



November 2018

November lunch

Sadly we must advise that Caroline Forest's talk has been cancelled due to administrative difficulties within her State Government Department. Given the lateness of the cancellation and our aim of always providing top quality speakers on topics of interest we were unable to obtain a replacement speaker at such short notice.

Member survey

The results from our survey are in. Thank you to everyone who shared their thoughts. Your committee has reviewed all of your anonymous responses. The overwhelming message from our members is that you are an intellectually curious bunch, and the most important thing we can offer is engaging speakers and interesting topics. We'd therefore like to ask for your suggestions of topics or speakers for lunches, evening events and our Annual Dinner. Please contact us via email at hello@cambridgesociety.org.au or social media with suggestions, or to see the detailed survey results.

Our Patron honoured

Our Patron, The Hon G Tony Pagone, QC, has been elected President of the International Association of Judges (IAJ). This is the first time an Australian has held this high office.

The IAJ is the pre-eminent international association of judges, bringing together almost 90 national associations of judges from all parts of the world. Individual judges are not members. The IAJ was founded in 1963 with the aim of safeguarding the independence of the judiciary, which is an essential element of the judicial function, guaranteeing the rule of law, human rights and

freedom. One of its central functions is to highlight and make representations where judicial impotence is threatened or has been attacked. This has occurred recently in countries such as Hungary, Turkey and Poland.

He will hold office as President of the IAJ for two years.

Diary dates

12 Dec	AGM and Varsity Match
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Last month

Lunch with Jim Bowler, Wednesday 17 October

Science and the dreaming

Nature and Culture at Lake Mungo: Conflict or

Convergent?

Jim Bowler is a most entertaining speaker. He opened his talk with a quotation from Charles Darwin as he left Australia from Albany in 1836. 'Farewell, Australia! You are a rising infant and doubtless someday will reign a great princess in the South: but you are too great and ambitious for affection, yet not great enough for respect. I leave your shores without sorrow or regret.' He came hoping to engage in intellectual conversation and to meet the natives, but was sadly disappointed on both counts.

Early in the 20th century phrenology was being used to try and support a theory that Aborigines were less developed mentally than Europeans and were more akin to Neanderthals. This required the acquisition of large numbers of skeletons, a need met by Murray Black of Gippsland among others. Black gathered large numbers of Aboriginal skeletons from the Murrumbidgee region without permission and sent them to museums in

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Canberra and Melbourne, but with inadequate labelling their usefulness for research was seriously compromised. This was the start of mass grave robbery of Aboriginal remains.

Jim was brought up in Gippsland, where his father had found many stone axes on his property. He became a geologist and in 1968 he went with a team from Melbourne University to the Willandra Lakes region of the Murray Basin, mapping the shores of old lakes. He found a lot of stone tools and reported this to ANU archaeologists who said that they were far too old to be associated with people. In July he discovered what he thought was a cremation site and again reported this. Alan Thorne of ANU excavated the site and managed to recreate part of a skull from 250 bone fragments. The skull was of a fully modern shape, which upset the current thinking considerably. The remains were of a female (named Mungo Lady) who had been cremated and her bones crushed. In February Jim discovered what he was sure was the top of a cranium about 400m from Mungo Lady. Again Alan Thorne was called in to excavate the remains, which were a complete male skeleton (named Mungo Man) which had been sprinkled with ochre in a ritual burial, and there were the remains of a large ritual fire nearby. Mungo Man was obviously a person of some stature in the community. Again the skull was of fully modern shape. The skeleton was quickly removed from the site. A third skeleton, of a child, was subsequently discovered between the site of Mungo Man and Mungo Lady but was never excavated due to Aboriginal sensitivities. Both sets of excavated remains were eventually dated at 41,000 (± 1000) years before the present day.

The local Aborigines were upset at this further evidence of grave robbing. 'It's our history. You have Captain Cook and other British rascals. Stick to the Queen and leave our history to us.' After much discussion the Mungo Statement was agreed on 23 June 1989 to cover future research on aboriginal remains. The local Aborigines talked much of 'connection to country' and 'dreaming', complaining that 'you white fellows have no dreaming'. Jim disputes this, believing that Darwin, 'Out of Africa' migration theory and the Big Bang Theory are examples of our scientifically-based 'dreaming'. Jim said he found it impossible to convince the Aborigines that their ancestors had migrated from Africa, as is commonly accepted by western anthropologists. 'We've always been here'

is the response. Jim considers this view and wider Aboriginal dreaming to have similarities to the bible in Christian thought. Both are vehicles that attempt to explain the unknown past and both should be taken with a pinch of salt. Jim was involved in facilitating the return of Mungo Man's remains to the area in November 2017 where they were reburied on site.

Commercials

If you have an offer, message or request of a personal or not-for-profit nature that you would like us to include in this section, please contact the editor at newsletter@cambridgesociety.org.au.

Snippets

We acknowledge our particular debt to Varsity and to the University News Release Service.

Investigation reveals share of Cambridge undergraduates on student loans

A Varsity investigation has revealed the share of undergraduates at each college who receive government loans and Cambridge bursaries to cover their tuition fees and living costs, shedding light on how much financial support is given to students at individual colleges.

This information, which offers another way to reflect upon the University's track record in attracting students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, is set against the background of the University's plans to raise additional £500 million for student financial support.

Across all 27 undergraduate colleges that provided information, 78.7% of UK and EU undergraduates received a loan from the UK government to cover their tuition fees in the 2017-18 academic year. Across the 22 colleges that distinguished between UK and EU students, 83.0% of UK-domiciled students and 60.3% of EU students took out loans.

According to the most recent data from the Student Loans Company, 93.4% of all English-domiciled university students received student loans, which is significantly greater than the 83.0% of home students on a loan at Cambridge.

This information shows that the share of Cambridge students at each college who are able to forego government assistance in paying their tuition fees is above the national average. Many students who are not on a government loan may

pay their tuition fees using family resources, although a number of students will seek assistance from other sources.

Another measure of socioeconomic diversity is the share of students on the Cambridge Bursary, a grant for students with household incomes of under £42,620. The grant, which is usually £3,500, is also only available to residents of the UK and the EU. The majority of responses showed 20–30% of UK and EU undergraduates receiving a Cambridge Bursary. This means that a relatively low share of the University's UK and EU students come from households with incomes of under £42,620, which is still substantially higher than the UK median disposable household income of £27,300.

In response to *Varsity's* request for comment, Dr Sam Lucy, Director of Admissions for the Cambridge Colleges, said: 'The University and colleges work hard to ensure that talented students from across the UK can come here to study, regardless of background.' She also pointed out that the University passes the benchmark set by the government for recruitment from areas with the lowest participation in higher education.

'The University invests more than £5m each year in outreach activities, working with schools in those underrepresented areas. The University and the Colleges provide a number of measures to support those in financial need, including support for low income students through a range of bursaries,' she added. She also noted that not everyone who is eligible for a bursary accepts one.

Though many colleges have similar shares of students on government loans and Cambridge Bursaries, there is some variation between them.

Murray Edwards College has the highest share of students on a government loan, with 94.4% of UK and EU students receiving one. It is followed by St Catharine's, with 90.2%, and St Edmund's, with 88.3%.

At the other end of the scale, only 53.9% of UK and EU Lucy Cavendish students are on a government loan. It is followed by Gonville & Caius with 66.7% and Pembroke with 72.8%.

In response to a request for comment, a spokesperson for Lucy Cavendish pointed out that a number of factors, including completion of prior study or receipt of funding from other sources, mean that not all UK and EU students are eligible for government support. When taking into account only those who are eligible, the figure for

Lucy Cavendish is 74.3%. As a mature college with many international students, Lucy Cavendish may be disproportionately impacted by these factors.

There is a weak positive correlation between the share of students receiving government loans and the share who have incomes low enough to receive Cambridge Bursaries, though Lucy Cavendish defies this trend. It has the highest share of eligible students receiving a Cambridge Bursary – 50%. Following it is St Edmund's, with 33.3%, and Homerton, with 31.6%.

Gonville & Caius is the college with the smallest share of eligible students on a Cambridge Bursary of the colleges that provided this information – only 15.6%, which is 34.4 percentage points lower than Lucy Cavendish – followed by Clare and Pembroke, with 19.2% and 21.7% respectively.

A Clare spokesperson commented that 'some fluctuation in bursary numbers is to be expected, but we continue to examine all the data carefully as part of our ongoing and sustained commitment to access and outreach.'

Pembroke's Admissions Tutor, Dr Caroline Burt, responded that 'at Pembroke we are very proud of our outreach work, and we are fully committed to improving access to Cambridge for the most able and committed students.'

Dr Burt went on to point out Pembroke's significant investment in outreach and its success in admitting more students from state schools and low-income areas, with the college above the University average by both measure. 'There is always more to be done and we are never complacent in our approach, but we are proud of our recent record in recruiting bright young people from a diverse range of backgrounds,' she said.

Two weeks ago, Vice-chancellor Stephen Toope announced a campaign to raise £500 million over the next six years to expand postgraduate studentships and bolster the Cambridge Bursary Scheme.

The university launched a Colleges Bursaries Taskforce last year, and it aims to redesign the Cambridge Bursary Scheme to standardise and integrate additional college-level financial support into an enhanced University-wide system.

The aim is to give a boost to students in the 'squeezed middle' – those with family incomes too high to qualify for University funding but who receive inadequate funding from the government and their families.

A few weeks after *Varsity* reported on the College Bursaries Taskforce, an investigation found that over half the students accepted to Cambridge over the last decade came from only 250 schools, and over a third came from 100 schools.

Is it time to move the Varsity match away from Twickenham?

William Ross shares his thoughts on the damaging implications of holding Oxbridge rugby at one of Britain's most celebrated grounds

The Varsity Rugby match, played annually at Twickenham, remains one of the highlights of the Oxbridge sporting calendar. Each year, the two blues rugby teams are given the privilege of battling it out at the home of English rugby, and the second-largest sports stadium in the United Kingdom. The only way for other British university rugby teams to play at Twickenham is for them to reach the final of the BUCS Super Rugby Championship, a tournament which the Oxbridge rugby blues do not even compete in. Why, then, are the Oxbridge rugby teams automatically afforded an annual trip to Twickenham?

The simple answer is tradition. The match, played annually since 1872 and held at Twickenham since 1921, is one of the world's longest-running sporting fixtures. The women's match was moved to Twickenham in 2015 – a significant step forward for gender equality in university sport. As the official Varsity Match website notes: 'the importance of the contest is highlighted by the enormous contribution Oxbridge rugby and the Varsity Match have made to the development and refinement of the game of rugby over the last 135 years.'

'Up until 1875, the Universities fielded 20 players a-side, as was the norm for Rugby football in those early years. In that year, the Universities and their respective Blues took the initiative and changed to 15-a side. This caught on quickly and was adopted as the international standard in 1877.'

Oxbridge rugby was certainly a trendsetter, setting the standard for the rest of the rugby world to follow. Indeed, the game was historically played to a professional, even international standard, with more than 600 players from either Oxford or Cambridge gaining international representative honours since its inception.

Indeed, according to the official Varsity match website, it remains 'the pinnacle of amateur and student rugby'. The results of the men's Oxbridge rugby teams against other British university rugby sides, however, reveal a sobering reality: since the 2012–13 season, the Cambridge University Men's Rugby Blues have played 17 fixtures against other British universities, losing 11 of them, drawing one and winning just five. In other words, they failed to win over 70% of their matches against other British Universities. Put simply, Oxbridge men's rugby is no longer the dominant force in student rugby that it once was. If attendance at Twickenham was judged on a purely meritocratic basis, it would be hard to maintain the argument that Oxbridge should be there.

The story for the Cambridge Women's Rugby Blues, however, tells a different story. Last year, they won the BUCS league unbeaten, with 532 points over second-place Nottingham, and have placed consistently highly in recent years, reaching the semi-finals in 2017, 2016, and 2014. Cambridge women's rugby remains a force to be reckoned with.

Norman Celliers, a former Varsity match winner at Oxford, said of the men's Varsity match a few years ago: 'It's unique; it's about Britain and history and tradition'. But playing conkers in the playground, Morris dancing and eating plover's eggs are also rooted in British tradition. Does that mean that they remain relevant in the 21st century? At any rate, do we really want a society fixated on history and tradition, at the expense of a meritocracy?

Members of the Oxbridge Rugby certainly work phenomenally hard over the course of the season in balancing their preparation for the Varsity match alongside their studies, but so do players at universities up and down the country.

Playing at Twickenham is a privilege which should be earned through excellence on the rugby pitch, not automatically bestowed. Special privileges for the Oxford and Cambridge rugby blues only serves to perpetuate the damaging myth that Oxbridge is in some sense better in all areas than other universities. If we want to favour meritocracy over elitism and innovation over anachronistic traditions, we need to stop giving Oxbridge rugby a free pass to Twickenham. Society has changed irrevocably since the early 20th century; the rugby world should do the same.