

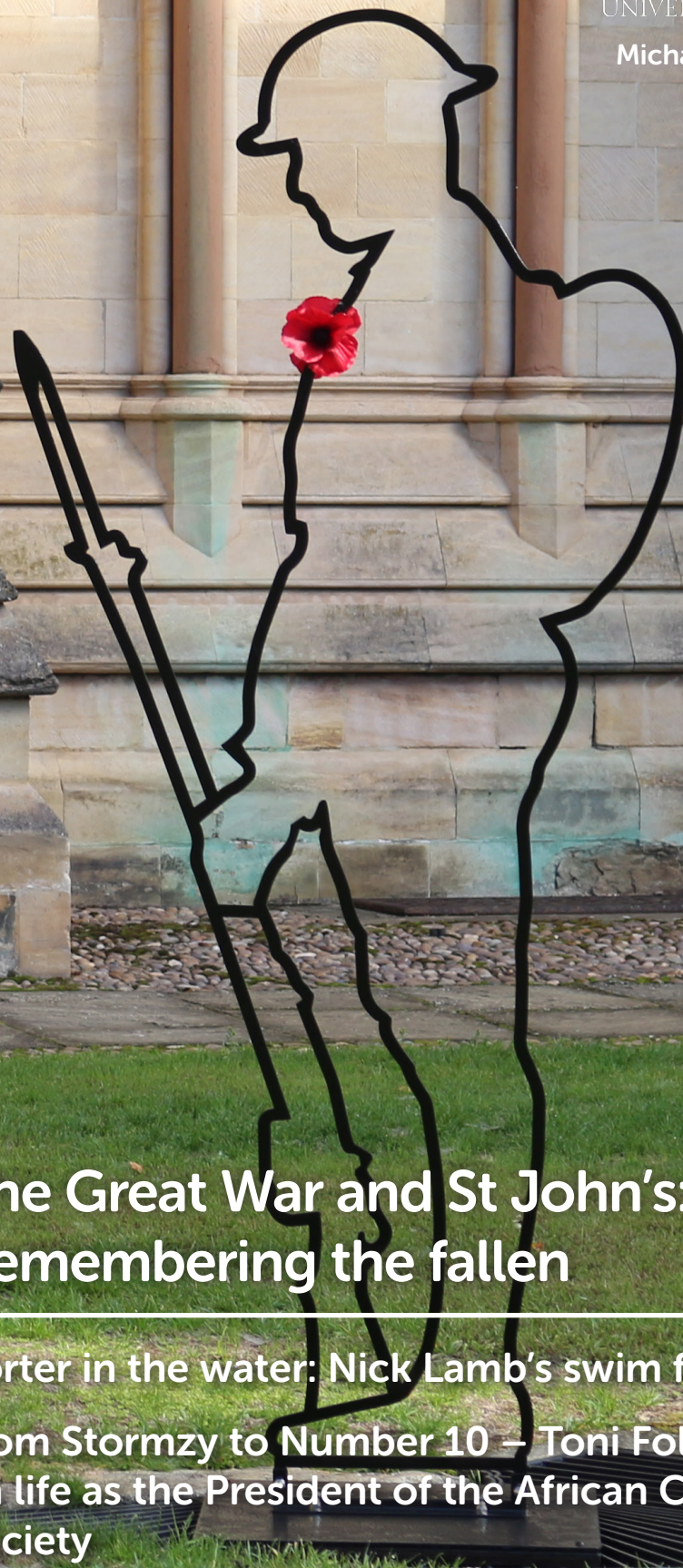
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ST JOHN'S COLLEGE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Michaelmas Term 2018



The Great War and St John's: Remembering the fallen

Porter in the water: Nick Lamb's swim for Alfie

From Stormzy to Number 10 – Toni Fola-Alade
on life as the President of the African Caribbean
Society

10 Minute Interview with Student Services

Welcome

to our recent
new staff!



► **IMAGE CREDITS: St John's College**

- 1 **Hannah Sharples** – Alumni Relations Officer (Publications)
- 2 **Elaine Norris** – Bedmaker
- 3 **Roy Mead** – General Kitchen Assistant
- 4 **Allegra Jaffe** – Chapel Cleaner
- 5 **Amy Reeve** – Head of Annual Giving
- 6 **James Waters** – IT Helpdesk Technician
- 7 **Sebastian Brimblecombe** – Evening Porter
- 8 **Lucy Robinson** – HR Co-ordinator
- 9 **Helen Chalmers** – Admissions Office Assistant
- 10 **Rowan Rush-Morgan** – Library Graduate Trainee
- 11 **Wendy Abrahams** – Gift Administrator
- 12 **Nicholas Pritchard** – General Kitchen Assistant
- 13 **Aneta Lubanska** – Catering Cleaner
- 14 **Graham Cox** – Carpenter
- 15 **Sunny Zeng** – Bedmaker
- 16 **Katharine Wiggell** – Undergraduate Admissions Outreach Officer
- 17 **Tim Waters** – Head of College Buildings
- 18 **Eliot Mann** – Bedmaker
- 19 **Emilio Kyriakou** – Apprentice Chef
- 20 **Jack Bazalgette** – Lay Clerk
- 21 **Benedict Flinn** – Lay Clerk
- 22 **Hugh Cutting** – Lay Clerk
- 23 **James Adams** – Lay Clerk and Choir Librarian
- 24 **Ian Jones** – Academic Administrator

And goodbye and thank you to...

Sandra Rodgers, Deputy Linen Room Supervisor in Housekeeping, who retires in December after 28 years at St John's. Happy Retirement Sandra!

Audrey Hewson

reached 25 years of service at St John's in June and a garden party was held to celebrate the occasion. Read our 10-Minute Interview with Audrey and the Student Services Team on page 14.



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

Contents

Cover Story

The Great War and St John's

2 Welcome to our new staff

3-4 News round-up

Find out what's been happening recently around St John's.

5-7 Porter in the water:
Swimming for Alfie

Louise Hanzlik talks to Senior Porter Nick Lamb about his open water challenge to raise money for a cause close to his heart.

8-10 The Great War and St John's:
Remembering the fallen

Hazel Lawrence takes a look at the devastating effects the First World War had on College life and the Johnian community.

11-13 From Stormzy to Number 10

Toni Fola Alade, second year Human Social and Political Sciences student, talks to Jo Tynan about his role as President of the African Caribbean Society.

14 10-Minute Interview

With Student Services.

15 Awards

Celebrating the achievements of our Fellows, staff and students.

Eagle Eye

This newsletter is produced by:
The Communications Office,
St John's College
Editor: Louise Hanzlik,
lh445@cam.ac.uk
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Cover wrap image: The Tommy in First Court to mark the centenary of the First World War. Credit: St John's College

News Round-up



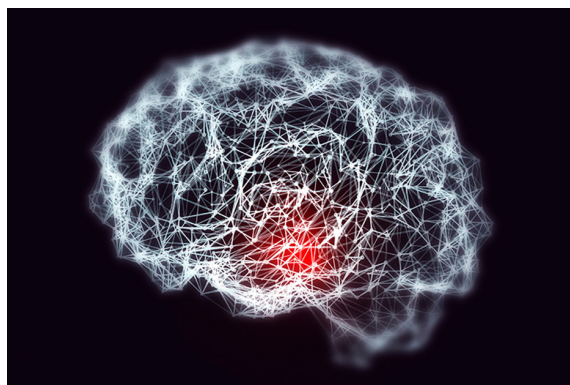
St John's welcomes the Reverend Canon Mark Oakley as new Dean

The former Chancellor of St Paul's Cathedral, Canon Mark Oakley, has joined St John's as the Dean of Chapel. Canon Oakley is responsible for overseeing and managing services in the Chapel, the activities of the choirs, and the pastoral care provided to the College community. He is a Deputy Priest in Ordinary to HM The Queen, and a Visiting Lecturer in the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at King's College, London. Canon Oakley is also a passionate campaigner for social justice and human rights, and an ambassador for the charity Stop Hate UK as well as being a Trustee

of several bodies including Liberty. He is an author, and has enjoyed success with his most recent book *The Splash of Words: Believing in Poetry*, which was described by Poet Laureate, Dame Carol Ann Duffy, as "beautiful and wise". He has also been selected by the Poet Laureate to be one of the judges of the Ted Hughes Award for New Work in Poetry 2018. Canon Oakley succeeds the Reverend Duncan Dormor who worked at the College for nearly 20 years and is now the Chief Executive Officer of Anglican mission agency United Society Partners in the Gospel (USPG).

Cambridge scientists reveal ground-breaking plan to target the cause of Alzheimer's disease

Academics at the University of Cambridge have found a new way to target the toxic particles that destroy healthy brain cells. Researchers including Professor Sir Christopher Dobson, Master of St John's College, and Lund University in Sweden, have now devised the first strategy to 'go after' the cause of the devastating disease, leading to hope that new drugs could be developed to treat dementia. The pathogens – the cause of Alzheimer's disease – have now been identified as small clumps of proteins known as oligomers, and the researchers are now developing a strategy to aim drugs at these toxic particles.



Catering team are the champs at annual staff football tournament



The annual five-a-side staff football tournament in August saw the battle of the Gardeners, Maintenance, Catering and Housekeeping. The sun was shining, spectators were out in full force, and ice cold beers provided by Vinny kept the teams cool. All the teams battled hard – everyone wanted their department listed on the trophy. Mick in the gardening team was outstanding in goal, as was Brianna – the first time keeper didn't let in a single goal in during their final game – but Phil from Catering won the award for the best goal scored. Adam and Tom from Housekeeping won the 'Crawling off the Pitch Award'. Catering emerged triumphant after winning all their games, one of which was a very close match with the Gardeners.

Scientists pioneer a new way to turn sunlight into fuel

The quest to find new ways to harness solar power took a step forward after researchers successfully split water into hydrogen and oxygen by altering the photosynthetic machinery in plants. The new study was led by academics at St John's College including Katarzyna Sokół, first author of the paper published in *Nature Energy* and PhD student. The researchers used natural sunlight to convert water into hydrogen and oxygen using a mixture of biological components and manmade technologies. The research could now be used to revolutionise the systems used for renewable energy production.



St John's graduate features in exhibition celebrating black alumni

A photograph of graduate Justina Kehinde Ogunseitan is on display along with 13 other photos of ground-breaking black students, academics and graduates in the Black Cantabs: History Makers exhibition in the University Library. The exhibition builds on the significant research done by the Black Cantabs Society, which aims to chronicle the history and stories of black alumni at Cambridge University. Justina, who studied English at St John's from 2011-2015, made history by directing, co-producing and acting in the first all-black all-female production on a Cambridge stage with a production of Ntozake Shange's play, *For Colored Girls (Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Enuf)*. Since graduating she has continued to make her mark in the world of the arts as a jazz-singer, theatre director, and award-winning writer. The exhibition runs until 31 December.

Porter in the water: Swimming for Alfie

Senior Porter Nick Lamb talks to Louise Hanzlik about undertaking an open water swimming challenge to raise money for a cause close to his heart.



As the sun came out from behind the clouds, the water sparkled and the rays illuminated the bottom of the canal. Jellyfish. Lots of them. Nick pushed the thought of getting stung to the back of his mind, hoping that his wetsuit would provide him with the necessary protection, and continued to swim as fast as he could along the canal, avoiding the flailing arms of the other swimmers packed in like sardines next to him. The race was on, and he had a personal challenge to meet.

Nick Lamb, Senior Porter at St John's and a familiar face over the last 12 years for those living and working in College, set himself a challenge back in February to complete the Copenhagen Canal Swim, an event which has taken place annually in August in the Danish capital since 2006. But Nick wasn't just competing in the event for the fun of it – he wanted to raise money for something close to his heart.

In 2015, Alfie, the son of Nick's close friends Kym and Mark Field, died when

he was only 36 hours old from a severe brain injury incurred during labour at the Rosie Hospital, Cambridge. Kym had experienced a healthy pregnancy, and the couple were looking forward to welcoming their first baby into the world. There was no specific bereavement support provided by the hospital, but Kym and Mark found out about Cambridge-based charity Petals, which provides specialist counselling to those suffering from loss and/or trauma surrounding pregnancy and birth. Fifteen babies a day are stillborn in the UK, and that figure doesn't include babies that are lost through miscarriage or neonatal deaths like Alfie. The charity

“I wanted to do something to help, and when I saw the Copenhagen swim taking place I decided that this is what I would do for Alfie and Petals.”

guided them through the trauma, and also provided support at the time of the inquest – support which they found invaluable. Nick wanted to take part in the swimming contest to raise money and awareness for Petals in memory of Alfie.

“I have known the family for over 30 years – they are like my extended family; I used to work as a College chef with Alfie's grandad, also called Mark and my closest friend – and I wanted to help by getting the word out about Petals,” says Nick. “Kym has been working hard to raise funds and awareness of Petals over the last two years to try to give back for the support they received – she has raised more than £10,000 – and me and my wife Esther have been along to many of her charity events to show our support. I knew I wanted to do something to help, but wasn't sure what. Me and Esther went to Copenhagen for our wedding anniversary, and when we saw the swim taking place I decided that this is what I would do for Alfie and Petals.”



Before Nick started training he hadn't really done any serious swimming for 30 years. "I had just hit 50, and decided that this was a good way of getting fit," he says. "I had previously been a member of the Territorial Army (TA) so realised just how bad my fitness had slipped and I was piling on weight, and felt that swimming was the most complete way of getting into shape again." One thing Nick did have to learn after he signed up to the race was how to swim in open water – swimming in a canal and estuary was going to be very different to swimming in a pool.

"I liked the experience of open water swimming, but it was difficult not swimming in lanes – trying to swim in a straight line in open water is hard!"

He found out about open water sessions in Milton Country Park, and started training there once a week, as well as doing sessions in his main pool in Nuffield Health Centre, increasing his training to every other day in the month leading up to the event. "I liked the experience of open water swimming, but it was difficult not swimming in lanes – trying to swim in a straight line in open water is hard! I had to learn different strokes – it was more endurance swimming which is much more about upper body strength – and I learnt how to do bilateral breathing to prevent neck strain," says Nick. "Swimming in a wetsuit is different; it provides more buoyancy. I didn't want to turn up to Nuffield in that though!" Nick also trained in the difficult tides at Southend with the Redcaps Open Water Swimming Club who do open water swimming training for Channel swimming. He was always supported during some of his training sessions by a recent addition to the family - his son Alex's cockapoo puppy, Murphy.

In February, Nick set up a JustGiving page to raise money for Petals, but he didn't start publicising it until April – and when he did, the donations came flying in; he raised more than £1,000 for the charity. "It's fantastic that so many people donated. As well as raising money, it's about getting the Petals name out there."

On the days leading up to the event Nick became more nervous, and his training picked up even more. Nick and Esther flew over to Copenhagen



on Friday 24 August, accompanied by Alfie's grandparents, Mark and Charlotte Rivers. Nick recalls: "It meant a lot to me to have them come along, and also because if I needed pulling out of the water after 50 metres, Esther would have plenty of help!"

The event started at 8am on Saturday 25 August with the elite swimmers competing in their heats. The canal had been closed to boats – this is the only time of year when the busy canal is shut down and people are allowed to swim in it; approximately 3,000 people would be swimming in the canal that



day. At 10am the rest of the swimmers begin to compete in around 70 heats, with Nick's race starting at 10.40am. "It's pretty hectic – every five minutes there are 40 swimmers setting off! It takes a while to get into your stride with that many swimmers around you."

Nicks started in front of Copenhagen's Royal Library, nicknamed the Black Diamond, then swam into the choppy waters of the estuary, and finally into the calmer and more sheltered waters of the canal – a swim of 2000 metres, or 1.5 miles. "The weather was good and the water was 18 degrees, and when the sun came out, it lit up the canal – jellyfish and rubbish and all! Luckily I didn't get stung, which is what I was worried about. During the race I zoned out and forgot about the spectators around me. Mark videoed much of my swim, and viewing it back afterwards

"I was pleased with the result, and got a real buzz out of it. It was all worth it, to be able to raise money and awareness for a great cause."



was the first time I had ever seen myself swimming close up; I was quite pleased with how my style of swimming looked."

Nick completed the race in 47 minutes and 9 seconds, and came 1,230th out of 3,000. "I was pleased with the result, and got a real buzz out of it," says Nick. "It was all worth it, to be able to raise money and awareness for a great cause."

Alfie's parents were touched by Nick's gesture to swim for Alfie and Petals. "It's every bereaved parent's worst nightmare

that their baby will be forgotten, and to know Nick has done this to remember Alfie means so much to us," says Kym.

"We were so proud to hear when he completed the swim, and the money he has raised for Petals will help so many families. So far we have helped more than 129 couples in Cambridge to have counselling after their baby has died, which is invaluable. Our mission is to see a Petals counsellor in every hospital to help other couples like us to have counselling after their baby has died,

either before or after birth." Kym and Mark have since welcomed their second son, Barnaby, into the world, and they were also supported by Petals during the pregnancy.

Since getting home, Nick hasn't stopped the training – in fact, he has ramped it up. "In September, I completed a 5k Open Water Swimathon in aid of Cancer Research UK, Marie Curie and the Swimming Foundation. I really enjoyed it – I actually ended up swimming 6K! I'll also go back and do the Copenhagen Canal Swim again; I'll probably do it every year. I'll try to improve my time – the winner completed it in 21 minutes so I've got a long way to go, but I'll keep going. I got a bronze medal, but if you race over seven times you get gold, so I'm aiming for that. And when I pass the finish line, like this year, I'll turn onto my back, look into the sky, and say, 'I've done it Alfie – you'll never be forgotten'".



To donate to Petals, visit Nick's JustGiving page: <https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/nick-lambswim4alfie>

To learn more about Petals, visit <https://petalscharity.org/>



▶ IMAGE CREDITS:

Nick at work at St John's. Credit: St John's College; Alfie Field. "Too beautiful for this world". Credit: Kym Field;

Murphy the cockapoo looks on as another training session comes to an end. Credit: Alex Lamb;

At the start/finish platform an hour before the big splash. Credit: Esther Lamb;

The Home Stretch. In Danish the swim is called 'Christiansborg Rundt' - to swim around Christiansborg. Credit: Esther Lamb;

Swim complete. Time for something other than salt water to drink! Credit: Esther Lamb.

Remembering the fallen: The Great War and St John's College

Hazel Lawrence takes a look at the devastating effects the First World War had on College life and the Johnian community 100 years after the Armistice was signed.

"The War has affected University and College life so profoundly, has taken away so large a proportion of our numbers, has turned the minds of those who are in residence in directions so different from what are customary, and has seemed to diminish so much the relative importance of academic occupations and attainments, that, even though there are a thousand men in residence in the University and a hundred in the College, the nature of the University and College life seems completely changed."

The Eagle, Easter 1915



Students at the Cambridge University Rifle Volunteers Camp in Salisbury in 1905. Front and centre (seated on a bucket) is Dr Roger Brownson, a medical graduate of St John's who was killed in Peshawur, India in 1918;

It is nearly impossible for those of us living today to imagine how drastically the First World War changed the world. The scale of death and destruction was almost beyond comprehension – it's estimated that at least 15 million soldiers and civilians died in the conflict and more than 22 million more soldiers were wounded, while nearly 10,000 square miles of land was laid to waste in France alone. It became known in this country as The Great War, and in Germany and Austria as the Urkatastrophe – the original catastrophe.

The effects of the conflict were felt all over the world and, unlike many of the wars preceding it, the First World War had long-lasting effects on civilian communities in many of the countries involved. Like numerous other communities, St John's College was forever changed by the conflict. Dr Mark Nicholls, Librarian and Fellow of St John's, explains: "The First World War was a hugely traumatic period of College history. The war years were wasted years for St John's, and for the University. Many students died in the fighting and hundreds more had their education interrupted. College became a military base with soldiers and officers training here – St John's operated as part of the war effort rather than an educational institution."

When war broke out in the Long Vacation of 1914, many College members quickly joined the war effort and didn't return for Michaelmas. By the end of 1915 College numbers had dropped from 161 to 116. Life at St John's during the war was therefore much quieter than usual and now with the national backdrop of war, more austere. Extra-curricular activities like organised sport stopped almost entirely except for a few friendly matches between Colleges, and there were no races, Bumps, or inter-collegiate leagues. Unsurprisingly the festivities of May Week were cancelled, and even College societies remained dormant for the duration of the war. Some societies never recovered and disappeared from College life forever, such as the literary society, the Portcullis.

For those who lived in College things changed significantly during the war. In 1916 St John's underwent preparations for air raids (which never came) and installed screens around the electric lighting in the Hall. Further lighting precautions were taken by the town's central electricity station which dimmed the lights throughout Cambridge, including the Colleges, when it was suspected enemy aircraft might be



Troops billeted to St John's pose for a group photograph in front of New Court in their uniform

incoming. According to one student writing in *The Eagle*, the College magazine, it was "impossible to read by this light, and many members of College accommodated themselves with a candle carefully screened in the coal scuttle". Food also became limited when voluntary rationing was introduced in the College kitchens in 1917 restricting the weekly amount of bread and sugar academic residents could consume.

"The First World War was a hugely traumatic period of College history. Hundreds of students had their education interrupted, and many of them died in the fighting"

While staff and student numbers dwindled, new occupants filled some of the emptier parts of College. By the summer of 1915, military regiments had arrived in St John's – billeted there before journeying to France and other fronts. They initially occupied the sports field and the boat house but by January 1916 the military had "requisitioned" New Court and students living there were relocated to rooms elsewhere. College grounds became the place of daily military drills which was, for some, a welcome addition to the strange quiet of the courtyards. An article in *The Eagle* in Michaelmas 1917 explained: "Although it was in many ways unpleasant to think that part of College was – with all due respect – in alien hands, the noisy activities of the troops helped to break

the unnatural monotony of College life at that time."

Life within the College walls became an inescapable daily reminder of the conflict. But by far the most affecting consequence of the war for the community of St John's was the service, and death, of many of its members.

At the outbreak of war hundreds of staff, students and alumni signed up to military service. The first War List of Johnians serving in the military was published in *The Eagle* in the Michaelmas term of 1914 and listed more than 400 names. These included recent graduates, Fellows, and 24 members of College staff including the Head Porter, James Palmer.

In the four years of the conflict, 565 students, staff, and graduates went to war, and nearly a third of them never returned. By the time the first War List was published, three Johnians were already listed as 'killed in action'. Two of them – Donald Rennie and George Evatt who died within two days of each other in November 1914 – were alumni, but the third, Harold Roseveare, was still a student. Roseveare died a month after joining the army on 20 September from wounds received at the First Battle of Aisne. He was 19 years old.

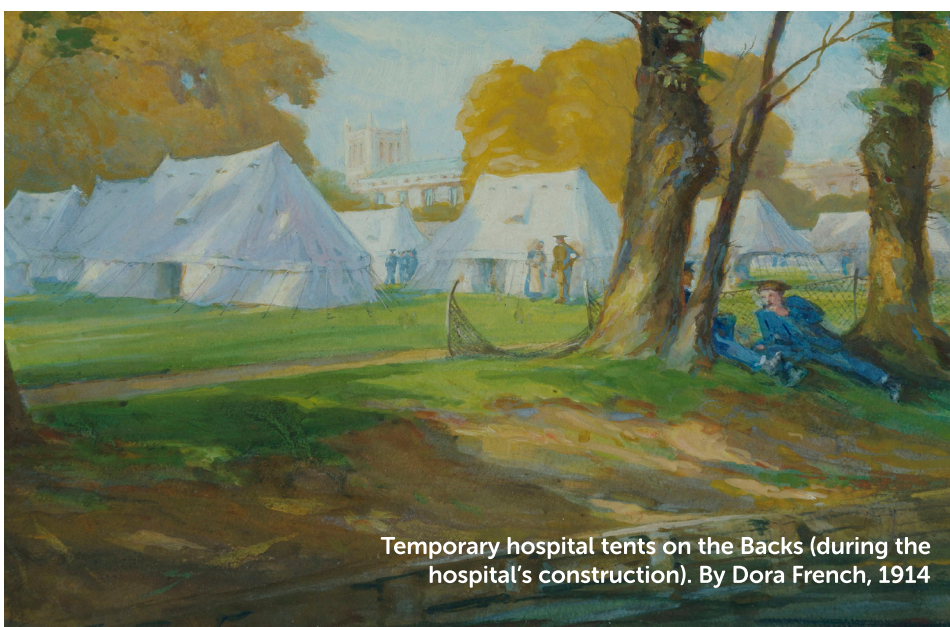
Harold Roseveare was the first of many young students from St John's to be killed in action. Of the 163 Johnians who died in the First World War, one fifth of them were aged 21 and under and died before completing their degrees. The youngest was Oliver Ellis, a pilot with the Royal Naval Air Service, who was only 18 when he was shot down by a German

plane in May 1917, three months after being sent into active service.

Back in College the student editors of *The Eagle* collected all available details of the Johnians who were killed and started publishing a Roll of Honour in each edition of the magazine. Now fascinating historical documents, the Rolls of Honour must have been difficult articles to research and collate. The student journalists would have been covering the deaths of friends, teachers and colleagues, sometimes in graphic detail.

“Besides these two, three other brothers have died for their country, and a sixth one has been crippled for life”

Reading the Roll of Honour reveals the personal stories of the Johnians who died, like the Beechey brothers. Charles and Barnard Beechey both attended St John's in the late 1890s and studied Mathematics. Soon after the outbreak of war Barnard, the eldest of the two brothers, joined the Army and died shortly afterwards in France. Following in his brother's footsteps Charles also joined the army, and served in East Africa. On his death in 1917 *The Eagle* reported “Besides these two, three other brothers have died for their country, and a sixth one has been crippled for life; a terrible toll for one family”.



Temporary hospital tents on the Backs (during the hospital's construction). By Dora French, 1914

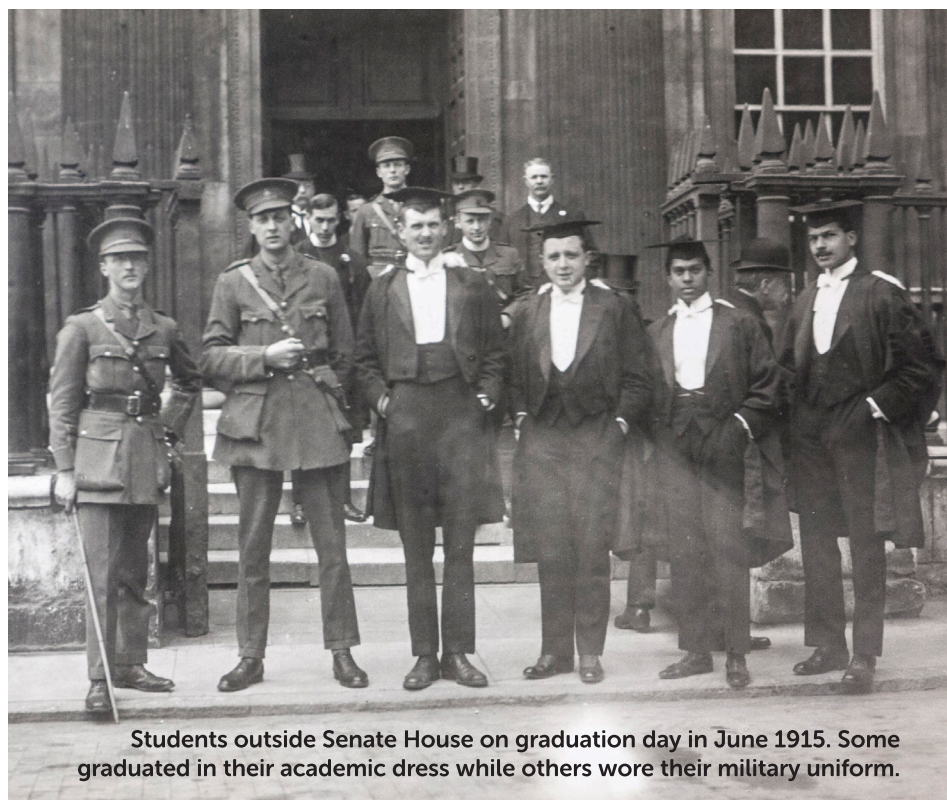
There are many similarly tragic stories detailed in the Roll of Honour. Stories of students like Frank Blakeley who died aged 20, only four days after arriving at the front in Mesopotamia, or Philip Alexander who was stationed aboard the HMS Hampshire and survived the Battle of Jutland only to be killed days later when the Hampshire hit a mine and sank. St John's graduate Dr Roger Brownson (pictured), joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1914 and served in Peshawar, India, for four years. He died on 20 October 1918 – less than a month before the Armistice was signed.

Although the details make for hard reading they can help us get to know the real people behind the impersonal statistics of the war. On 1 July 1916 the

“For two years Allen's friends and family only knew that he was reported 'wounded and missing'”

Battle of the Somme began and the British forces alone suffered more than 19,000 fatalities. Two of those men were St John's graduates – Geoffrey Allen and Denzil Twentyman – while at least 22 other Johnians (including 12 students) died in the following 140 days of the battle. The death of Geoffrey Allen, a Natural Sciences student who became a school master in Dorset after graduating, was not confirmed until after the war. *The Eagle* reported that he was injured and left on the battlefield with a scout. Allen was killed during the fighting by a bomb, but the scout soldier with him was taken prisoner by German troops and was unable to report Allen's death until 1918. For two years Allen's friends and family only knew that he was reported 'wounded and missing'. His name is the final one listed in *The Eagle's* Roll of Honour.

After the war, life at St John's was never quite the same. Degrees had been put on hold for hundreds of students who fought and only around half of them had survived. Hundreds of College alumni had died, as had several Fellows, and the community found itself reduced in numbers in the most tragic way possible. It was a fitting decision then to install a war memorial in the Chapel ensuring the names of every Johnian who died in the war, and as a result of injuries, would be carved in stone in the heart of College.



Students outside Senate House on graduation day in June 1915. Some graduated in their academic dress while others wore their military uniform.

There's never been a better time to be black at Cambridge

From visiting Number 10 as a 'Future Leader' to welcoming BRIT award-winning musician Stormzy to Cambridge, Toni Fola-Alade tells Jo Tynan why he hasn't exactly had a quiet start to the Michaelmas Term.



It is just as well Toni Fola-Alade likes getting up early as just two days into his second year at St John's he was on Radio 4's *The Today Programme* being grilled by presenter Justin Webb. Before sunrise and, even worse, before breakfast.

The only sign that the Human, Social and Political (HSPS) student was at all nervous was when he asked Webb off-air how many listeners tune in to the flagship current affairs programme and the news anchor quipped: "Oh several million." Toni replied: "I wish I hadn't asked!"

Cambridge has been criticised for not having enough pupils from a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds after it was revealed that just 58 black students were admitted on to an undergraduate course in 2017. The figure is actually a record high for Cambridge and represents a third of all black students admitted to higher education in the UK who attained at least A*A*A at A-level (the average grade achieved by a Cambridge entrant). But the University openly acknowledges that more needs to be done to encourage young black students to apply. Professor Stephen Toope, Vice-Chancellor of the University, said: "This figure is not nearly as many as we would like."

Toni was being interviewed by Webb because he is the President of The Cambridge University African Caribbean Society (CUACS) - a thriving community open to students of African and Caribbean descent. He used the opportunity to call for more support to

level the educational playing field for black students and further investment in programmes such as Target Oxbridge, a scheme that gives one-to-one support to black students to improve their chances of success. Toni applied to Cambridge himself after being mentored through Target Oxbridge.



Toni also spoke about being on the selection panel for the first student recipients of 'The Stormzy Scholarship', a brand new studentship scheme which will see four British black students provided with financial support during their degree courses. Double BRIT-Award winner Stormzy is a grime musician and a spokesman of black empowerment and social activism. He is covering the full cost of four tuition fees and providing a maintenance grant for up to four years of any undergraduate course.

Toni explained: "I don't see myself as an emotional person but being on the selection panel for the studentship really brought home to me that funding barriers are a real problem for people. My parents weren't extremely wealthy but I didn't have to worry about money or where things were coming from." Toni's family is from Nigeria, he grew up in Essex and went to Harrow School, the famous independent boarding school where household names like Winston Churchill and Benedict Cumberbatch were educated. The keen rugby player and athlete is very aware of how the label of 'private school kid' can attach itself.



"I have a fascination with fashioning myself into someone who is useful to the world; it is important to me to keep looking forward."

He said: "There is a narrative that says that black people who went to private school can't understand the perspective of other black people from less fortunate backgrounds. I don't want it to be such a divisive issue, no-ones schooling defines them. I have had mates who have been stabbed and I have mates whose dad's are dukes – my friends come from a wide spectrum. I have a fascination with fashioning myself into someone who is useful to the world, it is important to me to keep looking forward."

And the 19-year-old is already building up a quite an impressive list of ways that he is useful to the world. He began his tenure as President of CUACS with an ambitious plan to organise the inaugural 'Motherland' conference. Pitched as an opportunity to focus on Africa and collectively explore a new vision for the 'Motherland', it featured high profile speakers such as Stormzy, fashion designer Ozwald Boateng, and business speaker Adesua Dozie, general counsel at GE Africa.

Held at the Cambridge Union on Saturday, October 20 2018, the society



"We wanted to organise a conference that wasn't academic or policy led – it had to really make people feel like they could be part of something important."

had never organised anything on this scale before. The topics discussed included access to higher education, music, politics and mental welfare. Toni said: "We wanted to organise a conference that wasn't academic or policy led – it had to really make people feel like they could be part of something important."



is always keenly aware of a sense of duty and responsibility to himself, his family and the wider BAME community.

He explained: "As a black man if something goes wrong I'm the one who stands out – the other 15 people there look vaguely familiar. So even though I like to have fun, I am always aware of how I carry myself socially in Cambridge because people remember you."

"There has never been a better time to be black at Cambridge."

He speaks positively about the work Cambridge does to widen participation, and added: "I'm a realist – things will never be perfect. The Black Cantab exhibition in the UL shows that black people have been coming to Cambridge for 240 years. From the age of two there are already educational disparities, for example in America black men are more likely to go to prison than to University so doing some extra access initiatives won't change things overnight. So yes, we need more black people to apply to Cambridge, but we need more black people to be in a position to apply to Cambridge. But there has never been a better time to be black at Cambridge and the Stormzy Scholarships will definitely inspire more black students to consider applying."

So what's next for the student who hasn't yet turned 20? "I haven't ruled anything out yet – perhaps a political role in Nigeria in the future? But first, I need to go and work on my next essay."



The 350 people strong audience travelled from all over the UK to the conference – Toni wanted to make sure the reach wasn't restricted to Cambridge – and people came from as far afield as Swansea, Nottingham and Warwick to attend.

Once the conference was ticked off his list, he headed down to London to Number 10 Downing Street to be formally welcomed as a 'Future Leader' as part of the Government's official Black History Month celebrations.

Future Leaders is an annual publication, which profiles 100 of the most outstanding black university students in Britain. It is aimed at secondary school Sixth-Form, College and University students and is used as a role model guide to inspire and raise attainment. Toni was nominated because of his strong record of being a social activist. He launched an African Caribbean Society with two friends while he was at Harrow and stepped up to represent his fellow students when he was there.

He said: "The school wanted to ban dreadlocked hairstyles and I negotiated a compromise that was acceptable to students and staff; that hair could be kept in its natural state but not past a certain length."

As a Future Leader who came in the top ten of the list of students, Toni will attend various events organised specifically to celebrate black excellence and to forge links between different generations. When asked about his experience as a black student at Cambridge, Toni said he

"We had eight speakers in total and even the Union hadn't had this number of speakers in one go before. People told me it was dumb but I wanted to take the risk.

"Every speaker was a master of their different disciplines and seeing them in a room talking and laughing together was a very surreal experience. The coolest aspect of the conference for me was that even though most people came for Stormzy, he acted as a decoy as they actually discovered all different kinds of perspectives.

"But it is definitely the most stressful thing I have ever done! It is amazing to think at 19 that people were prepared to put so much trust in me. It was a bit of a wake-up call, I have had to take myself seriously and get organised."



► IMAGE CREDITS:

Toni arriving at Number 10 to be formally welcomed as a Future Leader. Credit: Toni Fola-Atade.

Toni and Justin Webb live on Radio 4's The Today Programme. Credit: St John's College

Toni being interviewed on BBC Look East at a CUACS social event. Credit: St John's College

Members of CUACS gathered at St John's for their first meet up of the academic year. Credit: St John's College

Musician Stormzy with Toni at the Motherland conference. Credit: Lloyd Mann

Toni and the famous Boston Ivy in New Court. Credit: Geoff Robinson

10-Minute Interview

with Student Services

We talk to Audrey, Fay, Stephanie and Kirstie in Student Services about dealing with unusual queries and wanting an office pet.

Hi Student Services - introduce yourselves and tell us about some of the tasks you undertake

Audrey Hewson: I'm the Student Services Manager; I am responsible for the management and administration of Student Services.

Stephanie Kingsnorth: The tasks I am responsible for are congregations, applications for sports grants and the Learning and Research Fund, as well as some website administration.

Kirstie van Schalkwyk: I deal with Student Loan Company administration, data management, confirmations of residence, and front desk queries.

Fay Page: I'm also on the front desk. I'm responsible for University and College access cards, ensuring the College holds valid immigration documents for our overseas students, and accommodation queries.

AH: The main tasks we all do as a team are answering general student queries, producing student status letters, transcripts, letters for opening bank accounts and dealing with queries and the payment of College bills. We also organise events such as the undergraduate matriculation and the Admission of Scholars Ceremonies

Michaelmas Term must be a busy time of year for you all with the arrival of the new Freshers – what are the main reasons that Freshers contact you?

AH: It is a really busy time! Freshers have a multitude of general queries when they arrive that we are happy to help them with. This ranges from letter requests (we are currently processing around 30 letters a day, that reduces to around 5-10 during quieter times) to questions about grants that are available, housekeeping in their rooms, and when they can see their Tutor.

FP: There are quite a lot of lost university cards from Freshers, so we deal with those too. International students here on a Tier 4 visa also have to come in to sign their point of contact, once a term. If they don't come in, we have to chase them until they do.

Are there any other periods during the academic year that are busy for you?

AH: The first two weeks of each term are always busy, as is the last week of term



and the one after as everyone is catching up with paperwork. The main exam period is four weeks long and we co-ordinate the exams taking place in College, so that's always very busy.

SK: It's always busy when we have major events as well. There is a graduation ceremony almost every month, with the largest taking place in May (MA day) when there are approximately 140 students, June (General Admission) and July.

What's the strangest question from a student that you've ever had to answer?

AH: We do get a number of visitors (and a few students) asking us how to get into the Library – they can't figure out how to open the door.

Student Services run an Undergraduate Freshers' app – how has this been received?

AH: The app has been running for two years now, and according to feedback it's really well received and the students love it. A number of Freshers have told me that it helped with their transition to College.

What are your favourite tasks to work on?

AH: I enjoy interacting with the students, simple but true.

FP: I like working on the student exchanges – helping students to apply for visas and dealing with travel queries. I like hearing their tales when they return from their travels the most!

KvS: I enjoy dealing with the Travel Awards – I like looking at the students' photos when they come back! Face-to-face contact is something I really enjoy too. It's really nice when a student goes out of their way to say 'thank you' for something you've done for them.



The team (nodding): Yes! It's nice to know our work is appreciated.

SK: I enjoy problem-solving including technical work on the website.

Audrey – you've been here for 25 years now – I guess you've seen some changes in that time?

AH: Yes, there have been several changes – I have seen four different Masters since being at St John's! The main change for me personally was the introduction of the Student Services Office – it has only been in existence for four and a half years, with our office now taking the majority of the footfall from other departments such as Finance and Accommodation, with whom we work closely. In that time, there have been approximately 15,000 student visits to the office. I also remember being overly excited when the cobblestones down the centre of Third Court were replaced with the now existing flagstones (so much kinder to your feet and shoes than cobblestones!).

What changes would you like to see in the future in Student Services?

FP: I'd like to have an online chat function in the future for students who would prefer to use this as an alternative to email.

KvS: I think we should have a Student Services dog or cat – that would be beneficial to students - whenever they felt stressed, they could come in and stroke it or take it for a walk!

SK: And I would like to see the reinstatement of FishCam (*The Student Services office has a calming fish tank*) – that would be great for everyone to be able to log on to see whenever they felt stressed or anxious. We really need to do that again.

AH: I would like to continue to work with students to understand their needs and ensure that we are doing what we can to support them effectively and efficiently.

► IMAGE CREDITS:

Student Services: Audrey Hewson, Kirstie van Schalkwyk, Fay Page and Stephanie Kingsnorth. Credit: St John's College

Audrey with the Master at her 25 years of service garden party. Credit: St John's College

Awards



Mystery shoppers from Visit England give four star Campus rating to St John's

Bed and breakfast accommodation at St John's has received 4* Campus status from Visit England for the third year. This is awarded to educational institutions that demonstrate high standards in their B&B guest accommodation. Visit England was particularly impressed with the cleanliness of St John's bed and breakfast rooms, the welcome from the Porters, the offers available to guests, and the standard of food. Representatives from Visit England came to St John's as 'mystery shoppers' and stayed overnight to assess the accommodation and guest experience.



Master of St John's honoured with knighthood

Professor Sir Christopher Dobson was knighted in recognition of his illustrious scientific career, and in particular, for his ground-breaking research into Alzheimer's Disease. In 2013 Sir Christopher co-founded the Cambridge Centre for Misfolding Diseases, where scientists focus on the origins of neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease. In 2016 he co-founded Wren Therapeutics, a start-up biotechnology company whose mission it is to take the ideas developed at CMD and translate them into finding new drugs to treat Alzheimer's disease. Sir Christopher paid tribute to his friends and family for their "unstinting support".

Professor Eske Willerslev awarded Semper Ardens grant of £2.3m for research into ancient rice genes

Professor Eske Willerslev has been awarded DKK 19m (£2.3m) by the Carlsberg Foundation for the Semper Ardens project 'Uncovering the genetics of rice resilience to environmental stressors: An ancient genomics approach.' The project will map the genome of extinct rice strains with the intention of identifying genes that can be used to make the rice grown today stronger and more resilient. Nurturing these genes and increasing harvest quantities could help fight hunger and increase food security all over the world.



Professor Ulinka Rublack awarded the Reimar Lüst Prize

Historian and St John's Fellow Professor Ulinka Rublack has been awarded the Reimar Lüst Prize, given by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

This is awarded to exceptional humanities scholars and social scientists who contribute to 'the enduring promotion of bilateral relations between Germany and their own country'. Professor Rublack is the chair of the German History Society of the UK and Northern Ireland, a member of the Management Committee of the DAAD Cambridge German Studies Hub, and coordinates regular research exchanges on the history of religious knowledge.



Professor named winner of international prize to honour young member of the statistical community

Professor Richard Samworth, Fellow of St John's, has been awarded The Committee of Presidents of Statistical Societies Presidents' Award in recognition of his outstanding contribution to statistics. Sir Christopher Dobson, Master of St John's, said: "Richard has not only made ground-breaking contributions in his own area of research, but he has made mentoring the next generation of mathematicians a key feature of his academic life."



► **IMAGE CREDITS:** Professor Eske Willerslev. Credit: Mikal Schlosser
Catering Manager Bill Brogan with the Visit England Campus Award.
Credit: St John's College Professor Ulinka Rublack. Credit: Ulinka Rublack
Professor Sir Christopher Dobson. Credit: St John's College
Professor Richard Samworth. Credit: Richard Samworth



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