



EAGLE EYE



ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Easter Term 2022

Happy Jubilee, Ma'am –

St John's and the Royals through the ages

Words apart –

Meet the student who was a global rap star

Secrets of the Neanderthals –

The Shanidar Cave finds separated by 60 years

Welcomes and congratulations

James mixes technology, education and camping for the good life

Gadget-addict James Hargrave, the College's new IT Director, may be keen on smart technology but he is just as at home heading off to Glastonbury in his vintage VW campervan.

Named Margo, after a character in the Seventies' TV sitcom *The Good Life*, the 1978 campervan has taken James to the legendary music festival six times, as well as to Cornwall, Wales, and on trips to the coast with wife Claire, three sons and now with Boxer dog, Peggy. Like the 'go-faster' stripes on Margo's side, James normally lives life in the fast lane, so camping enables him to ease on the brakes.

"We're all technology-focused in my family. I've got lots of iPads and gadgets – I like asking my lights to turn themselves on and off," said James. "But we like going off in the campervan to chill."

Before joining St John's in April, James worked for six years at University Information Services, most recently as IT Business Manager for the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Schools and as IT Director at Newnham College.

"I'm interested in how you can use technology to make things better," he said. "I enjoy technology and I love being able to share with others how to use it to get things done."

James has mostly worked in higher education, including at University College



London, London School of Economics and at Birmingham University. He is a keen volunteer too – helping with IT solutions at Radio Stradbroke in Suffolk, where he lives, and as the founding chair of a multi-academy trust of 10 small, rural primary schools. "I came into it because I was a chair of governors at my sons' school, and my wife, until recently, was a headteacher," said James.

James is already enjoying discovering what the College community wants and needs from its IT. "I'm keen on making the IT experience better for all. For example, making sure staff desktop computers work really well; are more straightforward, easier to use, maybe transitioning more to people using

laptops, docking stations, that type of approach, but more flexible, agile. We want people to be able to work in any space in College, such as the new community hub," said James.

"We are thinking about the spaces we use for meetings and teaching, looking at a standard approach to rooms that people can work in; adding cameras and microphones, so that you can do video meetings in there, and wireless presentations on screen.

"We're lucky that we have already got great investment in things like a really good network infrastructure at the College, and I am really excited about building on that."



Nina makes her debut

Congratulations to **Kristina Frilles**, Functions Assistant, and husband Joel who welcomed baby Nina to the world on 27 April, weighing almost 7lb 3oz.

Welcome to our newest staff

James Hargrave – IT Director (see above)

Chris Pope – Catering and Hospitality Manager (see page 7)

Camille Paris – Launch Project Manager of the community hub (see page 7)

Jordan Toner – Night Porter

Elizabeth Iglesias Granja – Chef de Partie

Caroline Stafferton – Assistant to the President and Dean

Teresa Kaszubowska – Senior Linen Room Supervisor

Viera Senselova – Cleaner

Vanda Csernalovics – Residential Buildings Manager

Kyle Cloughton – Sous Chef

Happy retirement to...

Peter Noble, Labourer, who retired in April after more than 17 years at St John's; **Philip Angier**, Painter, and **Danny Hale**, Carpenter, who both retire in July after more than 25 and 36 years' service respectively.

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

Contents

4-7 News round-up

The latest news from St John's.

8-11 Fit for a Queen

Her Majesty The Queen is the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee after 70 years on the throne. To mark the historic reign of Queen Elizabeth II, we look at the Royal welcome St John's has given to members of the monarchy during the College's first half a millennium.

12-13 From rap star to student

Ten years ago Niyi Adedokun left his successful rap music career behind to study at St John's. Now doing a PhD in Education, he reveals how he has rediscovered his voice and his place in the world.

14 All in the bones

Find out about student Andrew Smith's extraordinary family connection to a Neanderthal burial site being excavated in Iraqi Kurdistan by two St John's academics.

15 10-minute interview with Adil Lakha

Meet final-year student doctor Adil, who is flying high as he prepares to leave St John's.

Eagle Eye

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Front cover: Fourth-year undergraduates Sophie McInerney (Mathematics) and Isobel McIntyre (Engineering) at the College's afternoon tea held to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. Credit: Karen Clare.

Back cover: Niyi Adedokun.
Credit: Nordin Čatić.

Note from the Master



Welcome to the Easter Term edition of *Eagle Eye*, which we publish just as the celebrations of Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee reach a conclusion. Seventy years of service is an extraordinary commitment by any reckoning, even from the perspective of a 500-year-old institution. I hope that you were able to join us to celebrate such a landmark in College, in your local community, or to enjoy the spectacle in London from the comfort of your living room. The immediate celebrations at St John's were more muted because of exams, but later this year we will mark the historic occasion by planting a tree in the grounds, forming part of The Queen's Green Canopy being planted nationwide.

Reflecting on one woman's contribution for almost all our lifetimes, we have our landmark this year for the many women who have passed through the College. Throughout 2022, we are marking the 40th anniversary of the admission of women to St John's as postgraduate students (in 1981) and undergraduate students (in 1982). There are projects underway throughout this year and we have already celebrated

a milestone when we welcomed girls and women to The Choir of St John's. Still to come is a photographic portrait series of Johnian women who are pioneers in their field or for the College, a series of podcast interviews with female alumni talking about their lives beyond John's, and music commissions from female Johnian composers. In July, we'll welcome back the vast majority of those who matriculated in 1981 and 1982. I'm looking forward to hearing their recollections of those first years of the College becoming co-educational.

Before alumni events start up though, the final weeks of term will prove that Johnian life has fully returned to normal, with May Week parties and especially the much-anticipated St John's College May Ball. At the end of June we'll be welcoming families to graduation. It's an emotional moment, watching our graduands process out of College and down St John's Street, but you might have wondered what happens next? One of the innovations forced by Covid-19 was to livestream the awarding of degrees. This is carrying on, so if you are intrigued by this traditional ceremony in Senate House, complete with much raising caps, bowing and Latin, do take the opportunity to watch a little of it. If for no other reason, it's worth seeing the broad smiles on our students' faces as they are admitted to their degrees, the culmination of long hard study and the realisation of a dream.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Hancock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Heather Hancock
Master of St John's College

News round-up

Second platinum accolade

St John's has achieved the top environmental award in the University of Cambridge Green Challenge for the second year in a row.

The annual Green Impact awards encourage everyone at the University to take action collectively to reduce their environmental impact and to implement a range of sustainable policies that lead to positive change.

St John's has been praised for achieving the Platinum Colleges award for the second time – the highest accolade in Green Impact, a United Nations award-winning programme designed by the National Union of Students.

ERC grants for academics

Two St John's Fellows have won funding from the European Research Council (ERC) to invest in their pioneering work in the field of green energy.

Prof Erwin Reisner, Professor of Energy and Sustainability at the Yusuf Hamied Department of Chemistry, has been awarded an Advanced Grant and Dr Laura Torrente Murciano, Leader of the Catalysis and Process Integration Group at the Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology, has won a Consolidator Grant.

Poetry Spring success

Poetry sprang back to life after a two-year hiatus at St John's on 30 April with a free festival featuring prize-winning poets. Poetry Spring was organised by Sasha Dugdale, St John's writer-in-residence, and Dr Mina Gorji, a Fellow at Pembroke College, and was a successful day of discussions, readings and workshops.

Tributes paid to Jonathan, 'shining light' of College community



An 'intellectually brilliant' postgraduate student at St John's has been dearly remembered after his death aged 35.

Jonathan Gilmore was diagnosed with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a progressive muscle-weakening and wasting condition, when he was seven. He came to St John's as an undergraduate in 2005, graduating with a First in Theology and Religious Studies before taking an outstanding MPhil and progressing to a PhD in 2009.

Although Jonathan had been socially very active as a student, he had been absent from College since the start of the pandemic because of the risk posed to him by infection. He continued to write up his PhD dissertation at his family

home in Hampshire helped by research assistants.

Professor Jason Robinson, Fellow of St John's and a former tutor of Jonathan's, said: "Jonathan was a shining light in our College community for more than a decade and a half. He was intellectually brilliant with an extraordinary wit and knack to make anyone laugh when they needed it most.

"He was a dear friend to a great number of students at St John's over the years, and someone you could rely on for steadfast support and wisdom. He never complained about his health, but took every opportunity to bring joy and smiles into people's lives. He will be dearly missed."

Dr Matthias Dörrzapf, Fellow of St John's and also one of Jonathan's former tutors, said he was 'an amazing student, researcher, colleague and friend' and role model, and an essential and inspirational part of the College community. "We feel very lucky that Jonathan had chosen us for his education and for a large part of his life, and we are proud to have been part of his educational and life journey. We will miss him very much."

Jonathan's funeral took place on 16 May and a memorial service will be held for him at St John's in due course. He is survived by his parents Brian and Angela and two sisters.

■ [Read the full tribute on the College website news pages.](#)

Top prize for child cancer scientist

A scientist from St John's whose research identified the origins of aggressive childhood brain tumours has been named The Society of Memorial Sloan Kettering prize-winner 2022.

Professor Richard Gilbertson, Li Ka Shing Chair of Oncology, Head of Department

of Oncology and Director of Cancer Research UK Cambridge Centre, has been awarded The Society Prize, a prestigious \$25,000 recognition given annually to a researcher, physician or team lead who has made a positive and lasting impact in the fight against paediatric cancer.

First female choristers are welcomed to The Choir of St John's



Andrew Nethsingha with the new choir members.

The Choir of St John's has made history by admitting girls and women for the first time – making it the only Oxbridge choir to have both male and female members among the children and the students.

Three girls and one woman joined the internationally renowned choir as full members at the start of Easter Term. Founded in the 1670s, The Choir of St John's has a rich, warm and distinctive sound. Known internationally for its broadcasts, concert tours and more than 100 recordings, the choir is made up of around 20-25 choristers, who join from the age of eight, and around 16 adult choral scholars who are largely students at St John's College.

Like all new choristers, the girls – Amelia, 10, and Ingrid and Martha, both nine, have started as probationers and will begin their world-class musical education by attending choir rehearsals. At first they do not sing in services but will soon join the choristers on the top line.

The girls are pupils at St John's College School and Nina Vinther, the first female alto, is an MPhil student in European and Latin American Cultures at Trinity College. Nina, who is writing a dissertation on Schubert's song cycle *Winterreise* in a warming world, will join the other choral students in the training of the choristers.

The Choir of St John's sings at daily Evensong services and Sung Eucharist on Sundays during university term. They rehearse before school five mornings a week.

The admission of girls and women to the choir means it is unique in a Cambridge or Oxford College – no other choir of its kind combines the voices of males and females in both adults and children. The girls made history once more when they made their debut in the choir's traditional Ascension Day carol from the top of the Chapel Tower on 25 May.

Gig supports Ukrainian refugees in Warsaw

A music festival held in the Old Divinity School on 21 March raised £1,034 worth of humanitarian aid for Ukrainian refugees in Poland.

The Help Ukraine Gig was organised and supported by Jambridge, Cambridge University's Portuguese,

Ukrainian and Polish Societies and music shop PMT, as well as St John's College. St John's postgraduates Leon Zaporski and João Fonseca de Araújo have since travelled to Poland to spend the money raised on items requested by the refugee centre in Warsaw.

Boy fetuses 'more demanding'

Finding out the sex of a baby during pregnancy could lead to better life chances, a new Cambridge study has discovered.

Male baby pregnancies are more likely to result in complications, possibly because they grow faster in the womb and require more nutrients and oxygen than supplied by the mother through the placenta. Now scientists have discovered the sex of a fetus can affect how well the placenta functions, says Dr Amanda Sferruzzi-Perri, a Fellow of St John's. The findings were revealed in two journals: *Biology of Reproduction: A second study* and *Acta Physiologica*.

PhD studies call for action

Two St John's postgraduates have called for new approaches to protecting animal refugees and those in the wild.

Dorien Braam, from the Department of Veterinary Medicine, has called for the lifting of veterinary regulations to allow pets, farm and even zoo animals to be moved to safety in refugee crises, as seen during the war in Ukraine, arguing that a more holistic view must be taken to lives, livelihoods and mental health.

In a separate study, zoologist and fellow PhD student Thomas White argues for more transparency over the cost of conservation projects, after he found they are rarely reported – hampering others' ability to prioritise funds to protect nature.

First Penrose Lecture

The inaugural Penrose Lecture was given by Nobel Laureate Professor Sir Roger Penrose, alumnus and Honorary Fellow of St John's. A full audience of Fellows, students and staff gathered for the first talk in this new biennial lecture series at the College on 9 March. The lecture can be viewed on the St John's YouTube channel.

Solar fuel production breakthrough

Devices made of readily available oxide and carbon-based materials can produce clean hydrogen from water over weeks, according to new research.

The findings, co-led by St John's Research Fellow Dr Virgil Andrei with academics at Imperial College London, could help overcome a key issue in solar fuel production, where current earth-abundant light-absorbing materials are limited through performance or stability. Published in *Nature Materials*, the findings represent a significant step towards establishing a circular fuel economy.

New Acting Vice-Chancellor

The University of Cambridge has appointed Dr Anthony Freeling, a St John's alumnus, as Vice-Chancellor with effect from 1 October 2022.

Dr Freeling is the outgoing President of Hughes Hall and will take up his post on the departure of Professor Stephen J Toope. His tenure is expected to last six months. Between 1975 and 1984 Dr Freeling studied at St John's, completing an MA in Mathematics, an MPhil and a PhD.

Experiment shapes up

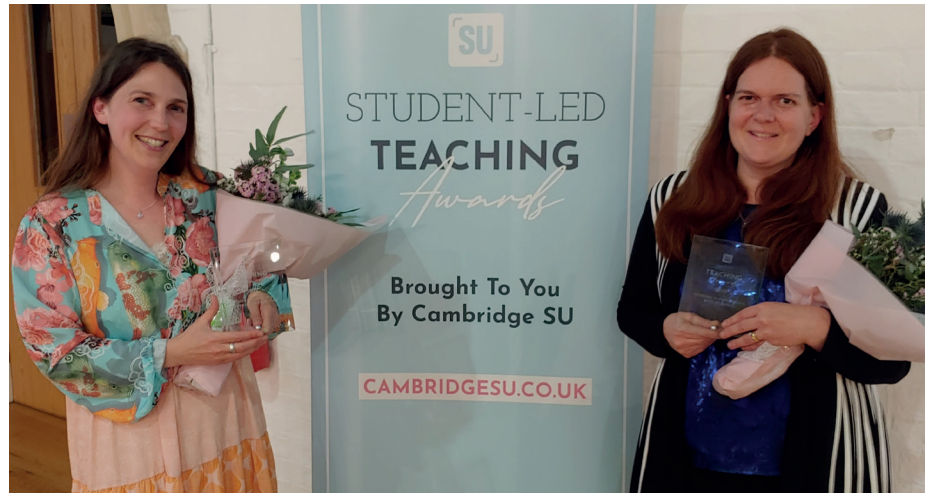
Volunteers tried flintknapping in the Fellows' Garden during a week-long experiment in April.

Victoria Pham, a PhD student in Biological Anthropology at St John's, observed small groups of students who were taught ancient techniques of shaping flint by a professional flintknapper. Victoria said the experiment went smoothly and thanked the gardeners for their 'cheerful and helpful' support.

New Visiting Fellows

Welcome to our new Visiting Fellows, who arrived for Easter Term: Dr Ann Benson, Dr Sandra Booyens, Prof David Cressy, Prof Jim Dalling and Prof Saul Olyan.

'Treasured' College members honoured by students at awards ceremony



Credit: Chris Hose

Rebecca Le Marchand (left) and Dr Jodi Gardner at the awards.

A Fellow and a Library Assistant from St John's have each won an award for 'going the extra mile' to provide support that helps students 'realise their dreams'.

Dr Jodi Gardner and Rebecca Le Marchand were among nearly 400 academics and members of staff across the University and its Colleges nominated in the 2022 Student-Led Teaching Awards (STLAs). Run by Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU), they reward outstanding teaching and student support.

At a ceremony on 11 May, Dr Gardner, a Director of Studies in Law at St John's and a University Lecturer in Private Law, came first in the 'Working in Partnership with Students' category. Rebecca won in the 'Student Support by a Member of Academic Staff' category.

Dr Gardner was nominated for her support, help and encouragement for the One Young World Cambridge Society, for which she is Senior Treasurer and Faculty of Law Representative. The society is a new think-tank for young change-makers that held its first student-led caucus at St John's in March.

The nominating student said: "She always goes the extra mile to provide concrete support and suggestions to ensure that we can realise our dreams/goals."

Dr Gardner said: "I was honoured to be nominated for this award, and it was such a surprise to win among many inspiring individuals. Working in partnership with students is the best part of being a Cambridge academic – I feel incredibly privileged to have won an award for doing something that I love."

Rebecca, who said she was 'truly honoured and moved', was nominated for the dissertation and study support groups that she runs. The student nominating her said: "Rebecca once told me that she wished she had had the opportunity to create a space for people to talk openly and freely about the things that were troubling them. I hope this award demonstrates to her that she is already this person for so many people, and we treasure her for it."

Amelia Jabry, SU Access, Education, and Participation officer, said: "It was fantastic to hear the heartfelt statements from the students who nominated them."



Lunch in the Lodge

The Master and Mr Mark Hancock welcomed current members of the JCR and SBR to the Master's Lodge for lunch at the start of term.

Committee members who finished their positions this academic year were also invited.

'The community hub will be a living, breathing space that people remember long after they leave John's'

From the House of Commons to working under TV cooking legend Delia Smith's watchful eye at Norwich City Football Club, Chris Pope knows the importance of good food.

The College's new Catering and Hospitality Manager has joined St John's just weeks after Camille Paris arrived to project manage the mobilisation and launch of the community hub.

Most recently Chris was the General Manager (Residences, Catering and Events) at Murray Edwards and Camille was formerly the Director of Food and Beverage at The Fellows House hotel in Cambridge.

Chris said: "No matter where you are in the world, people are passionate and opinionated about food – we look forward to our next meal, we like talking about what we've had, what we like and what we want next. There's set rituals around food in Cambridge Colleges that put it right at the heart of what a College is about.

"The community hub is an integral part of creating a modern eating and drinking experience for the 21st century where people will do so much more than share a meal – they will collaborate, study, meet friends and colleagues, laugh and cry. The catering staff see people on their best days in Cambridge and their worst. The Buttery, Bar and Café, will be spaces people remember – and miss – long after they leave St John's.

"We are now just months away from opening and so much has already been achieved on the structure and interiors, now the focus is on the detailed planning of how it will operate day-to-day. It will be a challenge to get the food



From left: Jason Barker, Ean Hogg, Camille Paris, Ray Stevenson and Chris Pope.

and drink offering right but it is very exciting too, there's a lot of places people can go just a stone's throw from College but we want people to turn to us first.

"We have an eclectic group to serve – we have everyone from people who are working in manual roles who need the food to fuel them throughout the day, to students who want to grab a quick bite between lectures. What they all have in common is the expectation that the food will be tasty, fresh, balanced and quick!

"I've worked in five-star hotels where customers obviously have high expectations and Delia was phenomenal to work with, she had an amazing sense of taste and could pick out the tiniest missing ingredient in a recipe. In recent years, a trend across Cambridge is that the food in Colleges has had to move with the times to deliver what people want today.

"I've found incremental change is what delivers success, we will work closely

with all the College constituencies to get the food and service right and that is where Camille is already coming in."

Camille, who has a Masters in Management, is responsible for pulling together all aspects of the launch of the community hub in the Michaelmas Term.

She said: "There's three distinct communities in College – Fellows, students and staff. The community hub spaces will bring them together throughout the day in a way that has never quite been possible before. There's so much pride in the way the catering team works that the next steps will be possible thanks to their expertise. The offering in the spaces in the hub will be more varied than ever before, there will be a lot of consultation to get it right, and we anticipate that people will use it in different ways even all in the same day. We know we have to compete with other outlets and we are ready for that challenge."



An artist's impression of the new Buttery.



How the new Café will look.

Fit for a Queen

In 2022, Her Majesty The Queen becomes the first British Monarch to celebrate a Platinum Jubilee after 70 years on the throne. To mark the historic reign of Queen Elizabeth II, Jo Tynan looks at the Royal welcome St John's has given to various members of the monarchy during the College's first half a millennium.



Lady Margaret Beaufort, founder of St John's, belonged to a Lancastrian noble family that had Royal ancestry. She was described by historians as a 'queen in all but name' and by the time she was 13 she had been married twice and had given birth to her only child – a son, King Henry VII, the first Tudor Monarch. Her grandson, King Henry VIII, was best known for his six marriages and initiating the English Reformation, separating the Church of England from the Catholic Church.

During her short time as the second wife of King Henry VIII, before she was accused

of adultery and treason and beheaded, College records show **Anne Boleyn** funded the Cambridge studies of William Barker, who went on to be elected as a Fellow of St John's in 1539.



Two Johnian scholars – Roger Ascham and John Cheke – were tasked with tutoring Elizabeth I when she was a child. Elizabeth was considered to be illegitimate after her mother, Anne Boleyn, was executed when Elizabeth was just two. In 1548 Ascham wrote about Elizabeth that, 'Her mind is no womanly weakness and her

perseverance is equal to that of a man' while, 'She delights as much in music as she is skilful in it'. Elizabeth, famously dubbed 'The Virgin Queen', became the last monarch of the Tudor dynasty when she became Queen in 1558.

In 1564 **Queen Elizabeth I** visited Cambridge for the first – and last – time. She was welcomed with trumpeters and crowds of people lined the streets shouting 'Vivat Regina' – long live the Queen! She dramatically rode into our 16th century Hall on horseback where she was greeted with a long Latin oration. The walls of Hall were decorated with verses written by Fellows and students in her honour.

Queen Elizabeth I may never have returned to St John's, or Cambridge, but actress Cate Blanchett, who played the title role in Hollywood blockbuster *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*, did. She came to College to film a memorable scene for the Oscar-winning movie – when Sir Walter Raleigh threw down his cloak to cover a muddy puddle to save Elizabeth's Royal feet from getting wet.



The **oriel window** over the arch in the north range of Second Court has a roundel of stained glass showing the French princess **Henrietta Maria**, whose engagement to the future King Charles I was signed in the Combination Room in 1624. Henrietta Maria was the daughter of King Henry IV of France and Marie de Médicis. As Queen Consort, she was the mother of King Charles's two immediate successors, Charles II and James II and VII. The latter was the last Catholic monarch of England, Scotland and Ireland until his reign ended in 1688.



Queen Victoria was the longest-ruling British monarch until the current Queen surpassed her in 2015, she celebrated Golden and Diamond Jubilees during her reign. She also wrote more than 60 million words during her lifetime. One diary entry from 1847 details how enchanted she was with St John's, and in particular a rather iconic bridge of ours...

The evening being so beautiful we proposed to walk out, and accordingly at ten set out in our curious costumes: Albert in his dress coat, with a macintosh over it; I in my evening dress and diadem, and with a veil over my head, and the two Princes in their uniform, and the ladies in their dresses, and shawls, and veils. We walked through the small garden, and could not at first find our way, after which we discovered the right road, and walked along the beautiful avenues of lime-trees in the grounds of St. John's College, along the water and over the bridges. All was so pretty and picturesque-in particular; that one covered bridge of St. John's College, which is like the Bridge of Sighs at Venice. We stopped to listen to the distant hum of the town; and nothing seemed wanting, but some singing, which everywhere but here in this country we should have heard. A lattice opened, and we could fancy a lady appearing, and listening to a serenade.

Queen Victoria, Diary (1847)

Eleven years ago, **Queen Elizabeth** and The Duke of Edinburgh visited St John's to mark the College's 500th birthday. With the Royal Standard flying over the College, The Queen visited the newly restored foundations of the original medieval chapel and unveiled a commemorative plaque in First Court. The royal party listened to a performance by St John's College Choir before attending lunch with Fellows and students in the Combination Room.

In the afternoon, The Queen and Duke of Edinburgh joined more than 1,000 students, Fellows and members of staff for a garden party on the College Backs. To complete the day, The Queen cut a special 500th birthday cake and departed the College to avid flag-waving of pupils from St John's College School.



The **Duke of Cambridge, Prince William**, was briefly a student at St John's in 2014 when he took a 10-week course in agricultural management designed to help him prepare for eventually inheriting the Duchy of Cornwall estate from his father. A year later, The Duke of Cambridge returned to College to open our new £2m archive centre. He unveiled a plaque at the School of Pythagoras, an 800-year-old building which now houses the College's historic collection of documents featuring many Royal papers dating from Richard the Lionheart to Queen Victoria. Prince William was elected as an Honorary Fellow of St John's in 2019.



Above: Postgraduate students at St John's enjoying an afternoon tea in Hall to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee. From left, Simon Heuveline, Gergely Flamich, Adria Segarra, Lily McGrail and Alexander Sneyd.

Left: Actor Emma Corrin.



And our Royal connections don't end with the actual monarchy – our acting royalty has portrayed members of the monarchy on stage and screen. **Sir Derek Jacobi**, who studied History at St John's, has played Richard I, Richard II and King Lear in Shakespeare productions and our alumna **Emma Corrin** played Princess Diana in season four of Netflix's *The Crown*. Corrin won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Television Drama Series for the role of Diana, who died in a car crash in Paris in 1997. Corrin studied Education, English and Drama at St John's from 2015-2018.

From rap star to student

Ten years ago Niyi Adelakun, a successful rapper and DJ, left his music career behind to study at St John's. Now doing a PhD in Education, he has rediscovered his voice and his place in the world. Karen Clare tuned in to find out more.

Performing in front of 18,000 fans at a festival and hanging out with the likes of will.i.am and Lady Gaga may sound like a dream come true but for Niyi the reality became very different.

After doing well in his GCSEs, the rap-star-turned-Cambridge student hit some problems and flunked his A-Levels. Leaving his home town of Chelmsford, Essex, for the buzz of London, he began running popular DJ and club nights and making music.

Some of his most memorable moments include giving Lady Gaga her first UK break at one his events – ‘she was so professional, not kooky at all, she was doing sit-ups in the kitchen before the show’ – playing Glastonbury and writing rap songs for a *Big Brother* TV spin-off show about happenings in the Channel 4 house.

Always fascinated in playing around with language, Niyi's rap really appealed to teenagers. “The people who bought my music and came to my shows were often between the ages of 14 and 17. I wrote about gently surreal and ridiculous things in my rap music, the lyrics were quite cartoon-like.

“I had a song about loving poached eggs and having a conversation with a chicken. I had another one about fancying my best friend's mum. They would be stories that to me made a lot of sense, and the only people who really got what I was writing about were young people because they just rolled with my music. They accepted the scenarios.”

After being initially signed by a small record label, Niyi was picked up by legendary stateside label EMI Records and launched on to the world's music stage. But he discovered all that glitters is not gold.



Credit: Nordin Catie

"The first place I travelled was Russia for an MTV show. I was picked up in a long car with a jacuzzi in the back, and guys and girls in there. It was so surreal," said Niyi. "I travelled to 11 different countries, and I was offered drink and drugs. Stuff was often happening all around me but I was teetotal at the time and I don't do drugs, so I was experiencing it sober. It all seemed ridiculous to me."

At one of his shows he met a fan who was a student at Cambridge, who told him he should apply. After taking up an invitation to visit him in Cambridge, the seed was planted in Niyi's mind. But it was another incident that led him down the path that would actually bring him to St John's.

"I was doing music and it was all going fine and then I got mugged on the street, and that's when my anxiety started. It was quite bad and then I couldn't go to shows, I couldn't DJ anymore. I had a big show at King's Place in King's Cross, they had an orchestra ready for me to play music. I didn't turn up because of my anxiety and I was eventually dropped by my record label."

Niyi decided to train as a chef but his panic attacks grew worse. "I went to my doctor, she said, 'Do you really think working in a kitchen is the best place for you if you've got anxiety?' We both laughed and I thought, maybe she's right. That's when I went to evening school to redo my A-Levels."

After getting his A-Levels in nine months, Cambridge was in his sights – and St John's in particular, because of the College's links to the abolition of slavery through alumni Thomas Clarkson and William Wilberforce, whose statue stands in the Chapel. "It was really important for me to see that as an ethnic minority individual because it felt like an environment that I wanted to learn in," said Niyi. "I felt welcome and supported."

"My interview was the most fun thing and it wasn't nerve-wracking at all. It didn't scare me. It felt like this was where I was meant to be. I really think that it was the connection I made with my interviewers, which got me really excited about Cambridge, they understood me."

When he won a place to study Education and English Literature in 2012 his

parents were not surprised. "They are very Nigerian, they were obviously very happy but they were like, 'yeah, you're going to university, of course you're going to Cambridge,'" laughed Niyi. He set about reinventing himself as a student but the Cambridge he had imagined was different to the real Cambridge. He explained: "When I got to Cambridge, it felt like I got to shed the clothes of my old life of being a rapper or a performer. Now I feel like that was a really big mistake. I now think I lost myself, just temporarily. I should have just been me. This is why when I was asked to do my TEDx talk a couple of years ago, I knew exactly what I needed to speak about."

During his degree his mother was diagnosed with a brain tumour and Niyi took a year off until she was better. Returning with fresh vigour and confidence, he completed his first degree and an MPhil and is now doing his PhD in Education, which focuses on disordered eating in boys.

After the first Covid lockdown in 2020 he decided to study part-time to balance the demands of high-level academia with his personal life. In the past six months he has suffered ill-health and chronic pain following the removal of his gall bladder, but said: "The support I've

had at St John's has been really amazing. Things happen in your life, you might have issues or problems, but people here are generally, like, 'we'll support you to make sure that you can do your thing'."

Now Vice President of The Dobson Society, the student Education society at St John's, he has no desire to return to rapping. Instead he is considering a career in education consultancy. Although his separate lives in music and academia may seem worlds apart, they both rely on the power of words. "My favourite book when I was young was the Thesaurus, I kind of get lost in it, and I still love it now. There are just all those possibilities. I have built up quite a collection," said Niyi.

"Another one of my passions is helping people achieve their potential. I get really frustrated when I see someone who really wants to do something but the idea of them doing it is so ridiculous that they don't even bother trying. But it isn't ridiculous at all – it's only ridiculous because it hasn't happened before, like being a rapper and coming to Cambridge."

■ Niyi's TEDxCambridge talk, *The Power of the Anomaly*, is on YouTube.



Niyi's 2012 album, *Great Britain: The Best of 2005-2012*.

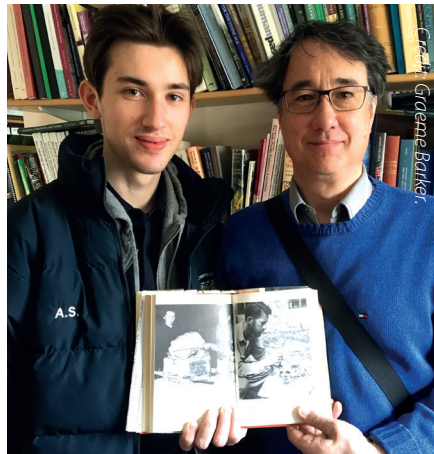
All in the bones

A student's family ties to the discovery of Neanderthal remains more than half a century ago have added another layer to the research of two St John's academics. Karen Clare began digging to find out more.

When St John's undergraduate Andrew Smith spoke to his grandfather, Philip, during a visit to Cambridge Department of Archaeology in April, the call brought together three archaeologists who worked on the same world-famous excavation six decades apart.

In 1957, Philip Smith was involved in the excavation of the Shanidar Cave in Iraqi Kurdistan, famous for the discovery by Professor Ralph Solecki of several Neanderthal burials during his 1951-1960 excavations – including an adult badly injured as a young man who must have been cared for by his community, and another one possibly interred with flowers. In 2017, St John's Fellow Professor Graeme Barker's team uncovered an articulated Neanderthal skeleton at the cave, which is probably the most important Neanderthal find for a generation.

The evidence for the flower burial has been questioned, but the Solecki discoveries have played a fundamental role in demonstrating that Neanderthals, our closest evolutionary cousins, were far closer to us in their behaviour than originally assumed. Solecki was unable to complete his excavations because of political turbulence and, in 2011, Professor Graeme Barker, Disney Professor of Archaeology Emeritus and Senior Fellow at the McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, was invited by the Regional Government of Iraqi



Andrew and dad Douglas with Solecki's book open at the page showing a photo of Philip with the Shanidar 1 skull in 1957.

Kurdistan to re-excavate the cave. He has been directing excavations there since 2015.

When Professor Barker learned that Shanidar veteran, Phillip, was still alive at the age of 94 and that his grandson was a student at St John's, he invited Andrew and his parents on a tour of the lab with Cambridge colleague Dr Emma Pomeroy, Assistant Professor in the Evolution of Health, Diet and Disease at the Department of Archaeology, to view the restoration work on the new skeleton they have found, known as Shanidar Z. Like the 'flower burial', Shanidar Z is approximately 75,000 years old.

Philip, who lives in Canada, joined the lab tour via video call and regaled the group with tales of his time at Shanidar. He had been an archaeology postgraduate at Harvard when he was instrumental in the discovery of the Neanderthal skeleton known as 'Shanidar 1', the badly injured male, and later, 'Shanidar 2'.

The Smith family saw the restoration being undertaken by Dr Lucia López-Polin Dolhaberiague, a leading conservator of human fossil bones based at the Institut Català de Paleoeologia Humana i Evolució Social in Tarragona, who is working with

Dr Pomeroy on the conservation and analysis of Shanidar Z.

Philip told *Eagle Eye*: "I was astonished and overwhelmed to join in the video call from the lab and see Shanidar Z at last. I only wish I could have been there in the flesh. It revived many old memories, ghosts from a distant past."

Grandson Andrew is in the second year of his Natural Sciences degree, focusing on Physics and Maths. He said: "Seeing the new Shanidar Z skull in the process of reconstruction by Lucia and Emma was especially fascinating – it was like a very complex puzzle."

Professor Barker led the team from the universities of Cambridge, Liverpool John Moores, Birkbeck, Oxford, Canterbury Christ Church and Canterbury Archaeological Trust that unearthed Shanidar Z. He and Dr Pomeroy, who is External Director of Studies in Archaeology at St John's, returned to the cave in May for the first time since the pandemic to continue their work.

Professor Barker said: "It was extraordinary to see Philip and hear his stories, and to have him there on screen, looking at the fruits of our labour, our modern work, in light of his own work. It feels as if it has come full circle."

Dr Pomeroy, who is a St John's alumna and a Newnham Fellow, added: "Shanidar Cave is an iconic site I learned about as an undergraduate at St John's and I never dreamed I would ever get to visit, let alone excavate and study Neanderthal remains from there. It was a really wonderful surprise to be put in touch with Philip and to talk to him about his recollections of working at Shanidar Cave in the 1950s, as well as his memories of finding two such important Neanderthal skeletons."

■ Read the full article at joh.cam.ac.uk/all-bones

Credit: Graeme Barker



Andrew's grandparents Philip and Fumiko on the video call during the Smith family's lab visit.

10-minute interview with Adil Lakha

Final-year student doctor Adil Lakha is flying high as he prepares to leave St John's.



What brought you to St John's?

I'm from a working-class background in Lancashire. No-one in my family had been to university and I didn't really consider Cambridge, but my chemistry teacher suggested I apply. So I did and managed to get in; six years later, here I am. I chose Cambridge because of the prestige and the research output and funding facilities. The sport facilities drew me towards St John's, the playing fields that Keith and his family and the grounds team very kindly look after for us. The funding for students from underprivileged backgrounds attracted me too, I wouldn't have been able to do some of what I've done without that. For example, I went to New York in 2018 for a research placement – we were looking for a new treatment for brain cancers. John's very kindly paid for the trip with a combination of the studentship, summer bursary and travel funds.

What do you like about Medicine?

I'm a problem solver, I like to fix things and I like to do things based on evidence, in terms of research trials. If something is proven to be beneficial for a patient, then it will be implemented, especially in something like emergency medicine. I want to do something that makes a difference.

You are an RAF reservist, tell us about that.

I've been an RAF Officer Cadet with the Cambridge University Air Squadron since 2019. I have wanted to be a pilot since I was small so I thought, maybe it is something I could do alongside Medicine – I like to keep myself busy. The aviation has been the main motivating factor, I fly from RAF Wittering near Peterborough once or twice a week. I love the aerobatics, the adrenaline rush of going upside down and pulling 5G and

the technical skill and concentration required at every landing. The RAF has also given me opportunities for adventure training, like skiing in France with the Army and Navy.

Are there parallels between flying and Medicine?

There are lots of similarities. Both require skills such as leadership, resilience and communication, alongside the technical skills. RAF pilots are seasoned pros and I enjoy going on that journey and trying to apply what I have learned in aviation to medicine. A book medical students often read is *The Checklist Manifesto* by American surgeon Atul Gawande. He looked at how aviation is very procedural, with lots of checklists to make sure nothing is missed; a proper safety culture has existed for decades. In medicine, there wasn't that level of procedure in terms of having checklists for everything you do – and to an extent there shouldn't be, there should be clinical judgement. But Gawande pioneered the implementation of checklists in medicine to the point where the World Health Organisation introduced a surgical safety checklist. Emergency drills come from aviation too. There are parallels in emergencies where there is clear preparation for the worst case scenario.

You also have your feet firmly on the ground, captaining the SBR Football Team to victory in the MCR Cup this term. How do you feel?

I was elected Captain in summer 2020, soon after Covid hit. We were fighting relegation but stayed up with goal difference. This season we've been challenging the top of the league and finished second, a couple of points off the top. It's a great team, I'm really proud of them. Without doubt, the highlight has been lifting the MCR Cup in my final game for the club.

What's next, do you plan to stay in the military?

I'll be officially discharged this summer as I leave Cambridge and John's. I will be prioritising medicine for now, although I will probably be a reservist still and I'd like to get my civilian pilot's licence. The RAF don't really take medical reservists until you're more senior in your career, but the Army do, and I will look into that because I want to go into trauma and emergency medicine. I've got a job in Oxford starting in July, but I've got my fair share of John's stash, which I'll be wearing proudly for sure.



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