



Issue 22



*Peterhouse*



## *Peterhouse* issue 22

The year in review 2020–2021

<i>The Master Writes</i>	3
<i>Fellows' research during the pandemic</i>	5–11
<i>Syed Mohammad Hadi: Petrean Olympian Over The Rainbow</i>	12
<i>MCR</i>	14
<i>JCR</i>	15
<i>Peterhouse Development</i>	16
<i>Donor List</i>	18

On the cover:  
Dr Christie and Gabrielle Mills (m. 2019)

Peterhouse  
Cambridge, CB2 1RD  
Telephone: 01223 338200  
Fax: 01223 337578  
Email: [develop@pet.cam.ac.uk](mailto:develop@pet.cam.ac.uk)  
[www.pet.cam.ac.uk](http://www.pet.cam.ac.uk)

Stephen Bond, Saskia Murk Jansen,  
Scott Mandelbrote, Vince Thorby

Design & print management: H2 Associates, Cambridge

Peterhouse Newsletter is printed with vegetable based inks on paper containing material sourced from responsibly managed forests certified in accordance with the Forest Stewardship Council ®.



05  
Fellows' research during the pandemic  
– Professor Mari Jones

08  
Fellows' research during the pandemic  
– Dr Christopher Lester

12  
Syed Mohammad Hadi: Petrean Olympian  
Over The Rainbow



# The Master Writes



Bridget Kendall  
sitting for her  
portrait, painted by  
Keith Breeden

I have had more time than usual to reflect recently, sitting still for hours on end while my portrait was painted. Thinking back over the past year or so, I have been trying to make sense of the extraordinary test of endurance that we have all been through.

When the pandemic first hit in March 2020, little did we realise that it would last for so long. In a strange interruption to the normal rhythms of academic life, here in Cambridge we found ourselves measuring the year in lockdowns instead of university terms: the first lockdown of spring 2020, the shorter November lockdown, the long, grim third lockdown from January 2021, and that dramatic moment last June as exams ended when infections from the Delta variant briefly skyrocketed and many student households went into isolation.

So, what have we learnt from this crisis? Firstly, we discovered that when forced to move online we can still function. Prior to the pandemic the idea of shutting down almost all physical activity in the College and University was almost inconceivable. Now

Thinking back over the past year or so,  
I have been trying to make sense of the  
extraordinary test of endurance which  
we have all been through.

we know that if we absolutely have to, we can still operate as a virtual community.

To start with, I worried whether we would literally have the bandwidth to sustain all the online connections required. In fact, the College wifi did struggle on a few occasions, but thanks to the hard work of our IT team who raced to upgrade the system where needed, on the whole it worked surprisingly well.

As far as teaching went, online lectures and supervisions were more successful in some subjects than others. Obviously students in

fields where practical work is crucial – architecture, medicine, chemistry – felt the absence of lab and project time acutely. Supervisors in engineering, physics and maths also missed being able to watch students complete work sheets in front of them, to be sure they understood properly. And we were all concerned about the potential impact on our students' mental health of being deprived of so much personal interaction. But it turned out that teaching and learning and even doing exams remotely can be made to work, even if it is not ideal.

We also found out that making some College activities virtual or hybrid did have upsides. Webinars came into their own, connecting audiences from different parts of the globe. Livestreaming the Christmas Carol service meant that, for the first time, we could link to a global audience of alumni, some of whom we were pleased to see at our online College Music Society concerts and other events run by student societies.

We experimented with online reunions: I hosted a series of *Meet the Master* sessions, bringing groups of Petreans together for a shared drink and chat on Zoom. (If any more of you would like to do this – do get in touch.) At the University level, we found that virtual meetings were a very efficient way of getting some 30 Heads of House together at short notice.

Yet, however useful a backstop online and hybrid events have proved to be, I think many of us would agree that you cannot beat the advantages and sheer pleasure of physical encounters.

And this is something else that we have learnt from this crisis: that in the Cambridge context, online is not enough. The lifeblood of this College and University is physical interaction; at every level it is the convening power of this place that makes it so potent.

Other universities round the world may see virtual learning as a viable future. But the reason people come to Cambridge, whether as a student, a young researcher, or a professor, is to walk the streets of this beautiful city, to live and work inside these ancient buildings, to enjoy the stimulation of meeting colleagues face-to-face and to benefit from incidental, unplanned conversations with those outside your own discipline that spark new ideas and connections.

What else have we learnt from this pandemic? That we can adapt ancient ceremonies and the roof won't fall in. When all Cambridge degree ceremonies had to be cancelled from the spring of 2020, I was asked to chair a University working group to decide what to do

Yes, this has been a year of unprecedented crisis, but it has also shown this is a College to be proud of. We have been 'stress tested' in a way that has not happened since the Second World War and we have emerged intact and stronger for it.

instead, and a lot of thought went into redesigning the ceremonies so they could be safely restarted in 2021. The Latin was tweaked so that those finalists who took degrees in absence could come back to have them celebrated instead of conferred; a Covid-safe ceremony was devised with no guests in the Senate House; the ancient traditions of touching fingers and clasping hands were temporarily suspended; and, most importantly, an online streaming service was trialled which for the first time enabled friends and relatives all over the world to view the Senate House degree ceremonies live. It was a welcome innovation, especially for students with families overseas, and hopefully it will be retained when ceremonies return to normal.

There is no doubt that this crisis has taken its toll on many people. We all know those who have lost loved ones, including some of our alumni. Here in College, it is what our students have been through that is at the forefront of all our minds: what they

have lost in terms of educational experiences and all the other ways that their lives have been constrained just when they should be widening their horizons.

But we are also mindful of how many people in College have shown extraordinary resilience, including many of our students, and how many of our staff and Fellows have put in an enormous amount of hard work day after day into keeping the community going. We also owe a huge debt of gratitude to many of you, our alumni, for your generous support for the College at this difficult time.

Yes, this has been another very difficult year, but it has also shown that this is a College to be proud of. We have been 'stress tested' in a way that has not happened since the Second World War and we have emerged intact and stronger for it. We can look forward, confident that this College stands ready to meet whatever lies ahead.





# *Fellows' research during the pandemic*

*Professor Mari Jones*



Professor Jones at work  
on a comparative glossary  
of the Norman language

My research involves the linguistic analysis of the varieties of Norman spoken in the Channel Islands.

The pandemic has made it impossible to conduct linguistic fieldwork and, even though travel restrictions are now easing, linguists working with communities who speak endangered languages recognise that it will be some time yet before our work can resume there. For instance, most remaining speakers are elderly, which raises ethical questions of how appropriate it is to mix freely with them in the same way as previously. Therefore, for the first time in my career, my focus has had to shift from analysis of the spoken word to that of the written word.

During the pandemic, I completed the compilation of a comparative glossary of the Norman language as it is spoken in Guernsey, Jersey and Sark, based on fieldnotes made in the 1930s. Some of

*During the pandemic, I have completed the compilation of a comparative glossary of the Norman language as it is spoken in Guernsey, Jersey and Sark, based on fieldnotes made in the 1930s.*

these fieldnotes were kindly loaned to me by Guernsey's Priaulx Library, where they had lain in a cardboard box in rather a jumbled fashion for some thirty years.

However, when it became clear that many of the cards on which the fieldnotes were recorded were missing from the library's collection, some linguistic detective work ensued and I succeeded in tracking down three more boxes of cards that had found their way out of the island.

The resulting glossary, to be published next spring, will therefore present an inter-island comparison of some 6,000 terms, many of which are recorded for the first time. The project has been met with great enthusiasm in the Channel Islands, where it has been featured in local media and a recent crowdfunding initiative has raised almost twice the target amount.

### *Dr Graham Christie*

The period spanning from January 2020 through to the end of March 2020 was an interesting time in Cambridge, more so as a microbiologist with an interest in infectious disease. It was evident that something significant was happening, however even I took whispers from Public Health colleagues that we might be heading for a pandemic scale incident with a pinch of salt. Reports from the Austrian Alps and unfortunate pensioners stranded on a cruise ship still seemed a bit distant. Elbow room while eating lunch in the Combination Room – an early attempt at social distancing – almost seemed comical at the time since I don't think any Covid cases has yet been recorded in Cambridge. Of course, things rapidly spiralled: the Vice-Chancellor's missives became more and more grim, Boris's lockdown broadcast hit like a bombshell, and soon we were packing PCs and office items into cars. It quickly became apparent that we wouldn't be heading back to the office (fine) or lab (bad) any time soon, which is problematic when one's research group is almost entirely dependent on lab work.

Then, probably from the end of April or thereabouts, there was a change of mood amongst colleagues. Rather than passively watching events unfold, the feeling was 'let's try and contribute something'. The 'something' wasn't clear, but I remember calling a group meeting to discuss the options.

My research group study the molecular and structural biology of spore forming bacteria – bugs that can cause food toxigenesis and a range of nasty diseases. This is quite a distance from virology, but many of the lab techniques are similar. The refrain at the time to a disbelieving group was 'microbiology is microbiology'. I was also reasonably well read on viruses having toyed with the idea of working with them in the preceding years (viruses and spores share certain structural features, namely the



Dr Christie

'tiled' exterior surface). I liked the idea of developing a heat-stable Covid vaccine, genetically engineering harmless spores to display the spike protein on their surface. However, I heard that a colleague at Royal Holloway was already working on this so, influenced by our expertise in environmental decontamination, we switched our attention to materials with anti-viral properties. Covid transmission was poorly understood at this point – was it from aerosols or contact with contaminated surfaces, or both? We were also being inundated with requests from industry to test the viricidal properties or otherwise of fabrics that could be used for facemasks and other elements of PPE. Global capacity for coronavirus testing was a significant bottleneck for R&D efforts in spring 2020, so we were dealing with requests ranging from small UK based start-ups to major corporations in the US and Japan. Thankfully, one of my PhD students and fellow Petrean, Gabby Mills, had experience of mammalian cell culture, which is a pre-requisite for virology work. Soon, with the University permitting lab



Gabrielle Mills (m.2019)

access for Covid-associated work, and having taken advice on techniques from Ian Goodfellow and colleagues in the Virology division, we were culturing coronaviruses and testing for their survival on a range of materials. Gabby's contribution in this regard was, and remains, essential, moving seamlessly from working with *C. difficile* spores for her PhD research to more applied work with coronaviruses. Grant applications followed, including one with another Petrean, Stephan Hoffman, (which really should have been funded) and another with new collaborators in Birmingham (which was funded). The work is collaborative and multidisciplinary, with vital input and energy from Stuart Clarke in Chemistry and Ljiljana Fruk from my own department. The first papers from these projects – describing the effects of various nanoparticles and surface coatings on coronaviruses, and viral survival in aerosolised droplets – are in review and should be published soon.

Papers are fine of course, but what we set out to achieve is to see these innovations making headway in terms of public health and infection control, whether that be via production of enhanced facemasks, aircraft upholstery, buttons on ICU equipment, door handles and so on, which genuinely reduce the likelihood of Covid transmission. It remains to be seen if this will be the case, but regardless Covid will be with us for a while yet, perhaps indefinitely.

The period spanning from January 2020 through to the end of March 2020 was an interesting time in Cambridge, more so as a microbiologist with an interest in infectious disease.

### *Dr Geraint Thomas*

The year 2020 looked set to be eventful for me as a historian, with the publication of one monograph and the start of another. Whereas the former occurred as planned (*Popular Conservatism and the Culture of National Government in Inter-War Britain* was published by Cambridge University Press in November 2020), the closure of all archives threatened to derail the latter.

My new project, a study of the ideas and politics of post-war reconstruction in Britain c.1914–1931, required access to the correspondence of the leading politicians of the time, including David Lloyd George, Austen Chamberlain, Winston Churchill and Christopher Addison. I determined not to change project, but rather to keep under review the means by which it could be pursued in the age of Covid. Looking back, there were three stages. The first coincided with the first period of national lockdown and involved acceptance of the fact that none of the archival collections could be consulted. I therefore focused on reading published material, practising what I urge research students to do in preparation for a doctorate, namely to expand the historiographical and disciplinary hinterland in which to position their research. This led me to read for international comparisons (histories of reconstruction in Australia, for instance) and finally to engage with some works of political science and anthropology that had long adorned my bookshelves unthumbed.

The second stage came with the immense efforts of archivists and librarians nationwide to digitise primary sources for use online. This enabled me to resume archival research, but not as intended. With the exception of Churchill, large parts of whose papers were already available online, none of my figures became the subject of the digitisation drive. Printed primary material

I determined not to change project, but rather to keep under review the means by which it could be pursued in the age of Covid.

(pamphlets, newspapers, social-survey reports), rather than private correspondence, constituted the bulk of digitised content. Although this forced me to recalibrate my priorities, it proved unexpectedly fruitful, bringing to the fore perspectives and material that I had initially dismissed as marginal to my subject – in particular the many popular studies of social policy, written by policy experts to coincide with the extension of the franchise in 1918, which will form the basis of a section of my next book.

And so, with the easing of national restrictions in the summer of 2021, came stage three: the re-opening of archives and

the return to my initial scheme. I spent several weeks working in the Bodleian in Oxford, the National Archives and the Parliamentary Archives in London, the National Libraries of Wales and Scotland, and – best of all – the basement of Hatfield House. Immersing oneself in their correspondence remains the surest way of entering the worldview of past leaders. Moreover, each visit reminded me of the serendipities that shape a project: the chance conversation with the archivist who tips you off about a relevant new collection, the prandial discussion with research mentors and colleagues, and of course the joy of handling the material unmediated.





### *Dr Christopher Lester*

The life of a Peterhouse Fellow is nothing if not varied. Early in my career as a particle physicist I was often required to go underground to install or calibrate LHC instrumentation in CERN caverns. However, in January 2020, I found myself underground on the continent for entirely different College business: to inspect what may have been the finest collection of historical Dutch chandeliers from the last three centuries, secreted in the basement of a suburban house in Belgium.

To explain why, we must first take a few steps backwards. Readers of this publication will be aware of numerous projects relating to the restoration and history of the College Chapel. Those who know it well will know that, though being predominantly lit by candlelight during winter evensong, the candles are mostly on the congregation and choir stalls and on the walls. There are no chandeliers hanging from the vault. But it was not always so. Indeed, a document from 20th August 1659 only twenty-seven years after its consecration, “An Inentary of ye goods in ye chappell” lists:

- 1 Greater Hanging Candlestick containing 16 branches,
- 1 Lesser Hanging Candlestick containing 12 branches (one of which is imperfect),

Alas, no other records of these chandeliers have been found – neither in the College archives nor elsewhere. Though the Chapel chandeliers have been long gone, the discovery of their existence has nonetheless prompted many to ask what the Chapel might have looked or felt like when lit as it was in 1659, and this resulted in a learning process for me culminating in the visit to Waterloo mentioned earlier.

Given the limited evidence, it seems likely that we will never know with any certainty the precise form taken by the original chandeliers. However, given examples that have survived from the same period in other places, given East Anglian trading links which made the Netherlands (for some purposes) closer to Cambridge than other parts of Britain, and given the pre-eminence of Amsterdam (and particularly

of its workshops) as the 17th century’s centre for ecclesiastical brass chandelier production, it seems likely that Peterhouse would have installed chandeliers that would now be described as being in the Flemish style. These feature a heavy baluster stem holding a large polished brass sphere to scatter the candlelight. Serpentine and faceted branches emerge from hubs on the stem, and terminate in candle cups and drip trays which would all have been easily removable for cleaning and maintenance. The branches were arrayed symmetrically in tiers to make a pleasing shape that is overall more spherical than disc-like. In the 17th century such chandeliers were almost all custom made for places of worship and large palaces, and so were typically much larger than those that were mass-produced for the domestic consumption of the middle classes in the 18th and 19th centuries. The search for age-appropriate chandeliers continued, eventually unearthing four significant 17th-century candidates.

Meanwhile, to satisfy my curiosity I purchased two 19th-century domestic chandeliers in the same style and for a few weeks in Michaelmas 2020 we hung them in Chapel to see whether they would make a significant difference to the ambience. Candle chandeliers were always hung as low as possible, partly to permit easier lighting and maintenance, but primarily so that the source of the light was as close as possible to the persons who needed it. Hanging them low over the choir provided a strong focus on the congregation and choir, and resulted in a feeling of intimacy that many commented favourably upon, so the College decided to hang chandeliers permanently. After this satisfactory excursion into College history, I (for one) will be very pleased to be able to return



with greater focus to my main job: attempting to find evidence of departures from the laws of physics as we presently know them, as seen in data acquired by the Large Hadron Collider.

I am one of three particle physicists in Peterhouse (Professor Parker and our new research Fellow Dr Pacey being the others) working on the “ATLAS Experiment” – which is one of the two main general-purpose detectors in Geneva able to observe proton collisions made by the Large Hadron Collider. The LHC and ATLAS have both been turned off for most of the last two and a half years to allow for a large programme of upgrades and maintenance. The detector was turned back on again in October 2021, at which time ATLAS was able to record its first proton-beam ‘pictures’ since the end of 2018.

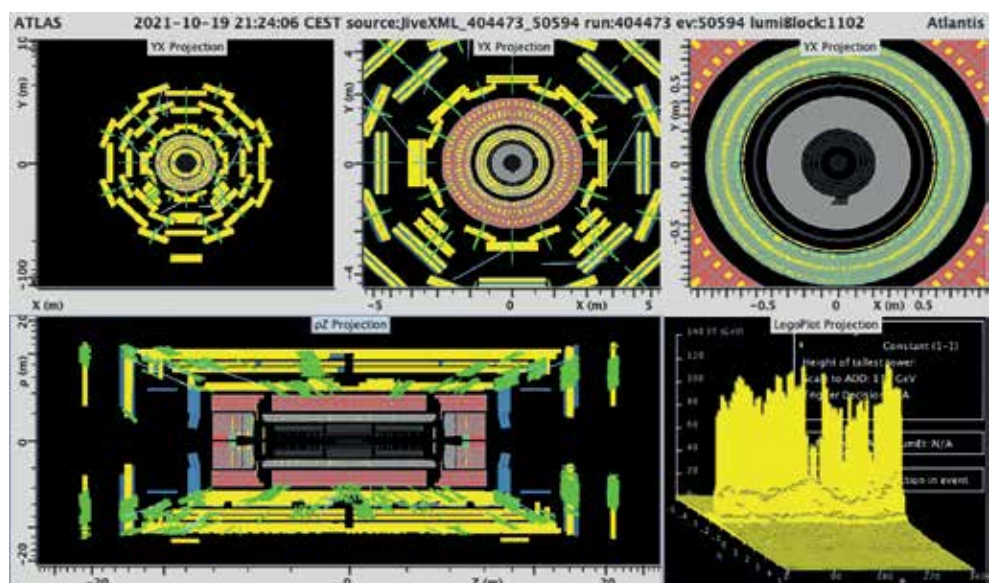
Given the limited evidence, it seems likely that we will never know with any certainty the precise form taken by the original chandeliers.



When taking pictures such as these, the ATLAS detector still uses pieces of apparatus designed and assembled in Cambridge between 2004 and 2008 in work then led by Professor Parker. Much of the so-called ‘Semiconductor Tracker’ (a three-meter long by one-meter diameter barrel) is made up of such components. Though the semiconductor has given fifteen years of good service, many of its components are already beyond their design life and will, in the next shutdown, be replaced by an entirely new apparatus which is also being fabricated in Cambridge (and in partner institutes). I hope to use the data that will emerge from the next five years’ worth of collisions to place constraints on the degree to which the laws of physics care about the handedness of space. So called ‘parity violation’ (a preference for one handedness over the other) has been known about in the Standard Model of Particle Physics since the 1960s. What is less well known is that the ATLAS and the Large Hadron Collider have themselves placed only a few constraints on parity violation since they both began to take data in 2009. This is largely a consequence of LHC beams being unpolarised and ATLAS lacking polarimeters, and that one or both of those would be required in order for the LHC to ‘reveal’ evidence of the sorts of parity violation that the world already knows about. Nonetheless, my work has shown that there are other, stranger, forms of parity violation that could be visible at the LHC, if only we look for them in the right ways. No such methods of parity violation are yet predicted by theorists, so the search for them seems to be a long shot. However, it would be criminal to have been involved in operating the world’s only machine able to reliably collide particles with centre of mass energies in excess of 10 TeV (tera electron volts) and yet to have not gone to the effort of checking whether the data produced contained evidence of strange and wonderful forms of parity violation. The fact that theorists have not yet predicted these forms of parity violation is their problem and not one for the experimental physicist. Indeed, the “muon” (loosely speaking a sub atomic particle which is a heavier version of an electron and is frequently found in cosmic rays where it lives for short periods of time) was so unexpected prior to its discovery in the 1930s that the Nobel laureate Isidor Isaac Rabi famously quipped, “Who ordered that?”. Perhaps non-standard sources of parity violation will turn out to be the next unexpected item to appear on the College bill of a researcher in Peterhouse or elsewhere.



Dr Lester considering the height of the temporary chandeliers



ATLAS's first proton-beam 'pictures' since 2018

### *Scott Mandelbrote*

#### **'Your ever-loving Chamberfellow, Isaac Newton'**

I had just walked back home along the guided bus route from Cole Farm on a bright March day, the first dose of vaccination against Covid newly in my left arm, when I received an email from Bonhams auction house in London. It drew attention to the sale at the end of the month of 'the long-lost notebook of Newton's friend and collaborator John Wickins, (d. 1719).' As Bonhams noticed, a notebook said to contain writings by and letters from Newton (signed 'Your ever-loving Chamberfellow'), and copied by his contemporary at Trinity, Wickins, had been described in 1728. It had never resurfaced and, apart from that reference, was unknown to scholarship.

For roughly the last twenty years, I have been one of the directors of the Newton Project, which aims to complete editorial work on the manuscripts of Isaac Newton (1642-1727). We are collaborating with the Cambridge Digital Library and other providers on a full digital edition. I decided therefore that my work would justify a journey to London and replied to Bonhams asking to inspect the manuscript. We fixed a date nearer the time of the sale at the end of the month and I parried the emails that came in from colleagues, librarians, and booksellers, by explaining that I would have an opinion on the manuscript once I had seen it. Clearly, it was important, if it was authentic, but both whether it was what Bonhams claimed it to be and what might be its significance were open questions.

Bonhams had noted that the handwriting of the notebook was not the same as that found in another manuscript, composed by Newton and written out by an amanuensis, who had long been thought to be Wickins. It rapidly emerged that scholars had suggested Wickins as the scribe for several manuscripts, in fact written in clearly different hands. The content of the notebook was attributed to Newton by its writer but the texts reproduced (a sermon on Romans 14.23 supposedly delivered in Trinity College Chapel, an unidentified Latin text, and three letters from Newton to Wickins 'at Monmouth', two of which were dated to 1677 and 1682) were unknown. It was believed that Wickins

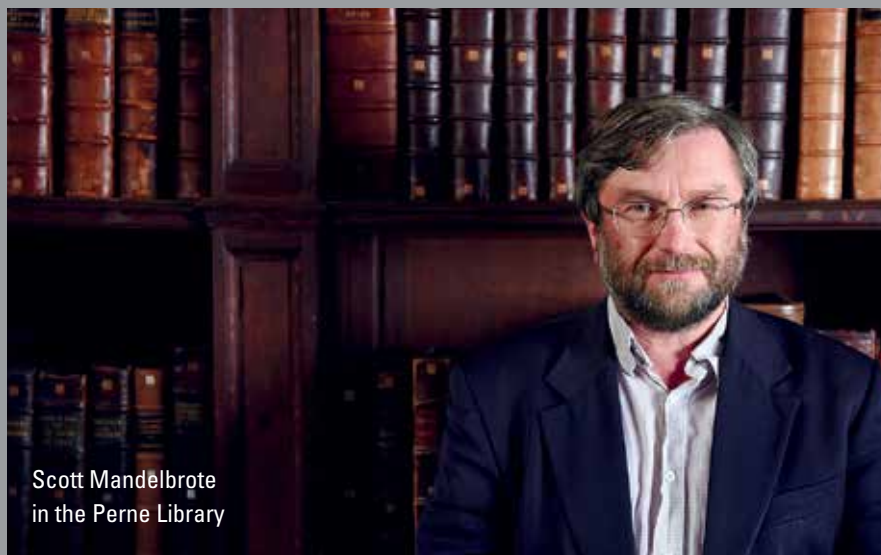
only left Trinity for the living of Stoke Edith in Herefordshire in 1684.

A few weeks later, I caught an almost empty train to King's Cross, walked across a deserted London through Hyde Park, and arrived at Bonhams' premises in Knightsbridge. It was locked, with no doorbell, and I had no telephone. Eventually, someone trying to bring their own property to auction persuaded Bonhams to open up, and I spent the day with the manuscript. It was immediately possible to confirm that the Latin text contained the lost answer that Newton had given at the Divinity Act in Cambridge in February 1677. The Divinity Act was a requirement for Masters of Arts resident in Cambridge to dispute on topics in theology, at that time presided over by the Regius Professor of Divinity, Joseph Beaumont, also Master of Peterhouse. I had recently published Beaumont's account of Newton's performance at the Divinity Act, based on manuscripts at Peterhouse, and argued that it provided the first clear evidence of Newton's concern with theology, later a major aspect of his unpublished writing. Now it was possible to read what Newton himself said and to confirm that he had taken an entirely orthodox stance on topics that related to the areas of theology where scholars have normally seen his positions as being heterodox or even heretical.

The presence of the Divinity Act disputation in the manuscript was a strong

argument for its authenticity, since nobody had realised that Newton even took part in the Act until I had discovered this a few years ago. The topic was the correct one and questions that Beaumont had recorded asking Newton corresponded with the content of Newton's answer. The sermon, therefore, was probably the one that Newton had preached as part of the required preparation for the Act, something which had otherwise proved to be difficult to identify conclusively. The letters in the manuscript, moreover, represented in part a discussion of the Act between two Cambridge friends who were both subject to its requirements: Wickins performed a year or so after Newton. They included extensive discussion of theological reading.

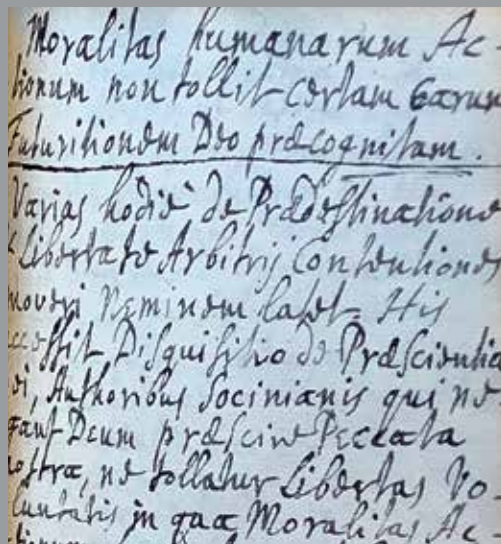
Comparison of the hand of the manuscript with known signatures of Wickins was inconclusive, although the notebook appeared to have an ownership inscription in his name. But one group of papers, relating primarily to the discovery of the optical phenomenon known as 'Newton's rings', that was thought perhaps to be in Wickins' hand matched the hand of the notebook almost precisely. This was enough for the time being to convince me that the manuscript was authentic and important and that it should be bought by the Cambridge University Library, which contains the largest collection of Newton's papers anywhere. Not only did it provide important evidence of Newton's friendship and collaboration with a younger colleague





at Trinity (including a letter discussing joint work on the refinement of the reflecting telescope), it also underlined the role of the normal functioning of the University in Newton's formation. It provided the first clear evidence of the precise content of an oral performance by Newton in any setting.

It did not prove difficult to persuade the University Library that it should make the purchase, although raising a sufficient war chest for the auction was more complex. Our position was helped by the fact that we discovered that the letters, on which Bonhams were leading the auction, had been published (without their accompanying reading lists) in a nineteenth-century periodical that had been entirely ignored by scholarship. That discovery also helped us to firm up a line of descent for the manuscript from Wickins, through his son and grandson, to owners in the nineteenth century who had made the link back to the description of the notebook from 1728, which had then just been published. Moreover, I was able to establish that



An excerpt from the newly discovered Newton manuscript

Newton himself identified the writing in the optical manuscript that I had used as a comparator for the hand in the notebook as being that of John Wickins, stating to Edmond Halley over a decade later that this proved the authenticity of the copy. The

questions of authenticity and significance had been settled.

On 31 March, the University Library purchased the notebook, about which it knew far more than any other bidder. Further research has identified its importance as a means of identifying Newton's reading in the late 1670s and work is ongoing on its significance for his thinking about religion. It has also proved possible to explain why and for how long Wickins was in Monmouth, where he was engaged in a dispute over his appointment as a preacher there by the Haberdashers' Company. The notebook is probably the most extensive discovery of material composed by Isaac Newton made in the last seventy-five years, although none of it is written in Newton's hand. Research on it, while archives were closed, was made possible by the success of libraries in Cambridge and elsewhere in digitising Newton manuscript materials and by the generosity of Bonhams in allowing me to visit during the height of lockdown.

## FELLOWS' RESEARCH DURING THE PANDEMIC

### Dr Justin Gerlach

In May, Anna Zora, a collaborator in the Seychelles islands, sent me some invertebrate pictures to identify and in passing said "I don't think I told you but last year I saw a tortoise hunting a bird". This was a rather startling statement and seemed very unlikely, a little more enquiry revealed that she had filmed the event. She sent me the video and this started a rather extraordinary project.

The video did indeed show a giant tortoise deliberately attacking and killing a tern chick in what can only be described as 'hunting'; not what vegetarian animals are supposed to do. As this had never been caught on film it was worth publicising and, in August, the video was released in our paper in *Current Biology*. I hoped it would get some publicity but wasn't sure that everyone would find it quite as exciting as I did. I was not expecting it to become the

media sensation of the week, being picked up by some 600 news outlets around the world and being the most viewed of any film on the University's YouTube channel in August and now they've put it on TikTok. I was particularly amused that *Nature* picked my comment to the New York Times "It's totally surprising and rather horrifying" as their 'quote of the day'.

Now that everything has calmed down again, we are planning to study this in detail. What started with a throw-away remark has led to very interesting new research collaborations and opportunities for ecologically interested students.

The full story can be viewed here: [https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822\(21\)00917-9](https://www.cell.com/current-biology/fulltext/S0960-9822(21)00917-9)



What started with a throw-away remark has led to very interesting new research collaborations.



# Syed Mohammad Hadi: Petrean Olympian Over The Rainbow

James Smith, Assistant Librarian



Syed Mohammad Hadi (m. 1921)

Yet, hockey was not even Hadi's principal discipline. That honour went to lawn tennis. Here, Hadi's record was nothing short of remarkable. A Blue in every year of his Cambridge education, such an achievement must have paled into relative insignificance during Easter Term of 1922 when Hadi reached the third round of Wimbledon.

With the eyes of the world eagerly trained on Tokyo and the successes and setbacks of the globe's most accomplished athletes, it seems an appropriate moment to celebrate one of Peterhouse's very own true sporting greats – and an Olympian to boot.

It is almost exactly one hundred years to the day that Syed Mohammad Hadi (1899–1971), born in Hyderabad in central India, matriculated at Peterhouse. Hadi's father, Captain Syed Mohammed, had died when his son was only two years old, leaving the care of the infant Hadi to Sir Asman Jah, sometime Prime Minister of Hyderabad.

From an early age, Hadi's athletic prowess was plain for all to see. He swiftly proved himself an adept horse-rider and polo player, and established himself as a regular in his local Nizam College football team. Keen to nurture such obvious budding sporting abilities, Sir Asman Jah arranged for his ward to continue his education in England, and it was to Peterhouse that Hadi journeyed in October 1921.

Hadi's record once established in his new collegiate surroundings more than vindicated his guardian's assessment of his athletic potential. Indeed, it is almost easier to list those sporting disciplines in which Hadi did *not* shine than in those that he did. Together with football, polo, cricket, chess and table tennis, he excelled most especially in hockey and tennis – a sporting septet that earned him the nickname 'Rainbow'. Only a term into his Peterhouse career, the College magazine, *The Sex*, remarked of its new hockey centre-forward that he was a "a very neat player, who makes full use of his opportunities in front of goal". A year later, that same publication wryly "pitie[d]...opposing goalkeepers when Hadi gets inside the circle and puts in one of his favourite shots". "How can we live without you? How can we let you go?" lamented the magazine's editor as Hadi embarked upon his final term in the summer of 1924.

Yet, hockey was not even Hadi's principal discipline. That honour went to lawn tennis. Here, Hadi's record was nothing short of remarkable. A Blue in every year of his Cambridge education, such an achievement must have paled into relative insignificance during Easter Term of 1922 when Hadi reached the third round of Wimbledon, both in singles and doubles. A year later he represented India in the Davis Cup, the premier international team event in men's tennis. He did so again in 1924 and 1925, in between becoming part of the first-ever Indian tennis team at the 1924 Paris Olympics. That same year, Hadi was a member of the joint Oxford and Cambridge tennis team that defeated the combined talents of Harvard and Yale at Eastbourne.

Peterhouse's loss of Hadi in 1924 was the University of Pennsylvania's gain. There, Hadi studied physical education prior to returning to India, where he was appointed as the Director of Physical Education by the Nizam of Hyderabad. But his new role as instructor did little to hinder his continuing exploits as a world-class sportsman in his own right. In 1926, Hadi reached the quarter-finals in the men's doubles at Wimbledon, and in 1934, he became the first man to score a century in the inaugural Ranji Trophy – the competition which to this day remains the premier domestic cricket tournament in India. That signalled the start of a hectic period at the wicket for Hadi. In early 1936, he starred alongside the Indian cricketing legend Lala Amarnath in an unofficial Test match against Australia in Chepauk. Several months later he once again donned his whites when the Indian team undertook a tour of England.

As the passing of years took their inevitable toll, Hadi's sporting passions found expression through public service.



Peterhouse Lawn Tennis team, 1924  
(Hadi seated centre)

In the early 1940s, he became one of the founder members of the Hyderabad cricket and football associations, and, latterly, rose to the position of Joint Secretary of Education in the Indian ministry. In 1959, he was appointed secretary to the newly-created All India Council of Sports. The latter was fitting recognition for one whose all-round achievements seem almost inconceivable in the professional sporting world of today. As the *Indian Express* put it in their obituary of Hadi in July 1971, "It is but given to a few and seldom to shine in so many sports". Syed Mohammad 'Rainbow' Hadi was unquestionably one of that select few.

#### Petrean Olympians

1908	Bernard Redwood (motor boating) GG
1924	Syed Mohamad Hadi (tennis) India
1932	T G Askwith (Tom) (rowing)
1936	T G Askwith (Tom) (rowing)
	A G K Brown (Godfrey) (athletics) G in 4x400 relay; S in 400
	Vane Ivanovich (athletics) Yugoslavia
1948	D B C Taylor (Danny) (rowing) Ireland
1972	Michael J Hart (Mike) (rowing) S
1976	Michael J Hart (Mike) (rowing)
1996	R E Bradshaw Crombie (Brad) (rowing) Canada
	Stefan Forster (rowing) Germany
2000	Stephanie Cook (modern pentathlon) G
2000	James Cracknell (rowing) G
2004	James Cracknell (rowing) G
	Sebastian Thormann (rowing) Germany
2016	Natan Wegrzycki-Szymczyk (rowing) Poland
2020	Tom George (rowing) B
	Oliver Wynne-Griffith (rowing) B



# MCR

*2020–21 from a graduate perspective by President of the MCR, Josey Parker (pictured), and outgoing President Jennifer Ward George...*



The 2020-21 academic year was one of the most difficult for the MCR, with a diminished sense of community, an enduring atmosphere of uncertainty, and a hollowed-out version of traditional Peterhouse days. Despite this, however, the MCR continued to be resilient, coming together in many of the year's dark corners to carry one another through.

In the beginning, we managed to adapt Freshers' Week events and run socials outdoors in a marquee under the glimmer of battery-powered fairy lights and with blankets brought from home; we sent postcards of Peterhouse across the world to those unable to be in College; we baked across Zoom from kitchens across the country; and, proudly, our MCR Committee even managed to lead and kickstart the initial lobby in CUSU (the University Students Union) for hardship funding for PhD students across the University. Although the year was a difficult one, it brought out some of the best in our community and embedded friendships that will last a lifetime.

As England has come out of lockdown over the summer, it has been wonderful to see our vibrant MCR come back to life. Despite the challenges involved in organising larger scale events while some Covid restrictions remain in place, our committee has worked tirelessly to ensure that current postgraduate students will be able to experience all that Cambridge has to offer.

Since many students who joined us in 2020 were unable to have a normal year in Cambridge, we are making every effort to open events to all year groups, including many of our events in Freshers' Week. The 2021 Freshers' Week was a

frenzied, joyous occasion, and it was wonderful to welcome new freshers – and welcome back old faces – with a slate of events including a cocktail night, a wine and cheese tasting, punting, and, of course, the obligatory black-tie Freshers' Formal! In addition, our MCR is returning to its previous status as a beloved space in College where graduate Petreans can gather for a cup of coffee and a chat at any time of day.

We are looking forward to the coming academic year in the hope that Petreans, new and old, can experience just how wonderful, eccentric, and lively our College can be.

Since many students who joined us in 2020 were unable to have a normal year in Cambridge, we are making every effort to open events to all year groups, including many of our events in Freshers' Week.



*...and from an undergraduate perspective by incoming and outgoing JCR Presidents,  
Sophie Challonder and Georgia Gray*



**Sophie:** Much like everyone else, nothing could have prepared the JCR for Covid, and the first lockdown during Easter Term 2020 was certainly a shock. We dealt with it as a community though, remaining connected online even though we couldn't be together in-person. We connected through online challenges, group video calls, and through a variety of welfare events – students were incredibly grateful for the £100 welfare fund offered to each individual by the Friends of Peterhouse. Graduating without a graduation ceremony was tough for finalists, but yearbooks and at-home celebrations helped them mark the special occasion, again evidencing the resilience of the Peterhouse student body.

Returning to Peterhouse in Michaelmas was certainly different, with freshers unable to participate in a regular Freshers' Week and with older

year groups experiencing a very different University life. But we made the best of it, with Covid-safe events organised to integrate new students into our College community and outdoor spaces provided to enable in-person interactions. Even the November lockdown couldn't dampen our spirits, with Peterhouse's students demonstrating their generosity through the BOGOF university food drive competition.

Lent Term saw many of us once again learning from home, unable to live in the College that we love so much. Despite this, our community spirit stayed strong. The JCR's first online elections, for example, were a real success – almost every role was contested, and Zoom hustings saw well over half of the student body in attendance. Handing over the role of President after all of this was bizarre, but I couldn't have been more confident in Georgia as she took over the responsibility.

**Georgia:** Like Sophie, beginning my term as President whilst being unable to actually be in Cambridge was incredibly strange. In spite of this, as a team, the JCR Committee and I have worked tirelessly since to bring about positive change in College, regardless of our location. We ran a room ballot referendum to decide which rooms allocation system we, as a JCR, would like to implement permanently, held a successful random room ballot for the second year in a row in August, and have thankfully been able to run an in-person Freshers' Week this Michaelmas.

All students have certainly enjoyed being able to experience a somewhat "normal" College this term, with regular formal dinners, a reopened JCR and Bar, the reintroduction of bops and with the renewal of a variety of College events, such as those run by the Beard Society, which our Women's and Marginalised Gender's Officer has worked hard to revive.

The JCR Committee will be continuing with their projects, and we have a number of exciting in-person events to look forward to after a year of virtual events.

**Much like everyone else, nothing could have prepared the JCR for Covid, and the first lockdown during Easter Term 2020 was certainly a shock.**

# Peterhouse Development

Thank you once again for your most generous support this year. We were overwhelmed by the generosity shown by our members during the pandemic, and are grateful to you for your support and loyalty. Between 1 October 2020 and 30 September 2021, we received just over £1m in donations, pledges and legacies from Petreans in the UK and around the world.

## The Telephone Campaign

We had another successful Campaign this year, and a total of just over £185,000 was raised in donations and pledges (£20,000 more than the 2020 telephone campaign). Unrestricted (core purposes) donations made during the campaign were allocated to restricted gifts and added to the projects below:

The Lady Mary Ramsey Fund for Student Bursaries and Hardship:	<b>£43,538</b>
Admissions Fund:	<b>£25,000</b>
Graduate Studentship (Arts and Sciences):	<b>£14,681</b>
Graduate Sports Scholarships	<b>£3,000</b>
Renovation of the Organ:	<b>£7,817</b>
Restoration of the Chapel:	<b>£6,600</b>
Restoration of the Brewhouse:	<b>£82,188</b>
Support for College Music:	<b>£3,000</b>
Friends of Peterhouse Student Well-being Fund:	<b>£3,600</b>
Academic Travel within UK:	<b>£2,762</b>

**Next year's Telephone Campaign will be held between 6 and 16 January 2022.**

## Email Appeal June 2021

In June of this year we circulated an email to members appealing for donations towards our core purposes due to the College's deficit of approx. £1.2 million as a result of the pandemic. We were pleased that so many of you responded to our plea and are delighted to report that almost £47,000 was raised in donations and pledges.

## Fundraising Appeals

**Undergraduate Support – The Lady Mary Ramsey Fund:** in the last financial year, 65 undergraduates benefitted from the LMR Bursary scheme and a further 480 undergraduates received other forms of financial support, doubling the support given in previous years as grants were given to students who remained in residence during the vacation period due to the pandemic. Our target for the Lady Mary Ramsey Fund is to raise £3m, which should provide an annual income of £60,000 at current interest rates. Donations are deemed to be expendable endowment so that we can assist students before that target is reached. We are also

mindful of the need to support overseas undergraduates and are looking into ways to expand our provision of overseas scholarships as soon as finances permit.

**Graduate Studentships:** in the last financial year 35 postgraduates received funding. We awarded four new graduate studentships (three-year studentships). We also had five new joint/match-funded studentships (two three-years and three one-year) and awarded two sports studentships this year. 26 continuing postgraduates were in receipt of a studentship (Peterhouse or joint/match-funded), and most of these were three-year studentships. This number includes eight students who received an extension of their studentship due to the pandemic. In order to minimise our deficit and to focus resources on supporting existing students and staff, we regretfully decided to reduce the number of new studentships to be offered this coming year. Donations to this fund will enable us to increase the number on offer sooner than we might otherwise be able to.

**Brewhouse:** we are delighted to report that the Brewhouse project is now almost finished. A garden party was held for donors to the project at the end of September, our first event for 18 months! The scaffolding came down just in time and the Contractor was on hand to give an informative guided tour. The beautiful rendering on the outside of the Brewhouse is the same that was used for Tunwells Court. The first



The Peterhouse crest and other trade marks in the rendering of the Brewhouse



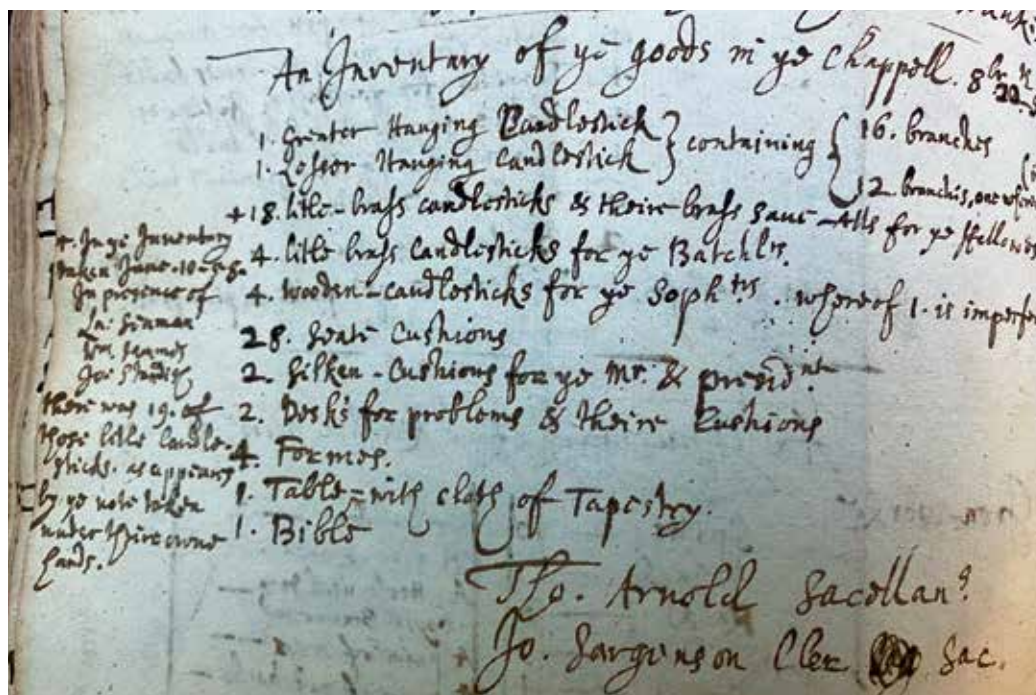
photograph below shows the Peterhouse crest and the second shows a hammer, representing the Contractor's company symbol, The Thorwood Hammer; a kettle, which is the symbol of the pargeter, her name is Kettle and it is her specialist technique; and NM are the initials of the renderer Nigel Mitchell. The Music Director, Dr Simon Jackson, is looking forward to his new office and practice rooms for the start of Lent Term 2022.

**The Chapel and the Organ:** it is with great sadness that we must report the death of one of our organ advisors at the end of last year. Catherine Ennis, previous President of the Royal College of Organists, was a leading concert organist and a highly respected teacher as well as a very experienced organist at an important City of London church. Her loss came at a critical moment in the project. We were very fortunate to appoint David Graham (Professor in charge of Organ at the Royal College of Music and one of the UK's leading organ teachers) to take her place. With his help and that of our other advisors Nicholas Thistlethwaite and Simon Jackson and under the chairmanship of Andrew McIntyre (m. 1974 as the organ scholar) we spent Lent and Easter Term working through the challenges posed by the discoveries of the organ builders.

When the organ builders dismantled the organ they discovered that the sides of the case were original and that, contrary to expectations, Snetzler had positioned the wedge bellows inside the case on the north side, not outside as was more frequently the custom. So it was decided to move the modern console to the south side so that we could restore Snetzler's winding. Research also revealed that Snetzler originally used balanced action rather than the suspended action of the Hill/Mander instrument and the decision was taken to restore Snetzler's action. Unfortunately, balanced key action takes up significantly more room than suspended key action so the design had to be modified in order to retain two consoles both with mechanical action. We are delighted to report that the DAC approved the modified design in the summer and that we remain on track to have the organ back in Chapel ready for Michaelmas 2023.

The absence of the organ had unexpected benefits during the pandemic – by putting the choir in the empty organ loft we have been able to have a larger choir than had they remained in the body of the Chapel. The absence of the organ has also meant that for the time being you can look right through the Chapel from west to east – an unexpected and rather lovely view. To provide the music in the Chapel while the organ is being restored, we bought a Viscount





The Chapel inventory of 20th August 1659

electronic organ and the organ scholars have already had fun experimenting with different temperaments and also different styles of organ – from baroque to French romantic to modern and back again. When the pipe organ returns we will keep the Viscount in a music practice room so that organists can play it with earphones on when the pipe organ is unavailable.

As mentioned by Dr Lester, the Chapel inventory of 1659 shows that, not long after the Chapel was built, the most impressive lighting in it was provided by a pair of chandeliers – one with sixteen arms and one with twelve. It is amusing to see evidence of a hierarchy (in this case relating to candle-technology) between Fellows, Graduates and Undergraduates. It is also curious to see the lone bible coming last in the list which in all other respects appears to be one sorted by the value or prestige of the items within it. The chandeliers themselves seem to have disappeared by the early 19th century. Pictures of the Combination Room unearthed by Dr Adamson, have shown two brass chandeliers which are also no longer present. These are not, however, the missing Chapel chandeliers as one has only eight branches. As reported elsewhere, to satisfy his curiosity Dr Lester purchased two 19th century domestic chandeliers in the same style as those believed to have hung in Chapel. For a few weeks at the end of Michaelmas 2020 they were hung in Chapel to see whether they would make a significant difference to the ambience. The results were surprising and impressive. Despite being hung on rather ugly steel braided cables, and despite almost certainly being smaller than those Peterhouse would have had in 1659, they looked substantially less out of place in the

Chapel than one might have expected, perhaps on account of the Chapel being relatively small itself, and perhaps also because all the other brasswork in the Chapel dates from the same period and has similar ornamentation.

The College was granted faculty to install the chandeliers permanently so the search for age-appropriate chandeliers continued, eventually unearthing four significant 17th century candidates – three in private collections in Belgium and one in the ownership of a Dutch antique dealer. Sadly, the quality of these items and their scarcity has placed them beyond the range of the pockets of both the College and



The view through the Chapel

potential donors. Fortunately, further investigation uncovered a firm that fabricates copies and with the generous help of Mrs Anita Higham (widow of Donald Higham m. 1956) and Mark Slater (m. 1988) we hope to have them in place within the current academic year.

### Future Projects

Many of our projects were put on hold during the pandemic, but we are looking to return to these again in 2022.

Work on our garden project in Cosin Court will commence with the addition of step-free access and landscaping to the side of the Master's Lodge.

The Boat Club's 2028 Appeal to refurbish the Boathouse was also put on the back-burner, but the Committee are meeting again the latter part of Michaelmas Term with a view to finalising the plans for the building and discuss costings.

### Friends of Peterhouse

Thank you as always to the Council of the Friends of Peterhouse for their support during the past year. The support they have given to the College throughout the year and the extra gift that they gave during the pandemic was very much appreciated. Grants made by the Friends in the FY 2019/2020 were used for student hardship, assistance with the cost of the College Counsellor, and support for (online) yoga classes. In 2020 we also established the Friends of Peterhouse Wellbeing Fund.



### The 1284 Circle

Membership to the 1284 Circle is open to anyone for the year in which their donations total between £1,284 and £5,000. The Circle attracted 68 members this year, and through the generosity of the Circle the College received almost £140,000 in gifts. Members to the Circle are listed at the end of this Newsletter. A special luncheon is organised for donors of the Circle in September of each year and they are also given priority booking for certain events.

### William Stone Society

The William Stone Society was set up to thank those who have chosen to remember the College in their wills and currently has 178 members. We obviously hope that it will be many years before we receive their legacies! Bequests are a very helpful source of income for the College and can enable donors to do something they would have had difficulty doing in their lifetimes. If you are considering leaving a legacy to the College, possibly for the Boathouse refurbishment or any of our other projects, please contact Ann Munro (ann.munro@pet.cam.ac.uk).



*Peterhouse*