdoors, with its health benefits, and gives them the chance to learn about agriculture and animal welfare.

The goats are hungry and are following Ray as he pushes a wheelbarrow around that is full of fibre and protein-rich spent grain from the beer-brewing process provided by Bartrams Brewery. "Most of the animals are probably happy because they are drunk!" jokes Ray as the chickens hop into the wheelbarrow filling their beaks, and the goats, Tilly and Snowdrop, munch away contentedly.

Ray, who has been working at St John's since 2007, was contacted by CEO of the Crack On Foundation Mark Byford a year ago and invited to become a trustee when the Field of Dreams was just 12 acres of barren farmland. Ray explained that the environment can help those with problems such as post-traumatic stress disorder; he suffered from this after his time in the army when he witnessed a friend commit suicide. He told us how counselling helped him, and he understands how spending time outdoors can be therapeutic. He works at the farm four days a week after work in the Buttery. He sourced the animals, including pigs, chickens, ducks, geese, goats, sheep, a cow, three alpacas, and a horse called Merlin. "I now feel that we have a complete set," he tells us. Last Christmas he helped raise money by donating proceeds from the annual housekeeping raffle towards the charity's Christmas lunch for disadvantaged children in Bury St Edmunds.

The birds live in a wonderful environment for laying eggs. "We rescued 500 chickens from Rymer Farm, Suffolk, who dispose of 15,000 birds every 6 months." Chicken and



duck eggs are available from the Buttery – posters advertising this are often dotted around College – and Ray hopes that produce from the farm will be on sale there soon. "We also sell the chickens to those who like to know where their eggs come from."

The Crack On Foundation was set up by Mark Byford and Gary Spencer. "We wanted to achieve more from our lives by helping others to better themselves; we were inspired by the film 'Pay it Forward,'" explains Gary. "It began six years ago when I started to hand out Christmas hampers to those who needed them the most,

pigs are all rescue pigs, from people who can't look after them. One was brought up on cakes as the family lived next to a bakery."

The Field of Dreams offers work placements to children with learning difficulties or problems so they can learn about agriculture, conservation and animals. "You can see the visible effects on the kids who are placed here," Ray says, and he introduces us to Jimmy, his oldest volunteer. Jimmy left school early and was home tutored, suffering from severe anxiety. His support worker showed him the farm, and now he works there three days a week, from 8am-7pm,

## **"You can see the visible effects on the kids who are placed here."**

suggesting that they also try to help others in need when they are able to. "When Mark received a hamper during a low period in his life he decided that his vocation was to help others, and he and Gary set up the charity. Six years down the line, the charity has four shops in Suffolk, the farm, a large warehouse, and 100 volunteers. They give out thousands of hampers every Christmas and they also run an Easter Egg appeal.

"I knew nothing about animals before this," Ray says, as he frees Banksy the sheep who has his head stuck in a fence, "but Mark was a pig farmer and has a horticultural background, and experts talked us through everything." As we are talking, his partner brings over their son Josh who is 12 months old; Josh's first visit to the farm was when he was just one week old. We feed the pigs and the three alpacas, Bert, Ernie and Atos; foxes are scared of alpacas so they are good protection for the chickens. "The

cleaning and feeding the animals "and chasing chickens." Ray tells us that Jimmy's transformation in just over a year is incredible. "The farm makes you feel good," Jimmy says. "I'm out in the open and it's relaxed – it's a release. Animals don't judge you. I enjoy being with the chickens the most. Merlin the horse is the highest maintenance!" Jimmy is now looking into an agricultural





course at Otley Agricultural College, Suffolk. Ray also tells us about Todd, who was expelled from five schools and since coming to the farm is a different person; he has now been accepted at Otley College to study Animal Management one day a week.

The farm also provides a community service. Groups like the Scouts, Beavers, schools and local nurseries visit to learn outdoor skills and how to interact with

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**“The pigs are all rescue pigs, from people who can’t look after them. One was brought up on cakes as the family lived next to a bakery.”**

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animals. A new conservation area and pond was constructed by the young people in the National Citizen Service (NCS) community scheme, the Scouts recently hung coconut bird feeders in the trees, and volunteers constructed the fencing around the farm. The charity is also cultivating an area to

grow vegetables so they can teach youngsters these skills.

But running the farm doesn’t come cheap. It costs £2,000 a month, which goes on rent, food, and vet bills, and the fencing alone cost £20,000. The farm charges a fee per child for school groups and work experience placements, but no money is charged for volunteers with anxiety or depression. “We received a £10,000 Lottery Fund grant, but that’s almost gone,” says Mark. “We don’t get financial help from the government, and a lot of the money we’ve spent came out of our own pockets.”

The farm is allowed to hold 14 open days per year which gives the charity enough cash to get them through the summer; their busiest weekend saw 5000 visitors. They have also held fundraiser evenings: one a race night and the other a bush tucker trial, where Ray and Jimmy ate cod eyes and

pig’s tongue. “Now we have to get through the winter,” says Ray. “We are always looking at ways to raise money; we are going to apply for another Lottery grant, and we are happy to receive donations. We really hope that we can keep it going – we just have to crack on.”

Read more about the Field of Dreams on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/farmisafieldofdreams> and on the Crack On Foundation’s website <http://www.crackon.org>

You can donate to the Field of Dreams via PayPal on [rayray\\_stevenson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:rayray_stevenson@yahoo.co.uk) or have a chat with Ray if you can help in any other way.

► **Image credits: St John’s College**  
**Previous pages: Ray Stevenson feeding the goats; Gary Spencer, Ray Stevenson and Mark Byford; Jimmy looking after the chickens**



# Archaeology on the Front Line: Saving Cultural Heritage Under Siege



Across the country many students will have made the most of the long summer break by taking up opportunities to gain practical experience of their subject, but unlike St John's PhD student Christoph Schmidhuber, not many will have travelled to the fringes of a war zone.

**T**he plunder and pillage of cultural heritage sites in the Middle East by Daesh has tragically been a frequent feature in recent news. After safely arriving home, 24-year-old Christoph from Cologne, Germany, tells us about his involvement in a project that aims to arm Iraqi archaeologists with the tools to protect their country's ancient past.

A couple of hours after boarding a plane in Istanbul, Christoph landed at Sulaymaniyah airport

in the north-east region of Iraq. He travelled there to take part in the Iraq Emergency Management Training Programme organised by the British Museum and funded by the UK Government's newly established Cultural Protection Fund. "The objective of the project is to train Iraqi archaeologists and heritage specialists in the excavation, documentation and conservation techniques that are badly needed in a country where there is so much heritage under threat," Christoph explains.

**"We were also in contact with the local authorities who would have given us advanced warning of any approaching trouble."**





The three-million-pound project will train a total of 50 Iraqi heritage professionals in a wide range of techniques that will help them to work in severely damaged or disrupted areas. Christoph worked for two weeks as part of an international team of experts training four archaeologists from different parts of Iraq. "Our main job was to teach the archaeologists how to correctly document their work during a dig and then use that information to create systematic records of an excavation. Keeping good records will help them to ensure they are following international standards of accuracy in the field. Badly conducted excavations can be disastrous as many of the clues that help you to identify what an object is and what it was used for lie in where it was found and the other objects that were discovered around it. Careful documentation will also help the archaeologists to record damage on sites, gathering important information for their potential reconstruction."

On the site chosen for the excavation training there was a large mound, a city wall and a mysterious mud-brick collapse visible on the surface. "We used de-classified military satellite images to see that there seemed to be a huge structure around 200 metres long and 100 metres wide

**"Iraq is a country with a rich multitude of ethnic and religious groups, and when people realise that the roots of their culture are diverse it helps create a more tolerant society."**

buried beneath the topsoil. At the moment it appears to be an early first millennium AD site, but it could be anything from Parthian or Sasanian to Islamic or Ottoman, so I am excited to see the final results of the project."

Prior to the dig, the Iraqi archaeologists had 10 weeks of intensive training in London and the equipment they are using in the field will be left with them at the end of the scheme. One of the archaeologists was Director of Antiquities in a province of Iraq and had fled his home twice to escape

invading Daesh militants. Christoph fears that, "when he is finally able to return home, he will have a lot of work to do."

Despite the obvious dangers that come with Daesh-occupied territory being within a two hour drive and a changeable front line between the militants and Iraqi and Kurdish security forces, Christoph maintains that he felt safe. "There is nothing going on in the area to make you feel like there is an imminent threat, apart from the odd bit of propaganda for the Peshmerga" (the name for Kurdish forces which directly translates as 'one who confronts death'). "I had to complete an extensive risk assessment before the University would approve the trip, stating where I would be staying and how I would be travelling. I also had to show that the trip would provide me with experience important to my discipline and therefore constitute 'essential travel,' a requirement stipulated by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office."

Everything was carefully organised as the British Museum provided evacuation plans and emergency procedures and the University had an external security company assess the threat level and create a security briefing. "We were also in contact with the local authorities who would have given us advanced

**“The archaeologists we have trained will pass their knowledge on to others in the field so that they can work together to salvage items and protect sites from further threats, not just from Daesh, but also expanding oil fields and construction.”**



warning of any approaching trouble.”

Some people might wonder if there is more important work to be done than salvaging artefacts in a country being ripped apart by conflict, but Christoph explains that protecting cultural heritage in a war

zone has far-reaching value. “Iraq is a country with a rich multitude of ethnic and religious groups, and when people realise that the roots of their culture are diverse it helps create a more tolerant society. Daesh are destroying heritage sites that don’t fit in with their religious or cultural ideology, using



iconoclasm to create a new culture stripped of competing influences.”

After oil, conflict antiques provide Daesh with their second largest source of income, with a big market for their illegal sale in Western Europe and the United States. “Academics and the authorities are working hard to stop this trade and the careful documentation of ancient artefacts will help trace plundered items that end up being sold in cities like London.”

For Christoph, the project gave him a chance to use his tuition and leadership skills and afforded him a unique opportunity to experience the “landscape and living culture in Iraq,” something that will provide important context for his PhD research. Although he is aware that what has been destroyed can never be brought back, he has high hopes for the outcome of the project. “The idea is that the archaeologists we have trained will pass their knowledge on to others in the field so that they can work together to salvage items and protect sites from further threats, not just from Daesh, but also expanding oil fields and construction. The skills we have taught them will enable some damaged sites to be reconstructed at least in a digital sense, providing an important public record of the ways of life of ancient cultures.”

► **Image credits: Dr. Amanda Dusting. From the top: Workers at the site, with Christoph third from the left; In action with local workmen; The view of the mountain from the site; The daily visitors - the site was still used for daily herding; The view from the mountain pass - Ranya in the far distance**

# War and Precious Peace: How WWII Radically Changed Professor Hinde's World View

Former Master of the College, Professor Robert Hinde, is one of St John's longest serving Fellows, but before he joined the College he was a pilot in the RAF, signing up for the Royal Airforce Volunteer Reserves aged just 17. Hinde rarely spoke about his involvement in the War, but now, in his 93rd year, he has written a memoir for his family.

**P**rofessor Hinde describes the part he played in the War as a "boring tale" in which "I am glad to say that I did not kill anyone and no one specifically tried to kill me." Yet his five years in the armed forces had a profound effect on the way he would see the world for the rest of his life.

As soon as they were old enough, Hinde and his childhood friend, Graham Cozens-Hardy, had enthusiastically volunteered for



Image: Hinde (left) and Graham, newly commissioned

the Royal Air Force. "There were advertisements in the papers for young men to join the RAF and get a pair of silver wings, fly above the clouds and all that. No doubt this was in part due to the role of Fighter Command in the Battle of Britain," Hinde recalls.

After passing his Air Force medical, Hinde waited to be called up for training. During this time, in 1941, Hinde's parents received the devastating news of the death of Hinde's older brother John, a newly qualified doctor who had signed up to the Royal Army Medical Corps within a few days of the declaration of war. After contacting a survivor who had been on the same troopship as John when it was hit by a torpedo, the family were informed of the 'terrific pain' John had suffered on a drifting lifeboat before being 'released of his agony on the 15th day', four days before the few remaining others were rescued. For Hinde, the awful story of John's death was crushing, but it did not turn him against the



war effort. "I loved and admired my older brother, but accepted his death as part of the War."

When Hinde finally received his call-up papers, it was only to endure further waiting at RAF receiving centres before being crammed onto a ship usually used to transport frozen meat carcasses and sent to South Africa. "By this time our hopes of ever learning to fly sank to a basic level. We had hoped to learn in England, but it was presumably due to the intrusions of German

night fighters that all flying training was moved to Canada or Southern Africa. We had been in the RAF for months and had not even seen an aeroplane."

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**"I do remember, walking alone by the lagoon, reflecting on what a terrible death to die in a damaged submarine stuck on the bottom would be, water pouring in and no means of escape."**

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Over the course of the War, Hinde did learn to fly Tiger Moths ("the open cockpit made one feel that one was really flying"), Airspeed Oxfords, Avro Ansons, and Catalina and Sunderland flying boats. He spent many hours in the air and flew across much of the globe. After three frustrating years of training and waiting, in 1944 Hinde was dispatched to the Far East as a fully-fledged RAF pilot in Coastal Command. The bulk of the work involved flying for hours over featureless ocean, scanning



the blue for anything from a ship's lifeboat to a Japanese fleet and then getting back to base on Addu Atoll, the southernmost of the Maldives Islands, before the aircraft ran out of fuel. He was elated to be fully operational at last.

Between operations, Hinde spent reflective hours walking the beaches of the coral atoll and observing the abundance of tropical wildlife. Looking back on that time, he says: "I do remember, walking alone by the lagoon, reflecting on what a terrible death to die in a damaged submarine stuck on the bottom would be, water pouring in and no means of escape. While maintaining my desire to contribute to the War, I also had a half-hope that I would never be involved in the sinking of a submarine." This is Hinde's first memory of doubting the ethics of war.

A few months after arriving at the Addu Atoll base, Hinde was fed up with "stooging round the empty

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**"There were advertisements in the papers for young men to join the RAF and get a pair of silver wings, fly above the clouds and all that."**

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ocean" and, along with another pilot, went to Command HQ to ask if they could learn to fly medium bombers. "I tried to get a transfer to something more exciting, but we came away with four fleas, one to buzz in each of our ears. It was frustrating to be seen as inferior beings compared with those about to proceed on Bomber Command ops. We did not realise how lucky we were," Hinde reflects.

Soon afterwards, Hinde's best friend Graham, who had become a navigator for Bomber Command, was killed in action during a daylight raid over the Ruhr on 9 November 1944 – the day after he had written to his sister to make arrangements for coming home.

On 4 April 1945, Hinde qualified as a Sunderland Captain, but too late to be sent on any military missions as the war in Europe was ending. A scholarship to study Natural Sciences at St John's awaited him, and so he was demobbed in 1946. He had qualified for the Burma Star for flights over the Indian Ocean, and the Atlantic Star for operational trips from Killadeas, Oban and Alness. However he elected not to apply for the latter: "As I was filling in the form I felt so strongly that I had done so little compared with my brother John or Graham that I did not request the Atlantic Star. In retrospect, that was silly and pretentious."

After leaving the military, Hinde mixed with other ex-service men studying at Cambridge and their shared experience brought home the true scale of the suffering. Hinde gradually grew accustomed to the post-war atmosphere of peace, and rejected not only the violence that had taken loved ones away, but also the mundane aspects of war that were responsible for the continuation of rationing.

Now an Emeritus Royal Society Research Professor at St John's, Hinde has dedicated the latter part of his career to eliminating the causes of war, writing papers and books on the subject, including *War No More* (Hinde & Rotblat, 2003). He has been Chair and President of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning organisation the British Pugwash

## “When the War was over I came to a different perspective and saw all its individual horrors rolled up into one gigantic horror.”

Group and the President of the Movement for the Abolition of War. "Post-war my world was transformed from one in which the main thing that mattered was winning the War to one where the preciousness of peace was dominant." So what exactly brought about this dramatic reversal of views?

The War had claimed the lives of Hinde's brother and best friend, but he had accepted their loss, becoming accustomed to the fact that in a conflict people get killed. "When the War was over I came to a different perspective and saw all its individual horrors rolled up into one gigantic horror. Every day members of all the services were dying. It was all those millions, on both sides of the conflict, only a few of whom I actually knew and many more who were not even names to me, the countless bereaved. Perhaps I should say 'especially the bereaved' for they had to go on living, when for many their lives had been impoverished and saddened forever."

Hinde believes that both before and after the War he was influenced by the attitudes of those around him. "Two men I came into contact with

post-war had a huge impact on the way I, and many others, see the world. One was Bruce Kent, the co-founder of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and later a founder of the Movement for the Abolition of War. The other was Professor Sir Joseph Rotblat, formerly a member of the 'Manhattan Project', engaged in developing the first atom bomb. When it became known to the Allies that Germany had abandoned production of such a bomb, Jo left the project on grounds of conscience – the only scientist to do so."

As a consequence of his experiences, Hinde believes that efforts to abolish war must focus on normal people, "changing the popular view of war as heroic, inevitable, or a solution to disputes, must be an important strategy for peace."

My 'War' (2016) is available to purchase through Spokesman Books:  
<http://www.spokesmanbooks.com>

► **Image credits: All images are reproduced by the kind permission of Robert Hinde. From the top: Sunderland Crew, with Hinde on Addu Atoll; Sunderland flying boat**



# 10-Minute Interview

with Ben Whitby

**Ben Whitby, medical student and JCR President, tells us about helping out junior members, representing the students at College Council, and fixing chocolate fountains.**



**S**o Ben, you are the JCR President. For the benefit of our new undergraduates, can you explain what the JCR is?

The JCR is the College's student body – our equivalent of a student union. The JCR does two main things. Firstly, our job is to represent, look after and help entertain the 900 or so junior members of the College – this means reaching out to those who may be struggling through our welfare events or our new mental health campaign, giving a voice to under-represented groups, and helping out with access work such that any and all capable students from across the world feel able and welcome to apply to study here. Secondly, we run a room with a big TV and a pool table. I'll leave you to decide which purpose is more important!

**What does the JCR President's job entail?**

The job is quite varied. So far it's ranged from representing students' views and problems to the Master and the College Council all the way

to bodging a chocolate fountain back into life with an old paperclip. Primarily, it entails chairing the JCR Committee and representing their views (and therefore those of the junior members who elected them) to the College and the University. Oh, and sending emails. So many emails.

**How and when did you become JCR President, and why did you want the position in the first place?**

I became JCR President in January 2016 following a dramatic election with a record turnout. I originally decided that I wanted to run for the role after serving on the previous year's committee and realising how satisfying it is to follow a policy from its inception through to its success. Even the most minor improvements we can make to the College can have such an awesome effect in refining the already fantastic academic, social and support community John's has cultivated. I ran for this role to try to lead an efficient committee which could bring about these changes in the most effective way possible.

**How long can you remain in the role?**

The role's duration is a year – running from the first day of the Lent Term to the last day of the following Michaelmas Term. Theoretically I could choose to run again but realistically I will have achieved everything I set out to do by the end of this year, so it'll be time to step aside and let another student take over. I'm not sure my email inbox could handle another year.

**What's been the most interesting part of being JCR President so far – what are the perks to the job?**

I'd say my favourite part of the role has got to be attending College Council. This is a truly awesome experience, with the Master and a dozen or so Fellows in the



Combination Room wearing gowns deciding upon College policies and discussing issues. It's amazing to see these inner workings of the College, and to begin to understand how such an historic institution is run. It's great to be able to represent student opinion in such a magnificent setting. Also, I like the free cake they serve there. That's pretty cool.

**What are you studying in St John's, and how do you fit all of these tasks around your studies?**

I study Medicine – meaning it does sometimes get quite hard fitting the JCR President tasks around my studies. I've found though that with just a few small sacrifices (namely a healthy sleeping pattern and regular meals!) this is possible. The College staff and Fellows are also very considerate of the fact I'm doing this on top of a degree – and they can often move a meeting around if I explain that I have a lot of work.

**What are your plans after St John's?**

As a medical student, I'm on track to be a doctor – which is definitely what I'd like to do. Hopefully being JCR President has given me some skills which I can use when I get into this field. Either that or it's just given me an irrational fear of the 'new email' sound my laptop makes. Hopefully it's the former.

► **Image credits: Ben Whitby: Brett Wilson, on behalf of the JCR; JCR on the Backs: Brett Wilson, on behalf of the JCR; JCR working on the bar at a College bop: Ben Whitby; Ben Whitby at alumni dinner: St John's College Development Office**



# Awards



## Maggie 'Head of the River' in May Bumps

The men's crew of the Lady Margaret Boat Club were crowned Head of the River after four dramatic days of May Bumps races. It was the first time that M1 were awarded this title in 27 years. 'Maggie' is historically one of the strongest rowing clubs on the river. Alongside M1, two boats – the men's second and fifth boats – got their 'blades' for bumping four other boats in their respective divisions. M2, who ended the week in second place in their division, are also now the highest-ranked second crew on the river. The women also had success on the river – W1 both began and ended the competition in 10th place, W2 also started as they finished, in third place in the third division, while W3 moved up two spots during the course of the week to end 15th in the fourth.



## Student wins top prize in international Maths competition

Maria-Romina Ivan, a 19-year old Mathematics student from Romania, was ranked in the 'first prize'

category at the International Maths Competition for University Students in Bulgaria. It is the most prestigious competition of its kind, with entrants from more than 50 countries. The participants are all Mathematics undergraduates but can enter during any year of their degree course, which can make it more challenging for the younger entrants. Maria plans on pursuing her passion for Maths through further study once she graduates and is hoping to specialise in the field of Analysis and Number Theory.



## PhD Student wins prize for research presentation

Chemical Engineering graduate Yehia Amar won first prize for a presentation about his PhD studies at the APACT (Advances in Process Analytics and Control Technology) Conference 2016, sponsored by Clairet Scientific Limited. The prize was awarded for the best presentation of a one-sheet, poster-sized summary of the research at this annual, three-day conference that brings together academics and experts in science and engineering, and was judged by a panel of plenary and keynote speakers.



## Stephen Stokes awarded Guild of Vergers Diploma

St John's Chapel Clerk and Verger Stephen Stokes was awarded a Diploma for the Church of England Guild of Vergers at the annual training conference in West Malvern. The course covers Pastoral, Historical and Administrative aspects of the role of the Verger in today's church, and seven vergers were awarded with certificates and academic hoods. Stephen received his award with Honours, and the hood that he was awarded once belonged to his late grandfather. Stephen completed a large proportion of his studies while he was in hospital undergoing treatment for Burkitt lymphoma, for which he has now been given the all-clear.



## Harper-Wood Student wins Forward Prize 2016 for Best Collection

Trinidadian poet Vahni Capildeo, St John's Harper-Wood Student 2015-2016, was awarded the Forward Prize 2016 for Best Collection for her work *Measures of Expatriation*, published by Carcanet Press. The collection of poems and prose-poems discusses the complex alienation of the expatriate as well as focusing on wider issues around identity in contemporary Western society. Chair of the judges, Malika Booker, called Vahni's collection "a book you will forever be opening". Vahni received the £15,000 prize at a ceremony at the Royal Festival Hall.

► **Image credits: LMBC Men's Crew: Bernadette Claire; Maria-Romina Ivan: St John's College; Yehi Amar: the Centre for Process Analytics and Control Technology team; Stephen Stokes: Stephen Stokes; Measures of Expatriation: Elspeth Duncan**

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