

THE MASTER-ELECT SPOTLIGHT ON INTERNSHIPS LONG SERVING STAFF HONOURED



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### Welcome FROM THE MASTER



(recently retired Conference &

Events Manager).

#### Welcome to this issue of *Pieces*.

I am now in my sixth and final year as Master of Christ's, and it has been a real privilege to lead our extraordinary College during this time. There have been many challenges, but it has been wonderful to have had a relatively normal Michaelmas term this academic year. There have been many highlights, including the Matriculation Dinners, hosting the

new students in the Lodge and hearing how they were settling in at Christ's, and admitting 94 students to their Scholarships.

In this edition of Pieces, you can learn about some of our recent activities. Dr Anna Protasio tells us how a research project came about by accident when she was by the College swimming pool, and there is a wonderfully uplifting interview with Ms Peggy Vance (m. 1983) and her colleague Ms Karen Paul (Trinity Hall) about the internship opportunity they were able to offer to Sam Smith (m. 2021), which turned into a business collaboration.

Another highlight of the year was the commissioning of photographic portraits of some of our longest-serving staff, who will be known to many of you. We were thoroughly delighted to recognise their devoted commitment to the College, and the stunning collection of portraits, by Martin Bond, hangs in the ground floor of Z for all to see.

You may have seen the press coverage of the wildflower meadow at King's College, and the traditional harvesting carried out this summer. I am proud to tell you that it was our head gardener, Mr Sergio Ballarin, who, with the head gardener of King's, came up with the idea of using shire horses, and was himself involved in the harvesting.

It has been a real treat to welcome alumni back to College for inperson events, and I look forward to seeing many more of you before my husband, Peter, and I return to our home in Australia following my retirement in August 2022. The Fellows have elected Lord McDonald to be my successor, and I know the College will be in excellent hands!

favo,

**Professor Jane Stapleton** 

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FRONT COVER IMAGE: Graduation Day – by Sanchit Agrawal (m. 2017)

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Mr Marco Travaglio, a 4th year PhD student in Toxicology, has been recognized by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Science and Human Rights Coalition for his entry in its annual Science and Human Rights Student Essay Competition. His essay, "Solving the standstill: Right to science as a vehicle to global migration policies" focuses on how science can advance human rights concerns around migration. The AAAS is the world's largest multidisciplinary scientific society and a leading publisher of cutting-edge research.





Two Fellows have been awarded early career awards for their work. **Dr Domen Kampjut** has been given a Life Science Research Award Austria by the Austrian Society for Molecular Biology (OEGMBT). **Dr Chiara Giorio** has been given a Royal Society of Chemistry Early Career Award in Environment, Sustainability & Energy, this was presented for her research on the environmental fate of systemic pesticides.



#### Fellow Professor Mark Girolami has been

appointed the first Chief Scientist of the Alan Turing Institute. The Alan Turing Institute is the national institute for data science and artificial intelligence. They undertake research which tackles some of the biggest challenges in science, society, and the economy, and collaborate with universities, businesses, and public and third sector organisations to apply this research to real-world problems, with lasting effects for science, the economy, and the world we live in.



Congratulations to Mr Jeremy Brier (m. 1999) who has been

Im. 1999) who has been appointed QC. He read English at Christ's, and is a Barrister at Essex Court Chambers in London, specialising in complex and heavy commercial litigation.

#### Congratulations to **Professor Alan Cottenden** (m. 1972), Emeritus Professor of Incontinence Technology, University College London, who has been appointed MBE for services to sufferers of incontinence.

NEW YEAR HONOUR

For the last 40 years Professor Cottenden's research has focused on technology for managing intractable incontinence, working with collaborators in the academic, clinical and industry worlds.





Fellow **Dr Daniel Field** has started a new role as the Strickland Curator of Ornithology at the Cambridge Zoology Museum. A job he has coveted since childhood as is clear in these photographs of Daniel aged 9 and in 2021.



Professor Duncan Bell and Professor Sarah Franklin have both been elected Fellows of the British Academy.





**Professor Sujit Sivasundaram** (m. 1994) has won the prestigious British Academy Book Prize for Global Cultural Understanding, for his book, *Waves Across the South: A New History of Revolution and Empire*.



Honorary Fellow, **Professor Philip Kitcher**, has been elected a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy and has recently been presented the 2020 Carl Gustav Hempel Award. This award was created to recognise lifetime scholarly achievement in the philosophy of science.

Congratulations to **Mr Simon Fairclough** (m. 2002), who has been appointed as inaugural Director of the Centre for Music Performance in Cambridge. The Centre's mission is to support music performance at all levels, in all genres, and for students of all subjects, placing

musical engagement at the heart of the higher education experience that makes Cambridge unique. Its vision is to create a dynamic and inclusive crucible for music performance, which contributes to the wellbeing of students and, through nurturing musical excellence, enriches society at large.

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Following on from their Millennium Technology Prize, further congratulations are in order for **Professor David Klenerman** (Fellow) (pictured right) and his colleague, Professor Shankar Balasubramanian, who have been awarded the 2022 Breakthrough Prize in Life Sciences. They won this award, the world's largest science prize, for their development of next-generation DNA sequencing.



Uncovering the College's connections to transatlantic slavery and colonialism

28<sup>th</sup> October – 11<sup>th</sup> November Open Tuesdays and Thursdays 2-4pm Free entry, open to the public

During the summer of 2021, four student interns worked alongside the College Archivist, **Dr Genny Silvanus**, to research the legacies of enslavement at the College. Their research spanned centuries, looking at everything from eighteenth and nineteenth century slaveholders, to

modern artistic displays in and around the College. Their work was presented in an exhibition, held in the Old Library.



In July, a portrait was unveiled of Christ's alumnus and Honorary Fellow, **Dr Yusuf Hamied** (m. 1954). The portrait was painted by critically acclaimed artist, Mr Tom Phillips, and was commissioned to celebrate Dr Hamied's global humanitarian work.

#### Fellow Professor Susan

Bayly has been awarded a highly prestigious State Honour by the Government of Vietnam. The 'For the Cause of Culture' medal was given in recognition of Professor Bayly's services to leading Vietnamese cultural institutions.



Honorary Fellow **Professor Linda Colley** has been awarded an honorary degree at Oxford University's Encaenia ceremony.



Professor Linda Colley (third from left) with the Vice-Chancellor and other Honorands.

We are sad to announce the deaths of three College Fellows. There will be a full obituary for each in the 2022 College Magazine.



Honorary Fellow, **Professor Phillip King** (m. 1954), died on 29 July 2021. Professor King was a leading figure among the group of young British sculptors known as the 'New Generation'. Professor King was elected an Honorary Fellow of the College in 2002. His sculpture, 'Anglepoise', is situated in the Master's Garden. The Yusuf and Farida Hamied Foundation commissioned 'Darwin' from him in 2009 to commemorate the 200th anniversary of Charles Darwin's birth, which is situated outside the Yusuf Hamied Centre (pictured above).



Senior Fellow, Mr David Yale, died on 26 June 2021. David came to Christ's in 1949 to read for the LLB and was subsequently elected a Research Fellow in 1950. He also became

Director of Studies, a Tutor, and was then appointed a College lecturer in 1952 until his promotion to a Readership in 1969, a role he held for 23 years. He is fondly remembered by generations of Christ's Law students.

Fellow, **Dr Richard Axton** (m. 1959), died on 16 November 2021. Richard was admitted to the Fellowship in 1964 and became a College Lecturer in English in 1966. In June 2021, Richard was awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to Heritage and Environment in Sark.



**TELEPHONE CAMPAIGN 2022** 



This year's Telephone Campaign will take place from 22 March -4 April. Our student callers will be ready and waiting to speak to alumni with all the latest news and views from Christ's. Catch up on how the past year has been for the College, how we are supporting students through COVID and beyond, and swap stories and memories with our student callers.

## THE MASTER-ELECT

On 23 November 2021, the Fellows congregated in the College Chapel to elect the 39th Master. Each Fellow present made a promise to "choose as Master that person who is [in my judgement] best qualified to preside over and to promote the honour and welfare of the College as a place of education, religion, learning and research" and then placed their vote. The President, Professor Richard Mortier, who had led the Search Committee, then counted the votes and pinned the traditional notice to the Chapel door.

The Fellows elected Lord McDonald of Salford GCMG, KCVO to be the 39th Master, succeeding Professor Jane Stapleton QC FBA, who has been Master since 2016 and will retire in August 2022.

Simon McDonald was born and educated in Salford, and read History at Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he is an Honorary Fellow. His career was spent in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), which he joined in 1982, and, amongst other postings, he served as British Ambassador to Israel (2003-06) and to Germany (2010–15). In September 2015, Simon became Permanent Secretary at the FCO and Head of the Diplomatic Service. When he left the FCO in autumn 2020 he was nominated for a crossbench life peerage. While Master, he intends to maintain a presence in the Upper House, speaking especially on



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international and environmental issues, and now higher education matters.

Simon is committed to diversity and inclusion, and, as chair of the Senior Appointments Board, oversaw the first appointment of women to more than 50 head-of-mission jobs; a quite unprecedented development. All the UK Ambassadors to G7 and P5 countries are now women. He also played his part in helping the FCO attract the best people by visiting schools and universities, and made the induction and orientation of new entrants in their first year a priority. He is very much looking forward to getting to know the students at Christ's, as well as the rest of the College community.

Simon will take up the post on 1 September 2022, and will be joined in the Master's Lodge by his wife, Olivia. We are looking forward to welcoming them both to Christ's.

From the President, Propose Barbert Minister CHRIST SCOLLEG, CAMBERS, CON 991

114 November 2021

"CHRIST'S COLLEGE EMBRACES EXCELLENCE AND INTELLECTUAL RIGOUR, BUT IS ALSO KNOWN AS A WARM AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY. I AM HONOURED AND THRILLED TO HAVE BEEN ELECTED NEXT MASTER OF CHRIST'S. ALREADY, SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF MY ELECTION, I HAVE RECEIVED MANY MESSAGES OF WELCOME, AND HAVE MET A NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY. I EXTEND MY THANKS TO EVERYONE AND AM VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO TAKING UP THE POST."



Inspiration at Christ's comes in many forms and from many places; and for Fellow, Dr Anna Protasio, inspiration for her newest research project literally fell from the sky. What followed a relaxing afternoon by the College pool was a collaborative and fortunate set of events that involved a number of College Fellows, a public appetite for understanding animal pathogens, and the potential for a research project with longevity stretching for decades.

Anna Protasio is a parasitologist, and computational biologist, with a particular focus on the non-coding genome of parasitic worms. However, her latest research project is taking her to uncharted territory. "I have always thrived outside my comfort zone", says the Uruguay-born scientist who came to Christ's to read for a PhD in Molecular Biology (m. 2007) and is now a Fellow in Animal Parasitology. The old adage is that it is lucky to have bird-droppings fall on you and for Anna this turned out to be true. During an afternoon by the pool in mid-July last year, she struck lucky when a bird dropping fell onto her towel. While trying her best to remove the bird's 'gift' she noticed emerging wiggling white forms that she identified as parasitic flatworms – something the rest of us would immediately recoil from! Anna was instantly fascinated by them and took a short video, which she shared with Fellow. Dr Daniel Field – Christ's resident bird expert, and the Strickland Curator of Ornithology at the Museum of Zoology, and with Distinguished Visiting Fellow Professor Nancy Stevens – Professor of Functional Morphology and Vertebrate Paleontology at the University of Ohio, USA and expert in Biodiversity Conservation. The parasite video was something none of the Fellows had seen before, and this sparked a series of conversations about the wealth of information that could be contained in bird faeces and their potential as subjects of scientific research. A piece of bird poop was now regarded as a complex biological sample, harbouring macro-pathogens such as the visible flatworms, but also bacterial and viral pathogens.

Without delay, Anna started writing an application for the University of Cambridge Joint Research Grants Scheme (Isaac Newton Trust/Wellcome Trust ISSF) which awards grants to early career researchers at the University. Her research project, "The avian "pathobiome": identifying and preventing wild bird pathogenic spillover events" hopes to show there is a lot more to explore in this bird poop sample than just worms.

As part of this project, Anna is planning her first field trip to The Wash on the north Norfolk coast to take samples



Dr Protasio collecting samples

of faecal matter of birds that come to the British Isles escaping the hard winter of continental Europe. She wants to learn more about the pathogens that piggyback their way from one continent to the next, travelling in the relatively stable environment of the bird host. COVID news is so prevalent that it may have escaped notice that the UK is also in the midst of an avian influenza outbreak. Regions where birds come to winter, such as the Wash in Norfolk, are often where the first avian influenza cases are reported. As well as coastal sampling, Anna and her team will collect samples from forests and cities to understand how differences in diet and ecological environments affect the birds' pathobiome in relation to geographical niches; essentially exploring the impact of a fish and chip diet on the bird's pathogens!

The main aim of the research is identifying avian influenza in wild birds, both migrant and resident, and to draw correlations between the presence and the types of viral, bacterial and worm pathogens. Anna's future plans include the expansion of this project to encompass the impact that climate change has on birds' migratory routes or flyways and how these, in turn, can modify the pool of pathogens present in the newly colonised stopovers of birds.

The scope for this project is vast, and the potential is massive. In its early stages, Anna will work with a small team to conduct the sampling, but the possibility of involving many more people in the future is an exciting part of the project. She eventually wants to create a citizenscientist project, inviting schools and students to conduct their own sampling, contribute to the project, and use this as a platform to learn about parasitology, molecular biology, conservation and ecology.

Follow us on our social media platforms to watch the project develop, and see what Dr Protasio and her team do next!



With the world in turmoil, exams in chaos, and the world stuck in uncertainty, the summer of 2020 was a stressful and difficult time for students. Issues surrounding the UK Government's results algorithm and the subsequent move to using school assessments in A-level grading meant that Christ's had more successful offer-holders than places for the 2020/21academic year and asked for volunteers to defer. One of those volunteers, now a first year English Literature undergraduate at Christ's, was Sam Smith.

Sam volunteered to defer his place until Michaelmas 2021, and take an unplanned gap year. In order to ensure that he was able to have a constructive year, Christ's helped him to enrol on the University's Undergraduate Certificate in English Literature. After which, through a collaboration between the Admissions and Development teams, Sam was connected with Peggy Vance (m. 1983) to undertake an internship. The result turned out to be a match made in heaven. We caught up with Peggy, Sam, and Peggy's business partner, Karen Paul (Trinity Hall, m.1987), to find out what made the venture so successful for all involved.

As fellow Cambridge graduates, lovers of theatre, and with Peggy's family history of innovative ways of bringing theatre to audiences, they made the perfect team to develop their business, Stellar Theatre. With the onset of COVID restrictions, their idea to bring theatre into people's homes developed further, and Sam became an instrumental part of that. Peggy said, "Christ's has been amazing over the years, and have sent me many great people who wanted to get into media. Catherine Twilley, (Development Director) came to me, via Emily Tomlinson (Director of Admissions) to find some work for someone who needed help during their unexpected gap year. That person was Sam."

Sam: "I started out helping Peggy, and then after a short time, I started working with Karen too, and then all my work was with Stellar (www. stellartheatre.co.uk); a lot of it was working on the website, which was great – learning Squarespace from the ground up. I had no previous experience of this." Karen interjects: "which seems incredible really given how great it looks." Sam continues, "I spend quite a lot of time on computers, and had done some programming before, so it felt quite natural to me. It didn't feel like labour of any kind, just problem solving really, and trying to make sure Peggy and Karen's vision was realised into something that worked and could be used – it was very rewarding."

Speaking about what an asset Sam was to Stellar, Peggy and Karen were effusive. Karen said, "We love Sam! Quite apart from his personal skills and his sense of fun, his intelligence is enormous. He loves English, both the spoken and written word, and he respects and understands it, which is really important to us. He was able to translate that with a technological understanding that we don't have. He understood the vision that we had for our website but we couldn't translate to the screen ourselves."

Peggy adds, "Absolutely – what actually happened is that the three of us set up the company. Sam was fully involved in the business decisions; we were three people with different strengths coming to the table. The great thing was that Sam's intellectual maturity meant he was able to challenge us and tell us if he thought we'd got something wrong, and that's incredibly valuable in any business."

Sam said, "They were happy to fully involve me in all the steps along the way, I especially enjoyed helping to select the plays, and the process of review. As someone who was going to read English Literature, it felt like a lovely extension of everything I was enthusiastic about in the first place."

Peggy continues, "It was very exciting, and good fun; everything we're doing, even now is infused with Sam; he very much kicked off the spirit of Stellar with us, and that will continue." Karen added to this, "When I think of Lockdown, I actually just have really lovely memories of the three of us making this company together, and having a great time doing it, so thank you to Christ's for giving Sam to us."



Sam Smith (middle) with Peggy Vance (right), and Karen Paul (left). Peggy is holding a poster from a 1980s CADS production of Huis Clos, by Jean-Paul Sartre.

On being asked what they would say to someone considering taking on an intern, Peggy said, "Trust Christ's – they've selected these students very carefully – and there are exceptional people here, and every business can benefit from exceptional people. We realised quite early on that we couldn't call Sam an intern, because he wasn't functioning as one: we weren't using him to do work of a lesser quality or skill. So we promoted him, and he became an Associate after a very short time.

"When taking on a young person, the thing you do need to be sure of is that you are enough for them, that you have enough stretch, breadth, and opportunity to match the lovely young mind you're going to get to work with. You need to be mindful that they will challenge you in very important ways – they will make you more nimble, more alert, more focused, and more audience ready, because they will think differently from you. It's also so important to be kind to them; only take on a young person if you feel you really can care about them. This is most likely their first experience of the workplace, and so it needs to be a good experience for them." And, what advice would Sam have for someone contemplating a gap year? "If you think you have any doubts about your preparedness for university then it's useful to give yourself more time to explore other opportunities. Everyone I know who has done something like this has only gained further experiences and perspective from it. If you can, and you're interested then do it, and Christ's can help make that happen."

If you have an opportunity that would benefit a Christ's student, then get in touch with the Development Office.



The Development Office runs a dedicated LinkedIn group that is designed to connect students and alumni with opportunities, advice and guidance. Scan the QR code to join the group and find out more.

# A STEP BACK IN TIME TO PRESERVE THE FUTURE

Back in 2020, the famous lawn in front of King's College was transformed into an ecosystem rich in biodiversity that saw poppies, cornflowers, scentless mayflowers, corn cockles, and more, stretch from the Chapel to the banks of the Cam. The wildflower meadow will self-seed each year and will continue to develop new and varied species of wildflower. It is a truly incredible sight. Having created the meadow, attention turned to harvesting. We spoke to Christ's Head Gardener, Sergio Ballarin, to find out how he got involved in the project.

Sergio said, "The planting of the King's College meadow has changed the horticultural culture in Cambridge; it's paved the way for other gardeners, especially within the Colleges, to be more radical and open to change within the gardens."

"I worked closely with the King's College Head Gardener, Steve Coghill, on the development of the wildflower meadow, and so when it came time to cut the meadow it make perfect sense to finish the circle and cut it in the most natural way possible - using working shire horses. I have my own shire horses and so I knew their capabilities. I contacted the Shire Horse Society to find someone with horses trained to pull the implements to make the hay, and so it was that we were joined by shire horses Cosmo and Boy from Waldburg Shires."

The horses arrived in Cambridge during the first week of August, arriving along

the towpath alongside the River Cam to much excitement in the City. The horses turned and carted the hay on a traditional wain; the bales were then dried and distributed to other gardeners to use to create more wildflower meadows across the city of Cambridge. Sergio commented, "Unfortunately Christ's doesn't have the space for our own wildflower meadow, but I'm excited to see who uses the bales next year, and where these wild meadows will pop up in the City.

"It was such an incredible experience to be involved in. My team and I all went down to King's to help with the pitchforking once the meadow had been cut and rolled. It was a true inter-College experience that was inspiring to be a part of.

"This naturalistic style of gardening has to be the future; it's the best, most carbon neutralising way we can garden sustainably."

This more naturalistic way of gardening is something Sergio wants to bring to Christ's, so much so that this summer saw an abandoning of the more formal garden style in Second Court, and a variety of fruits and vegetables were planted in their place in the borders. The sight of these small seedlings growing week by week was an exciting addition to the summer gardens. Everyone who walked by, from staff to students, Fellows to tourists, stopped to watch the progress of the varieties of heritage tomatoes, or to admire the sunflowers, sweetcorn, and courgettes.

Sergio continues, "It was such a fantastic addition to the gardens, we were overwhelmed by the response to the edible garden. Not only did they look beautiful, but they were also practical – we were able to provide more than ten weeks of bumper harvest to the College. It was wonderful to see people crowding around the harvest table every Friday and taking home fresh produce, grown in the heart of Cambridge.

"Although the vegetables were a lot more work than a conventional display, the rewards were so much greater. I couldn't do anything without my team and I'm grateful that the concept was so well accepted by the College community, and we hope to re-create the vegetable garden again next year."

"THIS NATURALISTIC STYLE OF GARDENING HAS TO BE THE FUTURE; IT'S THE BEST, MOST CARBON NEUTRALISING WAY WE CAN GARDEN SUSTAINABLY."

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### LONG SERVING STAFF HONOURED

This year the College decided to recognise those members of staff who have worked here for 25 years or more. Seven current staff members were given the opportunity to have a professional photograph of them displayed in College. At the end of the summer vacation six portraits were unveiled, and put on proud display in the corridor of Z. The College commissioned acclaimed Cambridge photographer, Martin Bond, to take the portraits.

Unveiling the portraits was a low-key affair, very much in keeping with the wishes of the sitters themselves. The Master, Professor Jane Stapleton, paid tribute to the members of staff, "We want to celebrate in portraiture the long service of members of staff who have devoted themselves to the College for more than a quarter of a century. It's the staff at Christ's who make possible everything we do here. Each of these members of staff has been an integral part of that support structure, each making huge contributions to our community. On my own behalf, and that of the entire Christ's community, I want to thank them most sincerely for their hard work, dedication, and commitment to the College."

Professor Carrie Vout, Fellow, explains the origins of the project, "What hangs on the walls of a College both reflects and influences how a College feels. Until very recently, the only portraits to hang on the walls of Christ's College were of its foundress Lady Margaret amidst a collection of men, all of them former students or Fellows. This series is one of a number of ongoing initiatives to capture something of the diversity of the College community, past and present. It is also a way of saying thank you. Martin has produced a set of pictures that are as of the moment as they are painterly."

A new staff awards scheme has also been recently introduced; members of staff who have gone above and beyond in their role can be nominated to receive a gift voucher in appreciation. The scheme has been a huge success so far, with more than 14 people being given awards during the Michaelmas term alone. Proof that Christ's staff truly are one of its greatest assets.

Mr Graham Howe (College Electrician) chose not to be photographed but has worked for the College for 29 years.



*Mr Chris Austin (College Accountant)* 

Mrs Teresa McManus (Domestic Supervisor/Housekeeper)



Mr Paul Davis (Head Butler)

Mrs Sue O'Donnell (Conference and Events Manager, now retired)



Ms Joyce Nightingale (Housekeeping)

Mr Tim Wilson (Deputy Butler)





## Stay connected

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

webinar

**17 FEBRUARY** Dr Harriet Lyon

17 MARCH Alumni Evensong

25 MARCH MA (2013 and 2014 Year Groups) 2 APRIL MA (2015 Year Group) 23 APRIL Christ's College Medical Alumni Association (CCMAA) Conference

**30 APRIL** Economics Alumni/Student





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