



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Easter Term 2015

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**Having a Ball: Behind the scenes
at one of the world's best parties**

Preserving the Past: Inside the College Archives

**The Map Of Life: Simon Conway Morris on
aliens and convergence**

Welcome

to our recent new starters!



► All photos St John's College: **1 Doris Asfaha** - Deputy Superintendent of Housekeeping **2 Emily Blackman** - HR Assistant (maternity cover) **3 Adrian Vasile Boda** - Platewash Assistant **4 Herman Doherty** - Section Chef **5 Sayed Gewid** - Night Porter **6 Federica Greco** - Bedmaker **7 Alison Hart-Arkley** - Administrative Assistant - IT **8 Dorota Ilczuk** - Bedmaker **9 Luis Lidon Alfonso** - Platewash Assistant **10 Richard Little** - Custodian **11 Kay Lovett** - Custodian **12 Monika Megyaszi** - Bedmaker **13 Susie Renshaw** - College Counsellor **14 Sally Sheppard** - Fixtures and Fittings Administrator **15 Hanaa Skalli** - Alumni Relations Assistant **16 Anna Smalec-Luczak** - Bedmaker **17 Chris Turner** - Platewash Assistant **18 Jorge Vallejo Perez** - Section Chef **19 Claire Watkins** - Assistant to the Fellows' Steward



And a fond farewell to...

Sue Mansfield, Secretary to the Fellows' Steward, who retired in April after almost 22 years at St John's.

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

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Eagle Eye

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News Round-up

What's been happening around St John's

Renaissance fashion aficionado's autobiography comes to life in new exhibition

The life and sartorial obsessions of a Renaissance fashion innovator have been reinterpreted for 21st century audiences in a new exhibition based on a unique collaboration led by College Fellow, Ulinka Rublack. Entitled "A Young Man's Progress", the display, at Cambridge's Fitzwilliam Museum until 6 September, offers a modern take on the wardrobe adventures of Matthäus Schwarz, a 16th century gentleman who chronicled his fashion experiments in a document now known as "The First Book Of Fashion".



Sporting Successes

St John's Rugby men's first XV secured the League trophy after a victory against Downing, and the Red Boys went on to win the Rugby Cuppers Final competing against Emmanuel College. St John's Football Team was also crowned Cuppers champions after defeating Pembroke College, lifting the trophy for the first time in 11 years.



► Images: Renaissance Fashion: Maisie Broadhead; Rugby: St John's College/Mark Wells



Film adaptation of novel and new spy drama for St John's graduate

A film adaptation of a best-selling novel by St John's graduate Tom Rob Smith was released in cinemas on 17 April. *Child 44* has been made into a film directed by Daniel Espinosa and produced by Ridley Scott, and stars Gary Oldman, Tom Hardy and Noomi Rapace. The international bestseller has sold over two million copies worldwide and has won several awards. Tom Rob Smith has also created and produced a new BBC Two five-part spy drama, *London Spy*, which will be on TV later this year.

St John's College Music Festival 2015

The St John's Music Festival, a free four-day classical music event, provided a stage for exciting new talent and established performers in a programme that combined famous works with no fewer than eight world premieres. The festival introduced audiences to some of the brightest breaking musical talent in Cambridge has to offer, including violist Julia Hwang. The first year Music undergraduate recently won the Cambridge University Musical Society (CUMS) Concerto Competition, giving her the opportunity to perform with the CUMS Symphony Orchestra in the 2015-16 season.



Details of medieval graveyard beneath St John's College published

Archaeological investigations discovered one of Britain's largest medieval hospital cemeteries, containing over 1,000 human remains, when excavating beneath the Old Divinity School at St John's College, a new report shows. One of the largest medieval hospital burial grounds in Britain once stood on the site of what is now the Old Divinity School. The report marks the first public release of evidence gathered by the archaeological dig which was conducted as part of the Victorian building's refurbishment in 2010-2012, and images of the well-preserved medieval skeletons were made available to the public for the first time.

Professor Hawking-bot: transform! St John's provides venue for Red Nose Day sketch

Stephen Hawking made a special guest appearance in a one-off *Little Britain* special shot at St John's for Comic Relief. St John's College was the venue for one of the highlight sketches during this year's Comic Relief Red Nose Day appeal, starring Professor Stephen Hawking, David Walliams and Catherine Tate. The sketch revisited parts of the College that were used in some of the most memorable scenes from the recent, Oscar-winning biopic about Professor Hawking's life, *The Theory Of Everything*, in which he was portrayed by actor Eddie Redmayne.



► Images: Child 44 Movie Poster: Lionsgate; Archaeology: Craig Cessford; Julia Hwang: Philip Barrett; Stephen Hawking: Comic Relief/Tom Dymond

Having a Ball

The May Ball doesn't organise itself – Ilia Cherezov and Bethan Charnley, President and Vice-President of the May Ball Committee, tell us what life is like behind the scenes for organisers of this popular event.

Not everybody would want the responsibility of organising an event that has the reputation of being "the seventh best party in the world", as allegedly described by *Time*. That's a lot to live up to. But luckily, Ilia Cherezov and Bethan Charnley don't let that kind of pressure put them off.

"It's great to be involved in something of such a massive scale," Ilia tells us. "It's one of the best experiences you can have at St John's."

Attracting over 2,500 guests and student workers, St John's is the largest of the Cambridge Balls. First held in 1888, the Ball originally took place in May after the Bumps. Nowadays, it takes place in June when exams are over, but the traditional name has been retained.

Both Ilia and Bethan were involved in organising last year's Ball, so they knew what they were letting themselves in for: Ilia, a Chemical Engineering graduate, worked on Sponsorship, and Bethan, a third

"It's like one huge Apprentice task!"

year History undergraduate, was in the Sub-Scene team that decorates the Ball, which was "great fun, and an opportunity to be really creative." So why did Ilia want to take on the massive responsibility of being President?

"Because I really wanted to have a say in choosing the soundtrack to the fireworks!" he laughs. "No, in all seriousness, it's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and such a rewarding experience to be able to work with so many talented people. It's like one huge Apprentice task - everyone's time management and project management skills are put to the test! And it's so satisfying when it all comes together; hearing people say that the Ball was the best night of their lives is a great feeling."



Organising the Ball starts nine months before the event. The work begins in Week 1 of Michaelmas Term when interviews are held to find committee members for areas such as Ents, Food, Drink, Employment, Creative, and Ticketing. Once all 15 positions are filled, the first task is to choose a theme for the Ball, and members pitch their ideas to the rest of the committee. "One theme stood out this year, so we all voted for that," Ilia says. "Everything organised after that then has to tie in with that theme."

By the end of Michaelmas Term all committee members have a budget, and that's when the hard work really begins. Members have to hire teams of engineers and designers; celebrity acts have to be booked; security has to be organised; food and drink have to be arranged; student entertainers are invited to attend X Factor-style auditions; decorations have to be made; risk assessments have to take place; insurance has to be organised; drinks glasses have to be counted... all 15,000 of them!

"It's a lot of pressure; people say that this is the best night of their lives, so we need to make sure we pull it off," says Bethan.

"Everything is pretty much organised now, but I do occasionally wake up feeling like we've forgotten something – is the microphone going to work, did we order the carpets..?" Ilia laughs. "All we can do now is keep all fingers and toes crossed for good weather."

As usual, the Ball's theme has been kept under wraps, and Bethan and Ilia won't give anything away. "We could reveal the theme, but we want it to be a surprise. Even when the props are being brought out on the morning of the Ball, people are still guessing. It's more exciting that way," Ilia says. "There are clues in the poster," Bethan smiles.

So what makes St John's May Ball stand out from the others? "It's just the best party, and it's fun and classy without being stuffy," Bethan says. "We try to cater for every taste when it comes to booking the acts," Ilia says. "And we have a great



“Hearing people say that the Ball was the best night of their lives is a great feeling.”

headline act this year. The College is also always lit up so nicely too; we are lucky to have such a great space to work with and it's no wonder they set the May Ball scene in *The Theory of Everything* at John's. So many alumni have applied for tickets after seeing the film."

Even though organising the Ball takes a huge amount of work, students still find the time to get involved. "Everyone just wants to be a part of it," says Ilia. "The rugby team help to build the dodgems, musicians help out, there are freshers and College sports captains

on the committee – we have a fantastic mix of people, and there's a role for everyone. Many fourth year students want to be involved to cap off their time at St John's. The staff are also incredibly helpful, such as the Catering, Porters, and Maintenance teams – everyone is so supportive of the Ball."

Ilia and Bethan will be on duty on the night of the Ball, making sure that everything runs according to plan. And at 6am, as soon as the Ball finishes, it's time for the big clean-up, and St John's is rapidly transformed back into a working

College; Bethan says she made it to bed by 3pm the following day last year. "It's all over in a flash. It feels like it was all a dream," she says.

Does Ilia have any advice to pass onto the next year's May Ball President? "Follow a formula that works, and add your own touches to it," he says. "If it isn't broken, don't fix it!"

St John's May Ball takes place on Tuesday 16 June.

► **Photo: Lafayette Photography by permission of the May Ball Committee, per the cover image.**



Preserving the Past

The ancient meets the modern in the new St John's College Archive Centre, housed in one of Cambridge's most iconic medieval buildings. We take a look at the purpose-built space, and ask the Archivist how the thousands of papers, books and maps in the collection found a new home.

The School of Pythagoras is the oldest secular building in Cambridge and has been in almost continuous use since it was first built around 1200, as a private house. Since then, the unusually-named building, which was owned by Oxford's Merton College until 1959, has been used as a classroom, a theatre and even a dance hall.

After years of extensive restoration, the School has been reincarnated as a state-of-the-art home for St John's College Archives. Tracy Deakin, the College Archivist, oversaw the move of the thousands of papers, maps and artefacts that the College has accumulated over 500 years.

Tracy joined St John's in 2012 and, building on the work of her predecessor, Malcolm Underwood, began a complete inventory and restoration of the College Archives, which contain administrative and historical records dating right back to the College's founding in 1511.

Many of the Archives were previously stored in the less than ideal conditions of the New Court cellars, and were at risk of damage from damp, humidity and mould.



Given that the Archives contain priceless historic manuscripts including the Foundation Charter signed by Bishop John Fisher in 1511, the need for a new place to house them soon became clear.

With the help of a team of eight volunteers working for several months, Tracy was able to re-box and move over 900 boxes of papers, files and records as well as 3,000 maps and plans of College estates and architecture. Each individual map had to be unrolled, measured, and replaced in Archival standard storage, to preserve it for the next 500 years.

Once everything had been carefully examined, catalogued and put into new boxes, the moving process itself began in July 2014, and took over a week to complete. Tracy and Rebecca Watts, from the College Library, moved most of the maps themselves by hand, and placed them in their new home in the School of Pythagoras.

The new Archive Centre provides not only a purpose-built warehouse for the priceless and historic items stored in the collections, with plenty of expansion space for the future, but also features space

for visitors to come and consult the Archives and read ancient manuscripts in comfort, as well as an exhibition area and a large central room, which can be used for teaching, research and public events.

"Pythagoras is considerably better as an Archive Centre than the old facilities we had in New Court, both in terms of storage conditions and for use by readers and visitors. It's particularly nice to have a good wifi connection," Tracy said. "Readers coming to visit frequently say how pleasant "Pythag" is to work in, even if a 13th century stone building can get quite cold at times. It can be hard to strike a balance between the temperature needed for Archive storage and a comfortable working space, but we're getting there."

The exhibition space in particular allows the Archives to be more open and accessible to Fellows, staff, students and visitors than ever before. From an exciting new programme of school visits to University-wide festivals and College poetry competitions, the treasures of the Archives are being seen, and used, by a wide audience including students, staff and the general public. These new

initiatives, led by Tracy and staff from the Library, are raising the profile of the Archives and their excellent resources both within St John's and in the wider community.

Tracy is also bringing the Archives into the digital age, and she regularly features interesting and unusual finds from the collections on the College website. See: www.joh.cam.uk/archives to explore some of the treasures of the College Archives. A few highlights from the collection can be found on page 9.

► All photos St John's College except image of Foundation Charter overleaf: Paul Everest

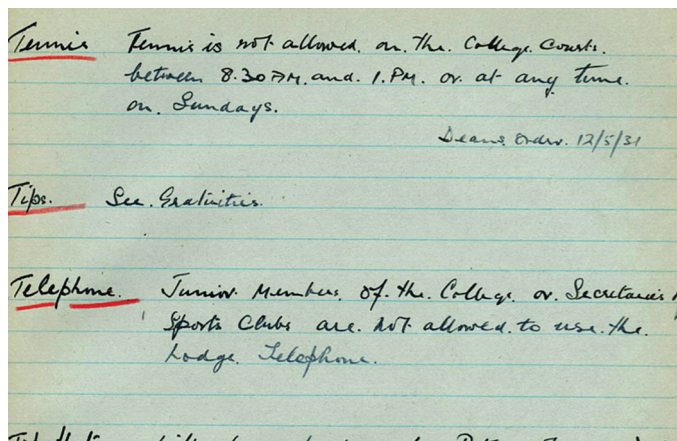


Treasures of the Archives



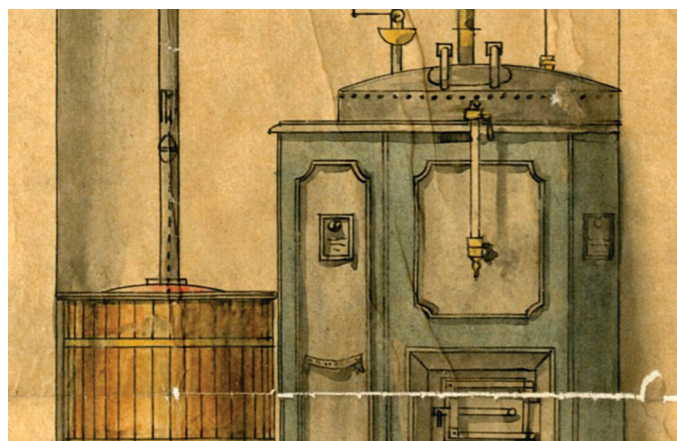
The Foundation Charter

The Foundation Charter marks the official founding of St John's in 1511. It carries out Lady Margaret Beaufort's intentions to found the College, made known before her death in 1509, and is signed and sealed in wax by all eight of her executors. The document converted the former Hospital of St John the Evangelist into the College and required the permission of the Bishop of Ely, Henry VIII and the Pope.



Porters' Instructions

The Archives hold Porters' instruction books from the 1930s and 1940s, which include information on College life, regulations and dress codes. Among the instructions are orders for gramophones to be banned from student rooms, restrictions on swimming in the Cam, and a note that Porters must wear top hats at all times except on night duty.

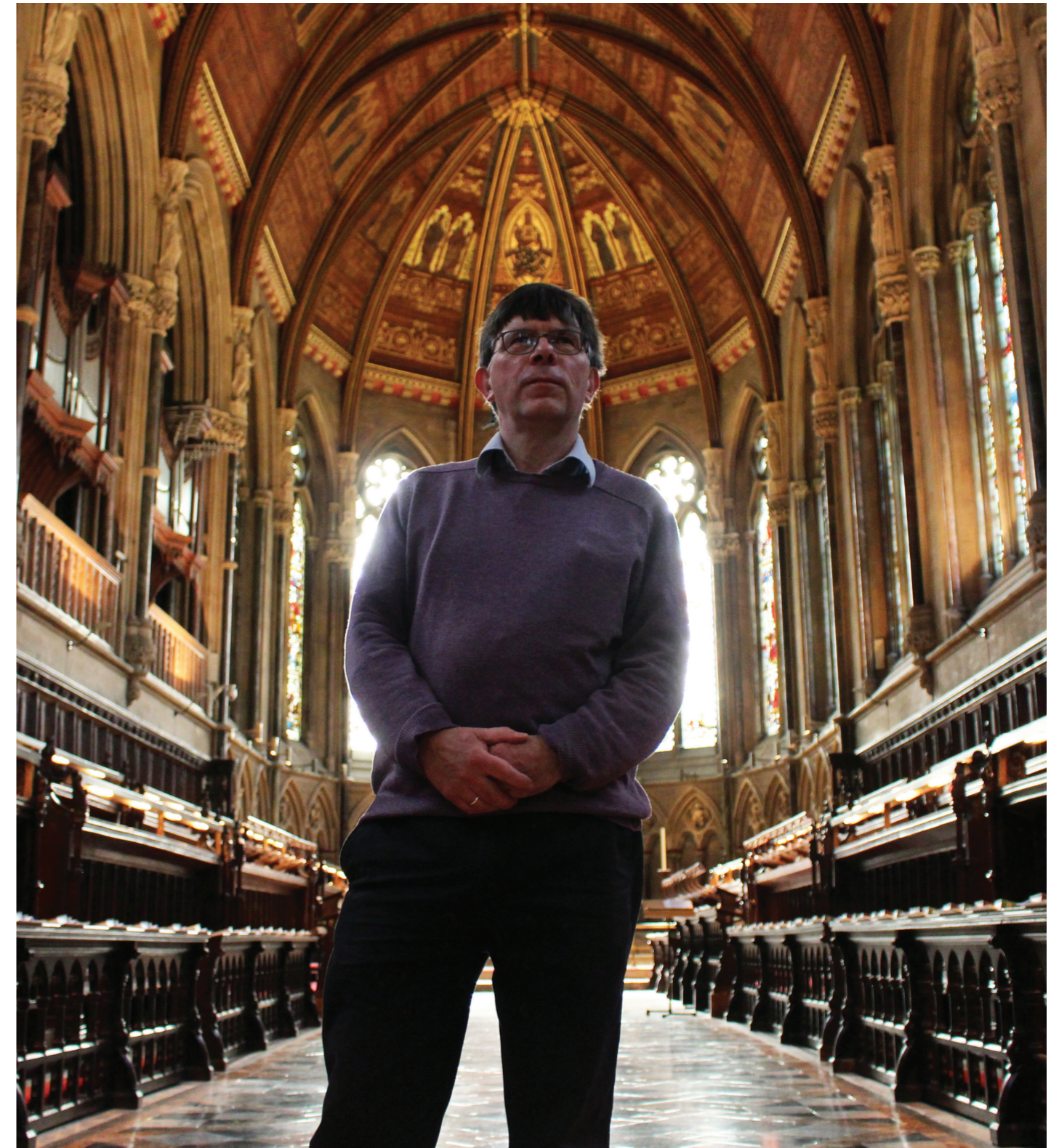


Kitchen Reconstruction

The College kitchens were completely refurbished and updated in the 19th century. The architect, Henry Boyes, submitted detailed plans in 1891. While the kitchens were being worked on, a temporary hut was set up in First Court to provide meals for students, Fellows and staff. Disused flues uncovered during the more recent renovations in 1957 show that the ovens were placed on the south east and south west walls of the kitchen.

The Map of Life

A new book by Professor Simon Conway Morris shows how life is more predictable than we think. Eyes, limbs, and intelligence all evolve according to a pattern, and if that's so, then aliens really should exist.



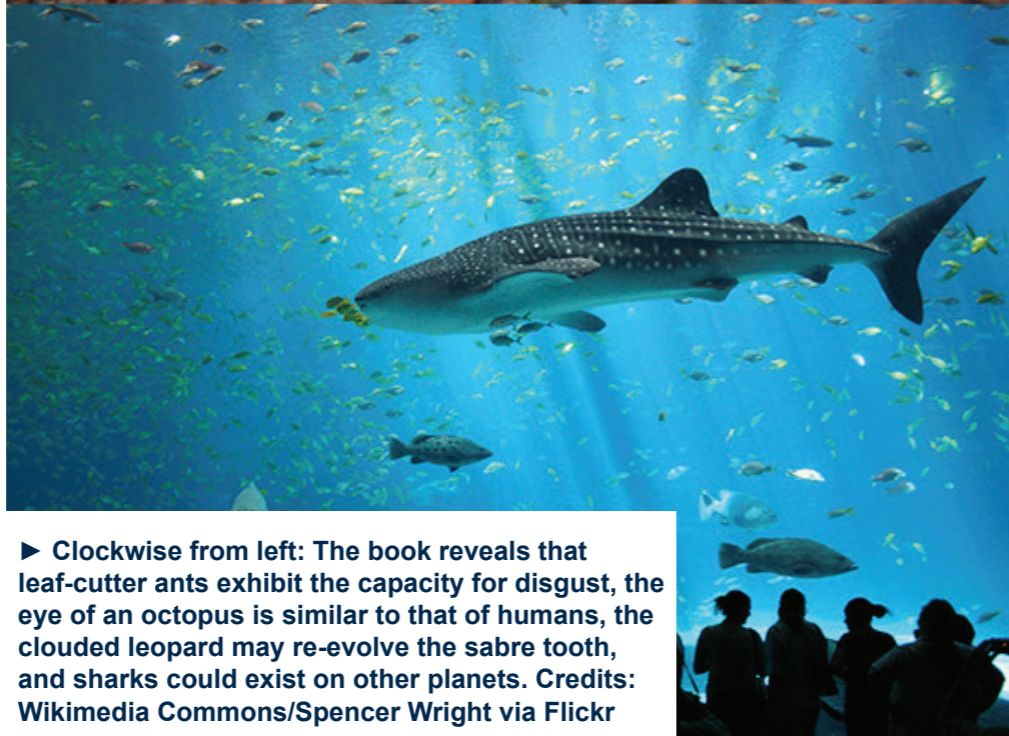
ET hasn't phoned yet, but he should have done. For Professor Simon Conway Morris, it's becoming a serious problem.

Of course, you might be surprised that he's discussing it at all. Aliens aren't usually the subject of "serious" academic research; usually life on other planets is reserved for science fiction writers and the downright paranoid. But think again; Simon Conway Morris is a University Professor of Evolutionary Palaeobiology, a leader in his field, and a Fellow of St John's, and he says that aliens are out there. Or rather, they're not out there, but they almost certainly should be. This is where things get a bit complicated.

Conway Morris has spent nearly all his working life in Cambridge. He arrived at St John's in the 1970s, initially on a Junior Research Fellowship, and for much of that time has studied the "Cambrian Explosion", a significant period in the evolution of life on Earth that began about 542 million years ago. More recently, however, he has looked into a bigger evolutionary question – the importance of something called "convergence".

Put simply, convergence is the idea that different species will evolve similar features independently. "Consider the octopus," Conway Morris is fond of saying; it has an eye very similar to a human's, but not exactly the same. Actually, we know that humans and octopi have a common ancestor – we both evolved from a rather unpleasant slug-like thing about 550 million years ago. This slug, however, lacked many of the features that we now share. So independently of each other, both the octopus and humans evolved an eye which, despite its differences, is very similar indeed. This is an example of convergence.

Writing in his latest book, *The Runes Of Evolution*, Conway Morris argues that convergence has happened, and is happening, everywhere on the planet. Proteins, eyes, brains, the ability to make and use tools, playing games - all of these have evolved independently in different



► Clockwise from left: The book reveals that leaf-cutter ants exhibit the capacity for disgust, the eye of an octopus is similar to that of humans, the clouded leopard may re-evolve the sabre tooth, and sharks could exist on other planets. Credits: Wikimedia Commons/Spencer Wright via Flickr

species. If this sounds surprising, you are not alone. "The sheer ubiquity of convergence has not been appreciated," Conway Morris says. "It is nearly always accompanied by adjectives of surprise – uncanny, remarkable, astonishing."

His book is packed with examples that prove the point. Have you ever thought about the fact that both snails and turtles can protect themselves by hiding inside a shell, for example? Or that hedgehogs, porcupines and cacti all grow

spines to defend against predators? These, however, are only the more obvious examples of convergence. Equally, it turns out that fruit flies get drunk in the same way that we do, and leaf-cutter ants can experience disgust. The clouded leopard, which inhabits parts of Asia, could, over time, even re-evolve the sabre tooth (although sadly it will probably become extinct first).

If this is the case, then, Conway Morris claims, evolution on Earth has been far from random. Even if



“The consensus offered by convergence is that life is going to evolve wherever it can”

life looks as though it has taken the shape it has by chance, it appears to be working according to a set pattern – a "Map Of Life", in fact. "Evolution keeps on reaching the same solutions to questions about how to catch something, how to digest something, how to work," Conway Morris says.

So what does this have to do with aliens? Back in 2010, Conway Morris pointed out that if life evolves according to this map on Earth, it could also do so on another, Earth-like planet – and probably will.

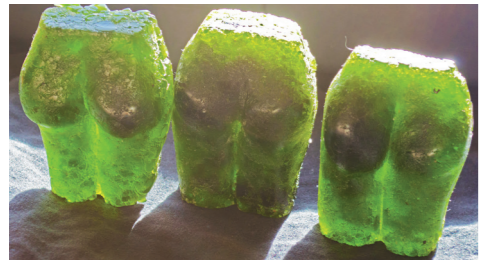
"The consensus offered by convergence is that life is going to evolve wherever it can," he says. Another Earth-like planet would, the book suggests, have things like sharks, mangroves, mushrooms and, eventually, something like us. If you have ever watched *Star Trek* or *Doctor Who* and complained that all the aliens look like humans, you should probably stop moaning, because it turns out that this could well be true.

Since 2010, astronomers have discovered that far more Earth-like planets are out there than they had ever thought possible. "The number is going through the roof," Conway Morris says. "I would argue that in any habitable zone that doesn't boil or freeze, intelligent life is going to emerge. One can say that the likelihood of something like a human evolving is really pretty high."

As the number of these planets goes up, and the likelihood of alien life rises, however, the problem deepens. If they are out there, why haven't we heard from them? "Maybe life itself is difficult to originate, but that seems a tad unlikely," Conway Morris speculates. "It's a paradox. In a nutshell, we should not be alone. But we are."

We're still waiting for ET to call.

The Runes Of Evolution, by Professor Simon Conway Morris, published by Templeton Press.



10-Minute Interview

with Pete Halasovski

Pete Halasovski, Computer Services Manager at St John's and part-time glass artist, talks about making glass backsides, crafting jewellery standing on his head, and ripping off Matisse.

So, you are a glass artist in your spare time. How did you get into this?

About 10 or 15 years ago I realised that I was middle aged and needed a hobby! I wanted a creative outlet, and have always liked glass as a material and the way the light bounces around it, so I decided to try working with it. I did an Art and Design City & Guilds in stained glass, and looked at the work of glass artists in the Open Studios. I then met a woman who ran short courses in glass work and it just snowballed from there.

What techniques do you use?

I use a variety of techniques to make sculptures or jewellery, but mostly fusing and casting. I fuse glass to make 2D items such as iridescent pendants and earrings. Fusing involves cutting out pieces of glass and firing them in a kiln to melt the pieces together. I occasionally use slumping, which is when glass is shaped over a mould to make simple items like plates. I'll be concentrating on casting this year, which is where chunks of glass are melted in a plaster mould in the kiln. This process is a lot more complex, and I learn by experimentation – finding the correct mould size, the right temperatures and timings is an art in itself.

What were the first cast items that you made?

I needed a simple shape to experiment with first of all and, having spent some time studying in life drawing classes, I chose the humble bottom! It took half a dozen attempts to get the process right. I



gave one of my first successes as a joke present to a friend in my local pub. To my surprise people said they would buy them. These sell well as paper weights.

Will you be taking part in the Open Studios this July?

Yes, I've been doing it on and off for five years now, and this year I will be taking part with my wife and daughter and a mate for the first time. My wife makes silver jewellery, my daughter is a multi-media artist and my friend makes items out of reclaimed wood. The studio in Swavesey will be open during the middle two weekends of July. I'll be concentrating on cast works and jewellery, and I'll probably display about 50 to 100 pieces.



Have you made any items to display yet?

I've made some pendants and earrings, but I'll be making more soon. The iridescent dichroic glass pendants sell well as they are bright, shiny and colourful, but they are

not as satisfying to make as cast glass items as there is less you can do with the material. It only takes me around 20 minutes to make a simple pendant, or up to an hour for something more detailed, plus the overnight firing time. I can make jewellery standing on my head! Once I master a technique I like to try new things. I'm currently doing figurative works (people, plants and animals) and I am experimenting with body-casting techniques.

What do you get out of doing Open Studios?

It's a lot of fun, and I enjoy seeing friends and running into people with a shared interest. It's also good to have to work to a deadline to finish a piece. We can get around 200 visitors over the course of a weekend, and sales during the Open Studios will almost cover my costs for a year. It's not an expensive hobby.

What's your favourite piece of work?

It has to be a fired glass figure of a female on tiles. It measures about 0.5 metres by 0.75 metres, and the colours are really intense. I ripped off Matisse's technique of cutting out paper to create collages; I just did it with glass instead!

Would you ever consider doing glass art for a living?

No, because then it would feel like work! I'm not kidding anyone that I'm any good; I do it because I enjoy it.

Pete Halasovski's work will be on display at his studio in Swavesey on 11-12 July and 18-19 July – see the Open Studios website for more information: <http://www.camopenstudios.co.uk/openstudios/560>

► **Photos of glass sculptures: Pete Halasovski**

Awards



St John's shines in restaurant awards

St John's has been granted two Stars in the Sustainable Restaurants Association Awards 2015, making it the first College in Cambridge to achieve this award. St John's joined the Association last summer, and according to Catering and Conference Manager Bill Brogan, becoming a sustainability champion was a great achievement for the College. "It took a lot of hard work to get there, but it was really worthwhile," Bill said. "Paperwork and invoices are checked, menus are looked at, and trading certificates are verified. It's a lot of time and effort, but it's worth it when you get there."



Undergraduate violinist wins concerto competition

Julia Hwang, violinist and first-year Music student at St John's, has won first prize in the Cambridge University Musical Society Concerto Competition. The competition was open to 33,000 students, and Julia competed against five other finalists to win the top prize. Julia will now get to perform with the CUMS Symphony Orchestra in 2015 and 2016.

Johnian awarded Women in Journalism prize

The founder of the Everyday Sexism Project, College alumna Laura Bates, has won the Georgina Henry Women in Journalism Prize for Innovation. Laura, who writes for the *Guardian* about women's experiences of sexism, said that she was honoured to receive the award.

School of Pythagoras wins design award

The 13th century School of Pythagoras has won an award for architectural excellence at this year's Cambridge Design and Construction Awards. This marks the second year running that St John's College has won this award, with the Old Divinity School picking up the prize in 2014.

Fellow wins award for real estate research

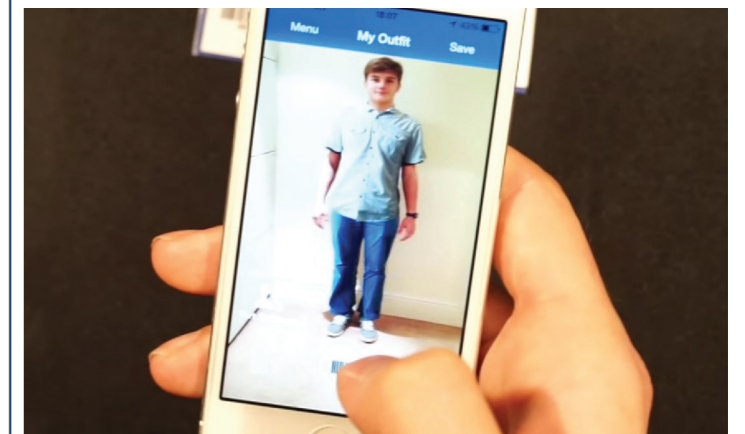
Dr Eva Steiner, Fellow and Director of Studies in Land Economy, has won the Aareal Award of Excellence in Real Estate Research 2015. She won the award for her PhD thesis which promoted a clearer understanding of Real Estate Investment Trust capital structure choices.

Virtual wardrobe app wins first prize in national competition

A smartphone app that allows shoppers to try on different clothes virtually without having to head for the changing rooms has won first prize in a national competition for young developers. The "SmartWear" app allows users to experiment with different outfits while they are shopping by scanning product barcodes. The clothes are then projected onto an image of the user that has been preloaded onto the phone, enabling them to see how they would look in their chosen garment.

Joseph Mambwe, a fourth year Manufacturing Engineering undergraduate, was part of the SmartWear team. He taught himself to code during the summer after his first year at Cambridge and has been creating mobile apps ever since.

Joseph said that he jumped at the chance to compete in the "Appathon" contest when the opportunity came along. "I had a great team with me who worked tirelessly in the final hours to pull it all together and secure us the win," he said.



Studentship awarded to Johnian doctor

Dr Jyoti Nangalia, who studied Medicine at St John's, has been awarded the Johnstone & Florence Stoney Studentship by the British Federation of Women Graduates, in recognition of her work on "the genomic landscape and evolution of myeloproliferative neoplasms".

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