



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Easter Term 2018

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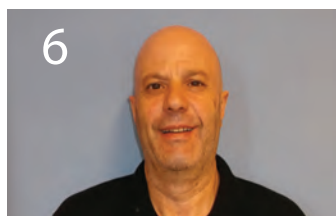
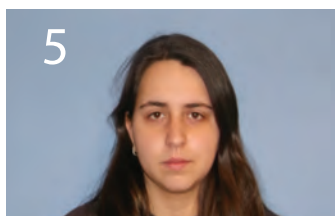
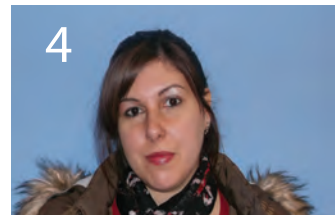
**Behind the Scenes at University
Challenge**

**Sowing the Seeds for the Future:
Inside the College Gardens**

To Innovation and Beyond

10 Minute Interview with Mark Wells

Welcome to our recent new staff!

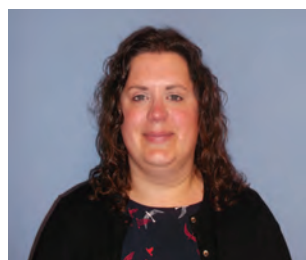


► Image credits: St John's College 1 Ian Todd – Porter 2 Sandra Carter – Property Administrator - Furnished Lets 3 John Slattery – Porter 4 Francesca Carta – Bedmaker 5 Catarina Barroco – Bar Assistant 6 Jaime Pereira – Kitchen Assistant 7 Vasileios Deligiannis – Section Chef 8 Sabina Bryant – Temporary Assistant to the Fellows' Steward

Goodbye to...

Mark Wells, Domestic Bursar, who has left St John's to focus on his writing. Read the interview with him on page 14.

We would also like to welcome...



Jo Tynan, Head of Communications

Jo Tynan has joined St John's as the new Head of Communications. She comes to John's from Newnham College where she was Director of Communications. Jo was a journalist for 10 years – most recently as News Editor of the Cambridge News – before she moved into public relations. She likes reading, socialising, and going out for brunch!



Helen Murley, Domestic Bursar

Helen joins the College with a track record of leading teams across a range of sectors. She has had a wide-ranging career encompassing teaching, chartered surveying, management consultancy and corporate social responsibility. Helen comes to St John's from the British Council, where she was the Global HR Director for four years.

Congratulations to...

Audrey Hewson, Student Services Manager, who reaches 25 years of service at St John's in June!

Correction

In the *Eagle Eye* Lent Term 2018 article about the refurbishment of E Staircase New Court – the 'Wedding Cake' – it was indicated that E Staircase, along with New Court's A and I Staircases, were intended when built to be only for Fellows. In fact it was only the south-facing sets on the first and second floors of all those Staircases that were so intended, with the other sets originally being for students.

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.

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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University Challenge team member,
with mascot Maggie the Eagle. Credit:
St John's College

Back cover image: James Devine-
Stoneman, University Challenge Team
Captain, with mascot Paul Pig. Credit:
St John's College

News Round-up



St John's student part of winning Boat Race team

Charlie Fisher, studying for an MPhil in World History, was part of the winning team in the renowned Boat Race against Oxford. Charlie, who is also a Lady Margaret rower, was in the bow seat of the boat. The Light Blues raced into an early lead, and after the first mile they were leading by two lengths. They eventually won by three lengths in a time of 17:51. Earlier in the day, Cambridge also won the women's race in a record victory time of 19:09.

Genetic adaptations to diving discovered in humans for the first time

Evidence that humans can genetically adapt to diving was identified for the first time in a new study. The evidence suggests that the Bajau, a people group indigenous to parts of Indonesia, have genetically enlarged spleens which enable them to free dive to depths of up to 70m. University of Copenhagen PhD student Melissa Ilardo, supervised by St John's Fellow Professor Eske Willerslev, was the lead author on the paper, published in *Cell*. The findings could have medical implications in relation to the condition known as Acute Hypoxia, which can cause complications in emergency medical care.





Inaugural performances from female a cappella group and College Jazz Band

The inaugural performances from two newly formed College groups took place in the Old Divinity School in March. Aquila the College’s all-female a cappella group, led by Joanna Forbes l’Estrange and comprising staff and students of St John’s, performed in the first half of the concert, and the new College Jazz Band, directed by Ollie Lepage-Dean, performed in the second half.

Symposium on renegotiating development for Manipur held in College

A one day symposium on the subject of renegotiating development for Manipur took place in March in the Castlereagh Room. The symposium, organised by Cambridge University postgraduates Randi Karanzki, Mutum Yaikhomba and Ben Woodhams, discussed the issues currently facing Manipur in North East India, including rising social tension, poverty, underdevelopment, and political instability. The group analysed the issues and opportunities that Manipur has to deal with going forward.



St John’s College Choir tour the Far East

The St John’s College Choir embarked on a tour to Hong Kong and Singapore over Easter. As well as engagements at alumni events, workshops and services, they performed at the Hong Kong City Concert Hall and the Singapore Esplanade, performing a programme entitled *Faire is the Heaven*, including choral works from the 16th century to the present. The Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong, and the British High Commissioner of Singapore Scott Wightman, attended the Singapore concert. The Choir was directed by Andrew Nethsingha, Director of Music at St John’s.

► Image credits: The Light Blues. Credit: The Boat Race; A Bajau diver hunts fish underwater using a traditional spear. Credit: Melissa Ilardo; Aquila, and the College Jazz Band. Aquila credit: James Beddoe; College Jazz Band credit: College Jazz Band Facebook page; Manipur conference attendees. Credit: Dr. Elangbam Bishwajit; The Choir of St John’s Cambridge, performing in the Singapore Esplanade. Credit: James Beddoe.

Sowing the Seeds for the Future: Inside the College Gardens

Louise Hanzlik talks to Adam Green, Head Gardener, to find out what's happening in the St John's gardens this season and to learn about future plans.



“We want to encourage people to use the gardens – they are here to be enjoyed.”

“Nature is trying to catch up – it’s been a long winter. Over the next month or so there will be a surge of plant growth and we will need to keep up with it!”

I’ve got my walking shoes on to explore the 22 acres of College gardens with Adam Green, Head Gardener of St John’s. The sun is shining, and the leaves on the horse-chestnut tree in the Master’s Garden have already quadrupled in size over the last few days. The gardens are waking up after the winter lull.

“There are subtle differences to every season,” says Adam, who has worked at St John’s for the last 33 years, progressing from gardener to deputy Head Gardener, and then to Head Gardener, a position he had held for the last 13 years. “We’ve recently been scarifying and spiking and feeding the lawns. It looks brutal, but we have to be quite rough to get the results. It removes a lot of dead grass and moss, prunes grass roots, and encourages healthy growth.”

The Gardens team, comprising seven gardeners, generally work in pairs around the College, with Adam, Zoe, and Rosie – Adam’s daughter who has been here for seven years – based around the Master’s Lodge and greenhouse. Mick, the Deputy Head Gardener, and David, Shaun and Peter are based in a second location at the Fellows’ Garden; all their tools and machinery are kept in these bases. “We have to have two bases as the areas we work are large and it can be quite some distance if you forget one of your tools!” Adam explains. The outbuilding next to the Master’s Lodge, where Adam’s office and machinery are located, used to house horses and carriages – you can even see the horse collar hooks on the wall. “We have a good team of gardeners,” says Adam. “We had a new injection of enthusiasm three years ago when Zoe and David started which has rubbed off on all of us.”



“One of my main plans is to develop the wilderness area as a wetland and a forest learning area for schools. It will be a nice legacy to leave behind when I retire.”

I’m interested in finding out about new projects that will take place in the gardens, and also the recent projects that are now coming to fruition with the change of the season.

We walk through the Master’s Garden, and Adam shows me the Rose Garden by the river, pointing out the new climbing roses that Rosie planted at the bottom of the arch which will bloom in June. He tells me that the high hedge walls at the sides of the garden have been cut back, letting more light in and also views of the ‘warehouse garden’ in the Master’s Lodge where Rosie, the Propagator, has established a new cut flower garden, and can provide the flowers for the Lodge during special events. Rosie is also responsible for the colour schemes of the beddings plants in Chapel Court, which change twice a year, as well as window boxes and stone tubs around the courts.

Adam takes me over to Swan Island, near the punting pool, where a swan is collecting nest material. New water marginal plants which have been grown in fibrous coir rolls have been planted around the island’s edge to create a new ecosystem. We then head to the peaceful greenhouse area, complete with pond that the gardeners created particularly for encouraging wildlife. Dragonflies, bees and even a sparrow hawk use the pond; it’s one of Adam’s favourite spots. Rosie is in the greenhouse planting seeds – there are rows and rows of plants inside. She tells me that many of the plants in College are grown from seed and she is in the process of trying out new pest control methods such as carnivorous plants to keep pests down as well as wax sprays on others.

I am shown the salvia bed outside Merton Cottage which Rosie has planted, taking cuttings from the botanical gardens. “The bees and butterflies love it,” says Adam. As it has been a harsh winter, he says we will have to see what has survived when it starts to come into flower. He points out the lawn next to the salvia bed, explaining that the grass was almost destroyed by



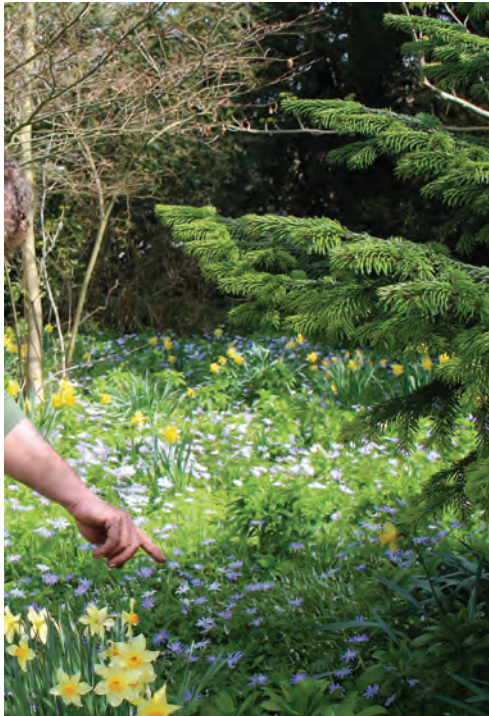
the chafer grub, so they decided to plant a wildflower meadow instead of reinstating the lawn, which will all come into flower soon. “The idea is that perennial wildflowers will get stronger this year as last year it was the annuals that were dominant. It will be interesting to see what we get. Grass paths have been laid out so people can walk through the meadow.” He shows me the echiums, which have been planted outside Merton Hall. “We’ve planted eight of



these. They are small right now, but over the summer they will grow to about six or eight feet and become smothered in tiny flowers, like giant bee larders.”

Adam takes me through the Spinney area, between the Scholars’ Garden and Cripps, and I can smell a familiar scent. “That’s the wild garlic, growing over there - Rosie has made pesto with it,” smiles Adam.

“We used to stripe this area with a lawn – we’d cut it weekly with a cylinder mower – we were young and a little fitter then, but we now leave it all summer, and cut it once. This is full of cow parsley in May, and we are



adding bulbs; we've planted lots of daffodils." He shows me the wood anemones and the pretty purple snake's-head fritillaries growing there.

Adam tells me that they will soon be carrying out a project to drop the sides of the brook. At certain points they will take away concrete and add water marginals, developing a new eco system, and add gradients to allow wildlife to come and go. In the past, creatures like hedgehogs have fallen in and these alterations will help them to escape to safety.

"The Fellows' Garden houses one of the largest wild collections of martagon lilies, or Turk's cap, in the country."



We walk through the Scholars' Garden and cross the avenue to enter the Fellows' Garden and Wilderness where Adam points out the martagon lilies. "This garden houses one of the largest wild collections of martagon lilies, or Turk's cap, in the country." And the garden has another claim to fame - there is a strong possibility that Capability Brown influenced the general design. "It's not a large piece of ground, but it's important. We see plenty of wildlife including owls, green woodpeckers, badgers, muntjac deer and foxes." A wildlife corridor of College gardens runs along the Backs, managed by the Backs Committee, made up of those Colleges. Twenty years ago Adam planted hedges and shrubs along Queen's Road to deaden the sound of the traffic. "In the long term, I'd like to see Queen's Road pedestrianised. Any vehicles that would be allowed, say for delivery purposes, should be electric- powered ones".

We stroll past New Court, with Adam pointing out the herbaceous border that Mick and David look after. "It was built three years ago. This is when it starts to spring to life, and over the coming weeks you'll see plenty of changes." He points out the design is to mirror plants each side of the gateway.

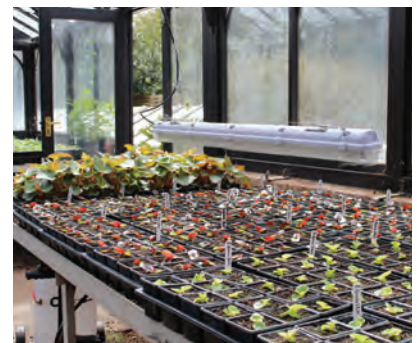
There is a project under way to plant more trees around College. "We have lost so many trees during my lifetime," he says.

The team have planted a new generation of trees along the bank on the far side of the Paddock, and also in the Spinney and Wilderness,

including willow trees, oak trees, pussy willows and field maples. They will be doing more planting in the autumn, but they always have to be aware not to obscure certain important views of the College.

So what other plans does Adam have for the gardens in the future? "There will be quite a few changes with the new Estates Masterplan. For example, the area outside the Buttery is going to be developed, with a herb border and pergola. But one of my main plans is to develop the Wilderness area between the Playing Fields, the brook and the road as a wetland and a forest learning area for schools, with a dipping pond, bee hives, water marginal plants, rushes, forest bulbs, a bridge from the St John's School side, and new trees. I've wanted to do this for a while, and the plans have been given the go-ahead so we just need to look at costings, but we hope to have action within two years. It will be a nice legacy to leave behind when I retire.

"The gardens mean a lot to us. They feel like they are our gardens, so we want to do the best job that we can. We want to encourage people to use the gardens - they are here to be enjoyed."



► **Image credits: All images credited to St John's College. The Wren Bridge border, and the Bridge of Sighs; Rosie planting seedlings in the greenhouse; Adam pointing out the martagon lilies in the Fellows' Garden; Echium outside Merton Hall; Merton Hall and the wildflower garden; Plants growing in the greenhouse.**

Behind the Scenes at University Challenge

This year four St John's students made history by becoming the first representatives of St John's College to win University Challenge. Hazel Lawrence speaks to them to find out how they prepared, and what it was like to win the show.



It is Monday 23 April 2018 and Jeremy Paxman is relentlessly firing notoriously difficult general knowledge questions at eight University Challenge contestants. "Ten points for this," he begins, "occurring, for example, in feldspars and micas what, after oxygen and silicone –" but the

final gong interrupts him. As the competitors realise the round is over, one of them, Rosie McKeown, looks at her teammates mouth open wide in shock and excitement at what has just happened. Meanwhile in a packed lecture theatre in Cambridge, more than 200 students and staff of St John's

College let out an almighty cheer. This is no ordinary round of University Challenge; it is the 2018 final, and St John's College, Cambridge have just won its first ever University Challenge title after narrowly beating Merton College, Oxford, 145-100.

For those watching the final in the Old Divinity School that night, it was the dramatic end to a journey that began more than six months earlier in October 2017. This journey, however, is short in comparison to the contestants' involvement with the show. The winning team from St John's included PhD students James Devine-Stoneman and John-Clark Levin, and undergraduates (at the time of filming) Rosie McKeown and Matt Hazell. For at least two of the winning team members from St John's, Rosie and Matt, their University Challenge preparation started by regularly watching the show as children. Rosie started watching the programme with her father at the age of 11 and said that ever since then it was her "dream" to be on the show.

Things played out very differently for American team member John-Clark, who had never heard of University Challenge until he was studying for his Masters at Harvard. He had, however, already caught the TV-quiz show bug and had appeared on the long-running US quiz show *Jeopardy!* It was this appearance that inspired his UK-raised classmate to suggest he check out University Challenge on YouTube. The first episode he came across featured the 2013 St John's team, captained by Anna Stansbury, and by the time he started his PhD at St John's he was keen to try to get involved.



The process of team selection is overseen by the JCR, and this year's trials were run by the Academic Affairs Officer, Alex Sampson. He set an initial written test of 45 questions and invited the best ten back for a mock buzzer round. These ten were then whittled down to five – four team members and a reserve.

Having a reserve is a requirement for all teams applying to University Challenge, just in case someone needs to fill in for another player. Aneesh Aggarwal took this year's reserve spot, and was involved in all their preparation and practices ensuring he was ready should he be needed to step in. He also attended all the programme recordings and was the organiser behind the 'watch parties' hosted in College.

Getting on the show at all is actually quite difficult as the St John's team captain, James, knows far too well. This series marks the fourth time he had been a member of a St John's College team that auditioned to be on the show, and his first time getting through to the televised rounds.

However, making it onto University Challenge is no guarantee of how well you will do. What you cannot predict is the strength of your opponents, or whether the questions will work in your favour. At the start of their University Challenge journey, the St John's team had little idea they would go all the way to the final, and they initially thought their biggest rivals would be Corpus Christi College Cambridge. "We had played against them in some practice rounds and the matches were usually very close," said Matt. They met Corpus Christi early on in round two, and soon discovered that their worries were unfounded – St John's won 285-80. James said this moment was very significant for the team: "Drawing against Corpus Christi in the second round was make or break for us; and after a thumping victory we started to see ourselves as contenders."

By the time they made it to the final the St John's team had an unbroken winning streak, having seen off teams from the University of St Andrews, Ulster University, Newcastle University, and the University of Edinburgh. Despite their previous victories they all knew that Merton College,





Oxford, would be incredibly tough opponents. "As is often the case on University Challenge, we liked them as people and feared them as quizzers," said Rosie. "We walked into the studio for the last time with a certain amount of trepidation."

Even though he was the most experienced TV-quizzier on the team, for John-Clark the final was still a big deal: "Before the final, I was literally doubled over with tension. Matt leaned over into my field of view and asked very tenderly whether I was okay, but once the recording began the gameplay was so fast and intense that there was literally no time to be nervous. We could see the trophy sitting there to the left in our peripheral vision, but we didn't have even the faintest sense of confidence that we'd won until the gong actually sounded."

The performance of the team, and their win, is now common knowledge (particularly at St John's). What is less well-known is the camaraderie and friendship

that can form between contestants of opposing teams. There are lots of opportunities for the teams to talk before, during and after filming and to get to know each other. Unsurprisingly all the contestants share a love of quizzes and often get on quite well, even though they are still technically rivals. "All the teams we encountered, including those we didn't play against, were so friendly and so passionate about quizzing," said Rosie.

"The friendships that are formed in spite of the spirit of competition are one of the best things about appearing on the show."

Here are a handful of the University Challenge questions the St John's team got right; can you answer them? (Answers are at the bottom of the page).

1. Which range of mountains gives its name to the language family that includes Nenets, Finnish, and Hungarian?
2. Andrew Johnson in 1865, Chester Arthur in 1881, Theodore Roosevelt in 1901, and Lyndon Johnson in 1963 are the only US Presidents to date to have succeeded to the office following what specific event?
3. What multiple of 10 is the only integer that when written as a word in English has its letters in alphabetical order?
4. Brass is an alloy principally composed of which two elements?
5. Which fictional ship's surgeon sailed on the Antelope and later on the Adventure and the Hopewell? The latter voyage began in 1706 and took him to Fort St George, Tonquin, Balnibarbi, Luggnagg and Glubbudrib.

- | | |
|----|-------------------------------------|
| 5. | Gulliver |
| 4. | Copper and zinc |
| 3. | Forty |
| 2. | The assassination of a US president |
| 1. | The Urals |

Answers:

► **University Challenge credits and captions:** Aneesh Aggarwal, the team's reserve player, with Rosie McKeown, James Devine-Stoneman, John-Clark Levin, and Matt Hazell. Credit: St John's College. St John's with Jeremy Paxman. Credit: The BBC. The Watch Party at St John's. Credit: Jean-Luc Benazet. The team on the Backs. Credit: St John's College.

To Innovation and Beyond

From innocent drinks to new treatments for Alzheimer's disease – entrepreneurs from St John's make a real impact on the world. But it's not always easy to make a difference, which is why St John's is working hard to help the next generation of innovators, Hazel Lawrence reports.



Although the media often make it seem that quirky new start-ups are everywhere, new graduates are far more likely to find employment with established companies.

Dr Sam Cohen thinks this is a missed opportunity. "Today it is far easier for a Johnian to find a job at a large firm than it is to

translate their ideas into a career in entrepreneurship. The scale of this missed opportunity cannot be underestimated." Dr Sam Cohen was recently appointed as the first St John's College Entrepreneur-in-Residence, the first ever College role of its kind at the University of Cambridge.

For nearly ten years, Dr Cohen has been researching the processes

responsible for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease at Harvard and Cambridge, including a four year Research Fellowship at St John's. His commitment to understanding these diseases also extends into his entrepreneurial activities – he's one of the co-founders and current CEO of Wren Therapeutics Limited, a University spin-out company developing new treatments for protein misfolding diseases including Alzheimer's.

It is no surprise then that Dr Cohen is so passionate about the possibilities of entrepreneurship, "ideas generated by members of St John's have the potential to transform every area of modern life," he said. There are many Johnians who are already proving this to be true, by turning their innovative ideas into successful start-ups. Johnian entrepreneurs can be found running companies in a wide variety of sectors, from healthcare to phone apps.

"Ideas generated by members of St John's have the potential to transform every area of modern life." – Dr Sam Cohen

Some Johnian entrepreneurs even used the success of their first company to fund other fledgling businesses. Richard Reed, Jon Wright and Adam Balon co-founded the hugely successful drinks company innocent. When 90 per cent of the business was sold for more than half a billion dollars to Coca Cola in 2013, they founded the venture capitalist fund JamJar Investments. It's since helped more than thirty businesses, including Deliveroo and Graze.

Despite these success stories, starting a company or launching a product can still seem incredibly daunting, and as Dr Cohen puts it, "many potentially ground-breaking ideas still remain unfulfilled." The role of Entrepreneur-in-Residence was created as a way to change this, by empowering College members to develop their entrepreneurial skills.

One of Dr Cohen's roles will be to forge connections between various College groups that want to engage in innovative activities. This includes the recently established Johnian Entrepreneurs Club. The club was started by St John's alumna



Dr Liisa van Vliet and a founding committee of five students - Nawar Al-Zebari, Amrita Mukherjee, Sam Fitzsimmons, Kirsten van Fossen and Rebecca Richmond-Smith.

Dr van Vliet originally noticed the need for a College entrepreneurial support system when she became involved with a University-wide competition in which students presented, and were judged on, their business plans. "It became clear that a lot of participants were unprepared for these large-scale competitions and I thought it would be helpful for students to be inspired and receive training and support within the College environment before pitching for funding."

As the founder of her own biotech company, Drop-Tech Limited, Dr van Vliet is well aware that one of the best ways future innovators can learn is from those who have practical experience. The Johnian Entrepreneurs Club offers talks, workshops and personal mentoring for current students from entrepreneurial alumni. Club member and second year undergraduate Pat Singkanipa says being involved has had real benefits for her. "The club has widened my perspective on entrepreneurship," she said, "and introduced me to a lot of future possibilities."

In the summer of 2017, as a celebratory way to end their first year, the club held its own business competition. Much like the Johnian

"The club has widened my perspective on entrepreneurship and introduced me to a lot of future possibilities." – Pat Singkanipa

entrepreneurs, the club members presented business plans covering a wide range of innovative ideas. One student proposed a new way to test for glaucoma, while others presented a business plan for running a popcorn company in Thailand.

These recent initiatives are both part of a longer-standing tradition at St John's of supporting change through business. During the 1980s Dr Christopher Johnson, then Senior Bursar of St John's, decided to undertake the "manifestly risky" task (as he described it in an article in *The Eagle* in 1998) of building what would become the St John's Innovation Centre in Cambridge.

At the time, the concept of start-up incubators was relatively new. Dr Johnson travelled throughout the UK, and to the US, visiting the few Science Parks and Innovation Centres that were already established. It was decided that while there were several Science Parks in the UK, including the Cambridge Science Park, very few of them helped new companies flourish. When it was built in 1987, the St John's Innovation Centre's aim was specifically to encourage entrepreneurs. Located on Cowley Road, the Centre was constructed on land that was used by the army to repair tanks during the Second World War.

The Innovation Centre was a bold project, but the supportive environment it provides is vitally important. While groups like the Johnian Entrepreneurs Club enables future innovators to take their first steps towards establishing a company, the Innovation Centre helps them grow. It now houses more than 30 companies and many prominent start-ups have started their careers at the St John's Innovation Centre over the years, including Owlstone Ltd, Zeus Technology and Autonomy Corporation Plc.

An entrepreneurial career path might still seem risky, but with



"I thought it would be helpful for students to be inspired within the College environment." – Dr Liisa van Vliet

the right support and community networks, it is clear that amazing things can be achieved.

entrepreneurship. If you want to get involved please email Liisa van Vliet ldv20@cam.ac.uk

The Johnian Entrepreneurs Club is open to any current student of St John's College who is interested in



► St John's Innovation Centre credit: St John's Innovation Centre; Dr Sam Cohen - credit: Owen Richards; Dr Liisa van Vliet - credit: Dr Liisa van Vliet; innocent drinks founders Jon Wright, Adam Balon and Richard Reed - credit: Richard Reed.

10-Minute Interview

with Mark Wells



So Mark, you are leaving St John's to move onto pastures new. How long have you worked at St Johns?

I started here as Domestic Bursar just over four years ago. I read Law as an undergraduate between 1981 and 1984, so it was strange returning to St John's 30 years later!

How did you end up coming to work at St John's?

I was taking a career break to do some writing and had a couple of short stories published under my pen name Nicholas Alexander. Anyway, I was down in Cambridge researching a novel set in Cambridge, popped into College to meet up with my friend Chris Ewbank, the Senior Bursar, and was told that the Domestic Bursar, Commodore John Harris, was retiring. Chris asked if I would be interested in applying for the position and help the College develop an Estates Strategy. It sounded like a good fit for me at the time so I applied.

What has been the biggest challenge during your time here as the DB?

My biggest challenge, but also the most rewarding, was developing the College's Masterplan. We had to think through the College's aims over the next 30 years, discussing plans with the Master, Council, senior members of College, Fellows, staff and students.

Why was this important to you?

We have to ensure that we maintain



a strong College community, creating places where people can interact, as well as accommodating as many members as possible on the main site. It came together really well and many other Colleges have been inspired by it. College life has always been important to me, and I can see that it was under pressure, but when John's delivers this plan it will ensure we maintain a really strong community and I'm pleased to have been a part of it.

What else have you enjoyed working on?

I've enjoyed working with the staff, establishing the sort of culture, attitude and behaviours that we want here at St John's. We've run culture workshops and found that everyone responded positively and enthusiastically and are committed to what the College is trying to achieve. In the last 12 months, I feel that we have developed a really supportive culture. I've also enjoyed engaging with the students - the JCR and SBR committees have been terrific over the last four years; they've been very constructive and set a great tone. I've also had a lot to do with the sport side, working with Keith Ellis, the Head Groundsman, and Lance Badman, the College Boatman. With students feeling the pressure more and more, we try to provide an outlet for them away from their studies, and it's made a big difference. We've tracked the academic performance of students who take part in co-curricular activities - from sporting activities to the Choir - and they are over-performing, compared to the College average. It's important that students find something they enjoy doing when not studying.

St John's has also led the way on environmental issues in the last few years such as recycling, sustainable food and energy efficient buildings. We've also helped negotiate energy supply contracts together with the other Cambridge Colleges

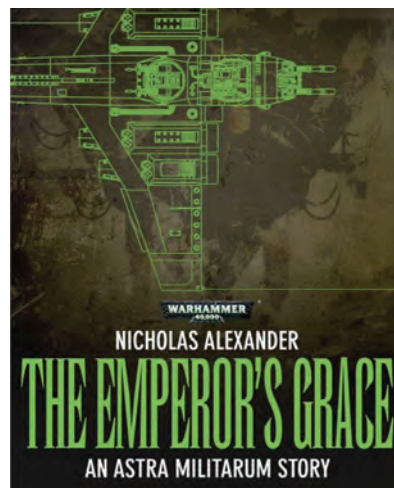
to ensure the electricity we all now use is green energy. We are a College that is always trying to do the right thing, and that's something to be proud of.

What are your future plans?

Although I have been a solicitor and a businessman, my passion is creative writing so I plan to be a writer. I'll be doing some writing courses over the two years, as well as finishing a children's mystery and a fantasy novel, both set in Cambridge, one in a College not a million miles from here! The children's book is a supernatural mystery with ghosts and puzzles to solve in various Cambridge museums. It's going to be a busy couple of years!

If you had to give a piece of advice to the incoming DB, what would it be?

I would say that you have a great management team and staff who all share a positive and can-do culture. They will let you know what the problems are and also the solutions. But I'd say that the main focus must be to deliver the College's Masterplan to ensure St John's will be in the same great shape in 30 years' time.



► **Image credits:** Mark Wells profile: Paul Carroll
The Domestic Bursar in his office: Mark Wells
Book cover: Courtesy of Black Library

Awards



Gold Award for St John's Catering Department

The St John's Catering Team won Gold in the Cambridge Sustainable Food Business Awards 2018. The award recognises the work that St John's College catering department does to work towards sustainability in sourcing local and organic produce, working to reduce food waste, sourcing sustainable fish and Fair Trade-certified produce, and engaging with the local community to make a difference. St John's is the first of the University Colleges to be presented with this award.



Johnian awarded scholarship to study at Yale

St John's alumnus Hamzah Ahmed was awarded the Bass Scholarship to study for a Masters at Yale University. The Bass Scholarship is awarded to one top-performing Architecture graduate from the University of Cambridge. Scholarships such as these, supported by kind donors, enable students who excel to experience

the best teaching in some of the top universities around the world.

St John's victorious in Cuppers final against Queens' College

St John's were the winners of the rugby Cuppers final against Queens' College, enjoying a 35-13 victory. This was the fourth time in five years that the Redboys have won Cuppers. Queens' played a good defensive game from start to finish, despite being under considerable pressure, but John's clinched the

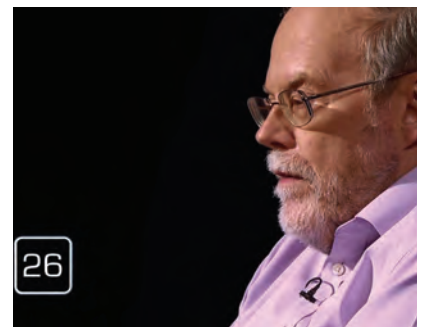


► **Image credits:** Catering Manager Bill Brogan with the Gold award. Credit: Perry Hastings. Hamzah Ahmed, recipient of the Bass Scholarship. Credit: Studio PARTI. Brian Chesney on Mastermind. Credit: The BBC. The Redboys in action. Credit: St John's College Rugby Team.

win after 80 minutes on the muddy but exciting April evening.

St John's alumnus wins Mastermind

Johnian Brian Chesney, 73, triumphed in the final of Mastermind, which aired over Easter, scoring a near record score of 32 points. Brian, a History graduate of St John's, won the final with his specialist round on The Revolt of the Netherlands 1568-1609. Four years ago, Brian was close to picking up the trophy but just missed out due to the number of passes. Brian, an author and retired librarian, is a member of the University of the Third Age in Malvern, which brings together mainly retired people to develop their interests and continue their learning.



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