From the Chair

Dear Fellow Alumni,

It appears that we will remain unable to reconvene physically for quite some time yet. However, I suspect no virus in history has encountered an enemy quite as formidable as the human race today. Perhaps we will be out of the worst of it sooner than we think. I certainly hope so. In the meantime, many are going through great difficulties, particularly the less well-off and those in care homes. It has prompted me to re-read Journal of the Plague Year by Daniel Defoe, published in 1722. The conversation between John ‘the soldier’ and a constable on the road near Walthamstow in 1665, might well have occurred today concerning as it does John’s worries about not being able to pass freely because of government restrictions on movement and quarantine regulations.

In 2020 by contrast many of us can remain safe by staying indoors and having our food delivered. We can also enjoy online events organised by the Norfolk Cambridge Society! One such event was held on 24 September, when Professor Richard Harvey of the UEA delivered, as a webinar, the lecture on Artificial Intelligence, that he was originally due to give in the Blake Studio, Norwich School, in April. It was watched by an estimated 180 people (one can never be sure with webinars!) of whom probably at least 50 were school students. We have also continued to run our four Zoom-based discussion groups, tackling subject matters of great variety and interest (see pages 2 and 3).

As I wrote in our last quarterly newsletter, this is a great time to make new friends online and discover the wide range of interesting Norfolk-based Cambridge alumni. Many of our events are also open to others of like mind. You can find a list of our forthcoming activities later in this newsletter and online at the NCS Alumni website. I hope to meet you at one or more of these.

Wishing you all good health and happiness for the coming months.

Geoffrey

From the Editor

As we head into Winter I hope you are all keep well and continue to enjoy your NCS membership. Thanks to the good auspices of the University Alumni Office we are now able to distribute the newsletter to all our 1500 Norfolk alumni rather than just to NCS members who currently number about 250. We would love some of you to join us, particularly while so many ‘real world’ activities are circumscribed. Details of a proposed walking club are included below. I know it’s a bit premature (!) but I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and look forward to catching up in the January newsletter. Please feel free to email Geoffrey or me with any material for inclusion. Kathy

ajskcm@btinternet.com
Seventh NCS Lecture and Future lectures

Our Seventh NCS Lecture was delivered in September, as a webinar, by Professor Richard Harvey of the University of East Anglia and Gresham College London, on the subject of **Artificial Intelligence - How Much is it Likely to Impact Your Life?** For the first half hour, we were treated to a very interesting technical history of how AI developed and how it works. During the next fifteen minutes we were shown examples of its power in recognising and classifying objects and in surveillance. Finally, Professor Harvey spent twenty-five minutes entertainingly answering questions submitted online by the audience. Many people wrote in afterwards to say how much they had enjoyed the lecture and the subsequent Q & A, although some admitted they found the first part a little beyond them! Professor Harvey has very kindly provided written answers to many of the questions that were sent to him in advance. They can be found on his website at https://www.prof-richard.org/post/ai-questions.

*We are in the process of lining up lecturers for 2021 and will post dates on the NCS website as soon as they are confirmed. Many thanks to those of you who have made suggestions. If you have any further ideas please email geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com*

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**NCS Socrates**

*Stimulating discussions on things that matter – over a glass of wine*

At our last meeting we discussed ‘What constitutes lying and when is it morally justifiable?’.

The background reading was ‘Lying is Wrong and ‘Lying is not Always Wrong’ in Joseph Margolis Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Vol. 23, No. 3 (March 1963), pp. 414-418. Opinions forthcoming on the night were, as always, wide and sometimes deep. A summary of the views expressed at all Socrates meetings is routinely prepared and circulated by the Chair, Geoffrey Smart.

If you wish to participate in any of these meetings or to receive a list of all the topics discussed since their inception and a summary of the views expressed at any, please email geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com.

Our next meeting is on **Thursday, 12th November from 5.30pm** when we will be discussing one of the questions set in past examinations for fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford ‘Is militant atheism just another form of religious extremism?’
NCS Symposiasts  
*Stimulating discussions on things whimsical – over a glass of wine.*

We last met on 30th September, when we discussed ‘Which work of art has moved you the most and why?’

Works considered were *Winter in the Woods* by Denise Watkins-Pitchford, *The Siesta* by Vincent Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait* by Rembrandt, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, *A Man Escaped* (directed by Robert Bresson), the East Window of Winchester College Chapel, Edvard Munch’s *The Scream*, Bruckner’s 9th Symphony and Lisa Reihana,’s video, *In Pursuit of Venus (infected)*. The discussion was fascinating and we learnt as much about our fellow contributors as we did about this eclectic selection.

Our next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 28th October from 5.30pm** when the topic will be ‘Which historical or fictional character do you find the most fascinating and why?’ If you wish to participate please email geoffryjnsmart@gmail.com

NCS Sceptics  
*Stimulating discussions on things current – over a glass of wine*

We last met on 8th October when we had a very lively discussion, chaired by Tim Cawkwell which considered our use of the news media, the chances of a dictatorship emerging in the USA and the meaning of national sovereignty in the modern world.

Our next meeting is on **Thursday, 10th December from 5.30pm** when we will be discussing

- Is the holding of power at a national level unhealthy? Should the UK embrace a more federal form of government?
- Is the UK’s permanent membership of the new UN Security Council justified?
- Should Shamima Begum’s British citizenship be reinstated immediately?
- What does it mean to be male or female in the light of the transgender debate?
- If we can afford the enormous sums involved in the pandemic furlough scheme why can’t we afford to house the homeless?
- How many Covid deaths is it worth to protect every £1bn of GDP

If you wish to participate in Sceptics please email geoffryjnsmart@gmail.com

Book Club

We continue to grow and now number 11 with six or seven generally attending each meeting. Since the last newsletter we have met to discuss *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari, *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahari and *Why I’m No Longer talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge. They have all produced wide ranging and very honest discussions.

We are now meeting 6 weekly with the day and date agreed as we go. Our next, and final meeting of the year, will be on **Wednesday 25th November between 6.p.m and 7.30 pm** when we will discuss *Circe* by Madeline Miller. If you would like to join email Kathy Moyse at ajskcm@btinternet.com
**Annual General Meeting**

Our AGM was held online by Zoom on 16th September and attended by just 10 people. It was good-humoured and uncontroversial. Concern was expressed as to whether the society’s main income stream from the quarterly lectures can be maintained through webinars, until such time as the pandemic is over. Our finances are currently very healthy, however, and continuing with the NCS Student Awards for 2021 was therefore approved. A copy of the minutes can be found on our website [https://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/group/norfolk-cambridge-society](https://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/group/norfolk-cambridge-society).

**Cultural events**

Undaunted by the Covid hand grenade lobbed into her meticulously organised programme for this year Mu Gurbett has been resolutely putting together suggestions for 2021. All dates tbc!

She is hoping to rearrange cancelled visits to John Inness, and Glemham Hall although the death of the owner of the Hall may mean this is no longer available. Mu is also exploring the possibility of reinstating the proposed walking tour of Norwich subject to restrictions around social distancing and how loudly the guide is allowed to talk!

Other ideas under consideration are visits to the National Horse Racing Museum in Newmarket and/or Elton Hall near Peterborough and a tour of a Cambridge College with a meal if circumstances allow.

As and when it becomes possible to resume these activities details will be posted on the website and included in future newsletters.

**Walking Group. New!**

This excellent suggestion has been made by Emily Norton (Trinity Hall 1997). She suggests meeting maybe monthly with members taking it in turns to organise and lead us on a favourite route. At the time of writing Covid regulations suggest that groups of 6 are fine and that more of us may meet to walk if we are socially distanced from each other. This is not as clear as it might be so the suggestion is that you contact Emily if you’re interested and we’ll cross the numbers bridge when we get to it! Ideally the route should be circular and offer the chance for people who want to do so to drop off part of the way round. The fine details will depend on the fitness and abilities of those who express an interest. Apart from anything else this group will allow some of us to meet in person and to get to know new parts of the county. **Once the first date and route are confirmed details will be posted on the website.**

Emily’s email address is [e.m.norton@btinternet.com](mailto:e.m.norton@btinternet.com)

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