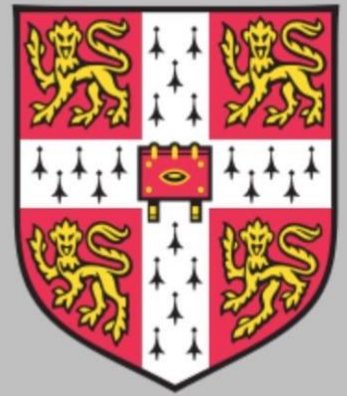


Norfolk Cambridge Society

Winter 2021 Newsletter



From the Chair

Dear Fellow Alumni,

Happy New Year to you all. I hope you and your families remain well and Covid-free. There are over 1500 Norfolk-based alumni on the Cambridge University database, although only around 200 of you have attended Norfolk Cambridge Society events. Perhaps more of you will this year! I hope so. With luck, by the spring or summer we will be back to physical events and able to meet in person again.

In the meantime, why not come along to one or more of our online events by Zoom? They provide an excellent opportunity to meet new people, are intellectually stimulating and a lot of fun. Our discussion groups range across matters philosophical, current and whimsical and our quarterly online webinars provide an opportunity to listen to powerful presentations by leading academics on fascinating subjects.

Whether or not you can attend our online events, to help keep your formidable brains fit during the long winter evenings, it occurred to me that some of you might be interested in participating in a very short Cambridge Brain of Norfolk challenge. All you need to do to enter the competition is email me with answers to the following three questions, which all have solutions connected to Norfolk or Cambridge or both. Anyone answering all three correctly will receive a special mention in the next issue of our newsletter.

1. How does a living person connect the numbers and letters 743, 1448, 51.208889N and 3.224167E?
2. This repeated thrice, revealed what object reminiscent of Murdoch?
3. Which notable Chancellor, strongly in favour of fellows spreading their knowledge far and wide, had very close connections with two fine buildings exactly 53.63 miles apart, as the crow flies? And which are those buildings?

Finally, we were very sad to hear of the passing on 20th October 2020 of one of the Society's founder members, John Noble-Nesbitt. John Balls, our President and former Chair, knew him well and has kindly written an obituary, which appears later in this newsletter. I met John on only a few occasions, once at an AGM and then at our physical lectures in the Blake Studio at Norwich School. By then it was clear that he was very unwell but he was unfailingly charming and courteous. Our sincerest condolences go to his family and, in particular, to his wonderful wife Brenda. A donation has been made by the NCS in John's memory to the National Society for Phenylketonuria

With Best Wishes

Geoffrey
geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com

From the Editor

May I wish you all a peaceful and healthy New Year swiftly followed by a *mea culpa*. Various (and I'm sorry to say mostly wrong) versions of Geoffrey's email address appeared in the last newsletter. This was entirely due to my improving, but still slightly dodgy, IT skills. The correct version appears *inter alia* at the end of his comments above and in 'Contacts' at the end of this edition.

You are reading this courtesy of our mail out by the University Alumni Office. However, if you are not yet a member of NCS but would like to join, please contact Geoffrey directly as we don't have access to the full university database of Norfolk alumni.

With Covid still on the loose, this will of necessity be a rather thinner newsletter than I had hoped but I am cautiously optimistic that the Spring edition will bring news of actual in person events! It may be a cliché to say that we have all been in the same storm but in different boats over the past 9 months but for me, experiencing a quieter, more reflective Christmas season has felt like a positive benefit even as I look forward to a very different experience next year with family and friends.

As ever any contributions for the Spring newsletter, due out in April, can be sent to me at the email address below.

Kathy

ajskcm@btinternet.com

Eighth Norfolk Cambridge Society Lecture

The Eighth Norfolk Cambridge Society Lecture will be delivered by webinar **from 6.30pm on Wednesday 13th January**, by **Professor Sir David King** on the subject of **"Climate change - what are the solutions and what will they cost?"** There is probably no more authoritative voice in the English-speaking world on strategies to tackle climate change. Sir David is a founder and Chair of the Centre for Climate Repair at Cambridge and Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, University of Cambridge. He was Master of Downing College from 1995 to 2000, UK Government Chief Scientific Adviser from 2000 to 2007 and the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative on Climate Change from 2013 to 2017. The webinar will therefore provide those watching with a wonderful opportunity to understand the issues in depth.

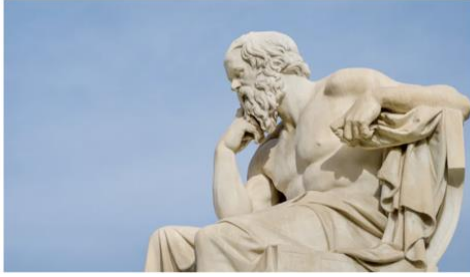
What actions governments must now take to solve the problem at the lowest cost to humanity, is a complex and multi-faceted question, involving considerations of political and technical feasibility, economic cost and the very limited timescales remaining. There is also the question of how best to achieve international cooperation, while maintaining political stability across the world. The better educated we are on the right way forward, the more intelligently we can put pressure on our government, others and ourselves to take the right action.

The price to attend is £10 per household. Any residual credit balances from previous lectures can be used to pay for webinar seats.

To reserve a seat, please email geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com.

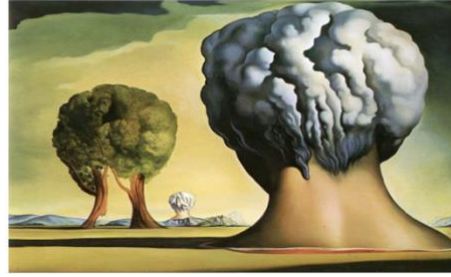
NCS Socratics

Stimulating discussions on things that matter - over a glass of wine



NCS Symposiasts

Stimulating discussions on things whimsical - over a glass of wine



NCS Sceptics

Stimulating discussions on things current - over a glass of wine



NCS Discussion groups

Three online discussion groups each now meeting quarterly: NCS Socratics on matters philosophical, NCS Sceptics on matters current and NCS Symposiasts on matters whimsical. What more could one wish for to make new friends and keep the grey cells ticking over? Just look at the subjects covered in the last three months or so:

- What constitutes lying and when is it morally justifiable?
- Which work of art has moved you the most and why?
- What news media do we follow and why? How is news consumed?
- What are the chances of a dictatorship emerging in the USA?
- What does national sovereignty really mean in the modern world?
- Is militant atheism just another form of religious extremism?
- Which book have you found the most enjoyable and enriching and why?
- Is the holding of power at a national level unhealthy? Should the UK embrace a more federal form of government?
- If we can afford the enormous sums involved in the furlough scheme during the pandemic, why can't we afford to house the homeless?
- How legitimate is it to view the past with a 21st-century mindset?

How could one's brain not be stimulated? Discussions are good-humoured and respectful. Everyone gets a chance to talk. Maximum of ten people per online meeting but we can set up more meetings if more want to attend.

Please email geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com if you are interested and for a calendar of future meetings go to our website at <https://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/group/norfolk-cambridge-society>.

Book Club

Our last meeting saw a very lively discussion of Madeline Miller's novel *Circe* ranging from how to pronounce it to the role of mythology in our lives. We meet six weekly (day of the week varies) and will next be convening at **6pm on Wednesday 27th January** to pool our thoughts on *The Rings of Saturn* by WG Sebald who was coincidentally killed in a car accident near Norwich in 2001.

If you would like to join us email Kathy Moyse at gjskcm@btinternet.com

Norfolk Cambridge Society Student Awards

In 2019 the Norfolk Cambridge Society launched a student essay competition, funded by income generated by the very successful NCS lecture series. The broad aim of the scheme is to raise the profile of Cambridge University within Norfolk and to encourage students from a wide range of state and private schools to study at Cambridge. Cash prizes were offered to students who submitted the best one-thousand-word essay outlining their aspirations for the future and explaining how they believed that their hoped-for Cambridge degree might enable them to solve an important problem or address a key change for society's betterment. School support for the NCS scheme is essential. It is only with their collaboration that we are able to publicise the scheme and inform those holding a conditional or unconditional offer from a Cambridge college that they are eligible to enter the competition. We also hope that schools will alert Year 12 students who are beginning to consider their university application choices that this opportunity is available if they apply to Cambridge and are offered a place.

We were delighted with the overall quality of the essay submissions received in the 2019/20 pilot year, and also by the interview performances of the shortlisted candidates. The NCS sub-group decided to award prizes of £500 to three winning students and £50 each to two runners up. The overall success of the pilot has encouraged the NCS committee to aim to run the competition on an annual basis and we have already initiated the 2020/21 scheme by contacting schools and 6th form colleges across the whole of Norfolk. We are planning a formal launch in late January, when full details of this year's competition task will be sent to our school contacts with a request that they pass them on to all eligible students.

The closing date for submissions is currently planned for March but in these uncertain times our timetable may have to be extended. If any newsletter readers know of current Year 13 pupils who meet our eligibility criteria but have not received details of the scheme from their schools by early February, please let us know so that we can send the competition information to the relevant school.

For any other information or queries please email Annie Grant at annie.grant@cantab.net.

DR. JOHN NOBLE-NESBITT 1934 – 2020. A Founder Member of the NCS.

John was born on August 25th, 1934, in Gateshead, and attended Gateshead Grammar School. After National service as a Radar Operator in the RAF he went up to Downing, achieving a first in Botany and Zoology. In 1959 he married Brenda, and in 1961 he was awarded a PhD in Insect Physiology. After a postdoctoral position in Toronto he returned to the UK to become one of the four founding lecturers in the School of Biological Sciences at the new University of East Anglia. He remained at the UEA for the rest of his career also spending some time on a Fulbright Fellowship in the USA. He served on committees for the East Anglia Institute of Biology, the Society of Experimental Biologists, and the Company of Biologists.

John and Brenda lived in Cringleford near Norwich with their four sons. Both were active members of the local community and John held executive positions with the NSPCC and Rotary. He loved to travel, and through his work was able to spend time in Canada, the USA, Portugal and India. He was also a sprinter, a beekeeper, a ballroom dancer and a trainee pilot. He played the accordion and sang with a barbershop quartet.

In the early 1990s John was a founder member of the Norfolk Branch of the Cambridge Society. He was its first Treasurer, and worked hard as a loyal committee member. The fact that the Society survived during some difficult years is a tribute to his dedication and support and when it was reincarnated a few years ago, John continued as Treasurer until ill-health made this impossible. With Brenda he enjoyed the lectures which were such a successful part of the new group.

Contacts

geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com

ajskcm@btinternet.com

annie.grant@cantab.net