Issue 34 | Summer 2025

THE FOUNTAIN

TRINITY COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

Produced by the Alumni Relations and Development Office

Photography:
Front cover: © Danielle Melling
Inside front cover: Graduation 2024 © David Johnson

Design:
Andy Harvey Design Limited

Editor:
alumni-comms@trin.cam.ac.uk
www.trin.cam.ac.uk/alumni

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

WELCOME

from the Master

Welcome to the *The Fountain* 2025. I last introduced this magazine back in summer 2020, when the UK's COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were beginning to ease. Five years on, the pandemic's after-effects continue to be felt around the world, but Trinity endures, and we remain focused on our important work.

This year, we have made great strides in supporting our postgraduates. To respond to declining funding opportunities for PhD research, both in the sciences and the humanities, we created the Trinity Cambridge Research Studentships (TCRS) in partnership with the University. The Funding will provide up to 300 fully funded PhD studentships over the next 10 years and ensure Cambridge can continue to attract the brightest researchers from around the globe. You can read more from our own PhD students and their work on pages 16 to 19.

We have also launched our Trinity Plus programme, made possible with alumni support. The pilot scheme is designed to give both Trinity and Cambridge undergraduate and graduate students new opportunities to broaden their horizons and engage with global issues while gaining transferable skills and experience for life after Cambridge. Each of the three TrinityPlus strands – Entrepreneurship, Policy, and Musical Theatre – provides an immersive learning experience designed to bolster confidence. You can read more on pages 13 to 15.

Looking further ahead, Trinity will celebrate its 500th Anniversary in 2046. To meet this major milestone with purpose, we will soon launch a major campaign to address the challenges the College and Cambridge face in remaining at the forefront of higher education and research impact. Our campaign centres on three core pillars – supporting students, research, and the Trinity estate – reflecting our commitment to scholarship, to Cambridge, and the wider world.

You can discover more College news on pages 6 to 9 of this magazine. In 'Wither Waterland?' on pages 10 to 12, Professor Emily Shuckburgh (1994), Co-Director of the Cambridge Centre for Landscape Regeneration, focuses on the five-year research programme to provide a sustainable future for the Fens. Other articles include our Digitisation Services Manager, Anne McLaughlin, on the impressive advances made by the Library team on the Wren Digitisation Project. You can meet the student co-organiser of Trinity's first Arts Week, Sophie Rayner (2022) on pages 24 to 25, and we also spend a day in the life of Trinity Executive Head Chef, Jon Witherley.

I hope you enjoy this edition; please share your thoughts with us. Don't forget to keep in touch with the alumni team too, via alumni@trin.cam.ac.uk.

Dame Sally Davies (e2019)
Master

GLOBAL

Alumni news

UK

Sir Andrew Cahn KCMG (1970) was appointed Chair of Council of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, for October 2024–2027.

UK

Architect, author and academic **Sumita Singha OBE RIBA (1988)** received an Honorary Doctorate from University College of Estate Management, Reading, January 2025. At the ceremony, Sumita wore the same sari she had worn for her Trinity graduation.

© CHATER PAUL JORDAN (CHRISTS, 2018)

UK

Head of Edinburgh Law School, Professor **Jo Shaw (1979)** was elected General Secretary of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, taking up the position in April 2025.

© STEWART ATTWOOD

France

Professor Philip Hoggan (1979) was promoted by the National Council to Distinguished Professor of Theoretical Chemistry, Université Clermont Auvergne, in 2024.

Netherlands

Dr Jan von der Thüsen (1990), Consultant Histopathologist at Erasmus MC, Rotterdam, has been elected President of the British Division of the International Academy of Pathology BDIAP 2025–2027.

UK

Artist and filmmaker **Lawrence Lek (2001)** received the 2024 Artist Award at Frieze London. The award gives an early- or mid-career artist the opportunity to realise an ambitious new commission at Frieze London. Lawrence also featured in the *TIME100* 'Most Influential People in AI 2024' list.

© NISHANT SHUKLA

China

Professor Wenhua Shan (1999) has been promoted to Senior Professor in Humanities and Social Sciences at Xi'an Jiaotong University, where he is also Assistant President and Dean of the Law School.

UK

Joya Chatterji (1985), Fellow of Trinity and Emeritus Professor of South Asian History at Cambridge, was awarded the 2024 Wolfson History Prize for her book *Shadows At Noon: The South Asian Twentieth Century*. The book charts the story of the subcontinent from the British Raj through independence and partition to the forging of the modern nations of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

© TARA MCMANUS

USA (Cambridge, Massachusetts)

Priyamvada Natarajan (1993), Joseph S. and Sophia S. Fruton Professor of Astronomy & Physics at Yale, has been awarded the Dannie Heineman Prize for Astrophysics 2025, in recognition of her 'groundbreaking contributions to our understanding of dark matter substructure in galaxy clusters, the formation and fuelling of black holes, and their feedback into the surrounding environment.' Priya was the first woman to be elected to a Trinity Fellowship in Astrophysics, while she was a graduate student at Cambridge.

USA (New York)

The first Trinity Regional Gathering in New York was held on 25th to 28th September 2024. The programme included talks from alumni **Sir Laurie Bristow (1983)** and **Dr Daniel Yergin (1968)**, tours of the Metropolitan Museum of Art led by Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, **Luke Syson (e2019)**, and a special viewing of the off-Broadway musical Lifeline, introduced by the **Master, Dames Sally Davies (e2019)**. Thank you to everyone whose generous support made the event possible.

Evening reception at the Yale Club on 26 September, with Director Luke Syson on the challenge of leading the Fitzwilliam Museum and developing the collections.

MENTORING MONTH 2025

In March, Mentoring Month returned for a third year, providing Trinity undergraduate students with the invaluable opportunity to develop the skills, abilities and connections they require for their futures.

Thanks to your incredible support, the scheme continues to expand, and we were able to match 104 students with volunteer alumni mentors, to benefit from their guidance and friendship. You can find out more at: **www.trin.cam.ac.uk/alumni/community/mentoring.**

We are grateful to everyone who contributed to Mentoring Month's success.

Our mentors and student participants told us what they gained from the experience.

> My confidence has increased when thinking about the future after my studies. Speaking to a real person who has walked this path before was very helpful, and hearing their experiences made their advice real.
>
> Sam (2024)

> If you care about a younger version of yourself, then it's a wonderful experience. It hardly takes any actual time, but can have a massive longer-term impact, in good ways, for both you and your mentee.
>
> Ravi (1991)

> Thanks for pairing me with [my mentor] and for going out of your way to make this connection happen. I really think these interactions will shape and improve my future plans.
>
> (Jacob 2021)

> Perfect – manageable in busy diary, very focused– effective & efficient. Loved it. Hope my mentee did too.
>
> Nerida (1993)

> I highly recommend becoming involved because it's an easy and enjoyable way to give back to the College which can be done entirely remotely!
>
> (Paula 2000)

Our Recent Graduate Mentoring Month, supported by the Trinity Business & City Association, will return in October, for its second year. The scheme is designed to connect Trinity alumni who have graduated within the last six years with professionals in their chosen career sector. Applications will open in September and if you would like to sign up as either a mentee or a mentor, please visit the website or keep an eye on the alumni e-newsletter.

trin.cam.ac.uk/event/recent-graduate-mentoring-month

Trinity Policy Dialogue

On 25 February 2025, the College hosted the first Trinity Policy Dialogue in the series, which has been made possible by a generous donation.

Chaired by the Master, Dame Sally Davies (e2019), proceedings opened with the inaugural lecture, from guest speaker The Rt Hon. Lord James O'Shaughnessy, Senior Partner at Newmarket Strategy and a leading authority on health innovation, policy and life science, entitled 'The NHS is broken – how can life sciences fix it?'

An expert panel continued the discussion, sharing their insights and fielding questions from the audience during a Q&A session. Thank you to Dr John Arne Rottingen, CEO at Wellcome, Roland Sinker, Chief Executive at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Professor Cathie Sudlow, Director, Chair of Neurology and Clinical Epidemiology at the University of Edinburgh, Charlotte Summers, Professor of Intensive Care Medicine at University of Cambridge, and Sarah Teichmann (1993), Professor of Stem Cell Medicine at the Cambridge Stem Cell Institute & Department of Medicine. To conclude the evening, guests enjoyed networking drinks in the Master's Lodge, followed by dinner in Hall.


© DAVID JOHNSON

Dialogue panel members taking questions from the audience.

The Trinity Policy Dialogue will return next year. If you wish to learn more, please contact us: **alumni@trin.cam.ac.uk.**

New Trinity PhD studentship in medicine

Cambridge donor and Canadian entrepreneur Dr Victor Phillip Dahdaleh has endowed a PhD studentship at Trinity College in medicine.

This endowment forms part of a £5 million donation to the Victor Phillip Dahdaleh Heart & Lung Research Institute at the University of Cambridge, bringing to £21 million his support for the Institute in the past two years.

The Institute is a collaboration between the University of Cambridge and Royal Papworth Hospital and aims to improve cardiovascular and lung health for everyone.

Professor Dame Sally Davies, Master of Trinity said: 'We are immensely grateful for Dr Dahdaleh's vision in establishing this studentship. It will undoubtedly attract exceptional talent and contribute to the advancement of heart and lung research at Cambridge.'


© UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

TRINITY BRADFIELD PRIZE

This year's Trinity Bradfield Prize-winning innovations seek to help those affected by endometriosis; transform the care of people with Alzheimer's; and cut carbon and costs by boosting the efficiency of power systems.

The winners, announced in a ceremony at the Bradfield Centre on the Cambridge Science Park in January, are Lorna MacLean, who won first prize for Demetria, which aims to revolutionise the diagnosis of endometriosis through AI-assisted ultrasound scans.

Xufu Ren of PowerMatrix won second prize for power systems technology that shrinks costs and boosts efficiency, cutting 100 million tonnes of CO_2 annually.

Yizhu Yu took third prize for Healthspan Biotics, which is developing probiotics that could transform Alzheimer's care.

The Trinity Bradfield Prize awards a total of £30,000 in cash alongside a comprehensive programme of entrepreneurship workshops, mentoring and free membership of the Bradfield Centre, a thriving workplace for start-ups and a hub for a host of entrepreneur-focused events. The former Master of Trinity and Nobel Laureate, Sir Gregory Winter (1970), chairs the judging panel of entrepreneurs and investors.

James Parton, Managing Director of the Bradfield Centre, said the competition was proving ever more popular, "Thanks to all of our partners and supporters that make the prize so special. This year's applicants represented an amazing 34 departments and 24 colleges from the University of Cambridge."

Discover more: **trinitybradfieldprize.co.uk.**

© KEITH HEPPELL

The winners Yizhu Yu, Lorna MacLean (left) and Xufu Ren (right) with Sir Gregory Winter.

BOAT RACE

Cambridge celebrated a complete clean sweep at The Boat Race 2025 on 13 April, with victories in all four openweight races and also both lightweight races. Trinity is tremendously proud of the two accomplished athletes who contributed to the Light Blues' triumph.

Isabella Fiske-Harrison and Polly Shorrock.

Congratulations to Isabella Fiske-Harrison (2022) who coxed the Lightweight Men's Boat and to Polly Shorrock (2021), who rowed in Blondie, the Women's Reserve Boat, on their impressive performances.

© BENEDICT TUFNELL FOR ROW 360

In an interview on the website, Polly shares how she balances rowing with an MPhil in Classics and what being part of Cambridge University Boat Club has taught her.

trin.cam.ac.uk/news/what-has-polly-shorrock-learnt-from-rowing-for-cambridge/

Trinity Arts Week

The College's first Arts Week, a collaboration between various arts societies, was held in February, offering talks, workshops and performances, poetry, jazz, drama, photography, fine arts and more. Every event was open to all Cambridge students.

Third-year students Sophie Rayner (2022) and Alexander Velody (2022) jointly devised Arts Week, galvanised both by their enthusiasm for the arts at Trinity and the frown of some Cambridge academics at student involvement in theatre rather than, for example, rowing. Sophie and Alexander's aim was to showcase the wealth of talent of current students and Trinity alumni in the arts, by incorporating events in theatre, film, photography, literature, music and fine art.

Some of the highlights of the week included a Creative Careers Dinner, for which alumni in publishing, film, theatre, architecture, curation (to name a few) returned to Trinity to share their experience and advice with students. The Dryden Society welcomed professional theatre company, The Mango Ensemble, and last year's Shaffer playwright in residence, Tom Murray, to host a workshop and perform their play *Forgotten in the Land of Egypt,* in the Chapel. During an evening of poetry, James Harpur (1976), Rebecca Watts (2001), and Mona Arshi Fellow Commoner in the Creative Arts (e2024) shared poems from their new collections. The keynote event saw Director of the Almeida Theatre, Rupert Goold (1991), in conversation with co-organiser and student director Alexander Velody.

Thank you to alumni who generously gave their time to return to College to talk with students as part of the programme and helped to make the inaugural week such a success; we hope Arts Week will return again next year.

Whither Waterland?

Professor Emily Shuckburgh OBE (1994)

Venture north of Cambridge and you find yourself in an enigmatic, uncompromisingly flat, windswept terrain of big skies and black earth. But what might at first seem a monotonous landscape, scoured by grids of artificial water channels, shrouds a hugely varied past, a complex present, and is subject to a vibrant debate as to its future.

Preserved within the soil are entire trunks of trees from the oak and yew woodland that blanketed the land 5000 years ago. Marine inundations and the silt they transferred then transformed the landscape into a marshy peatland, taking its name from the Old English word for wetlands, *fenn*. The East Anglian Fens were a haven for fish and wildfowl, with Ely celebrated for its eels, and rivers meandered languidly across the wetland. Centuries of drainage projects, especially those undertaken in the 1600s on behalf of a group of wealthy landowners and informed by Dutch engineering expertise, turned the marsh into an agricultural paradise – and sparked rebellion and protest from the locals who lost their previous livelihoods. Today this is Britain's largest man-made landscape, supported by hundreds of pumping stations and thousands of miles of watercourses.

The modern Fens are a highly productive region for arable farming, the source of one-third of England's fresh vegetables and salad, contributing about £3 billion annually to the UK economy and supporting significant employment. Of the half a million people living in the Cambridgeshire Fens, 80,000 of them are employed in some aspect of food production. The region is also home to an incredible 13,000 different plant and animal species, including a spectacular array of dragonflies and beetles. But as only 1% of the original fenland habitat remains, much of this unique biodiversity is now confined to the drainage ditch network and to a few sanctuaries in nature reserves. The National Trust's Wicken Fen reserve is one of Europe's most important wetlands with thousands of rare and endangered species including grasshopper warblers, bitterns, fen violets, and 22 dragonfly species.

Tantalising signs of the historic wetland can still be found: the ancient riverbeds can be traced in 'roddons', inland silt banks that now rise several metres above the surrounding peatland. Why this topographic reversal? It is because drainage, cultivation and wind erosion lead to the peatland shrinking at a dramatic rate. While it takes a thousand years for one metre of peat to build up, once drained it subsides at a centimetre or more per year, meaning in places the rich peat soil has all but disappeared and much of the land is now below sea level. The subsidence is associated with the release of large quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere as the organic matter is oxidised, with estimates that peatlands contribute several percent of the UK's total greenhouse gas emissions. The result is the Fens are both contributing to climate change, and vulnerable to climate change induced flooding – and the loss of the rich peat soil that makes the Fens so productive is questioning the sustainability of the current farming system. Moreover, somewhat paradoxically, as one of the driest parts of the UK in terms of rainfall, there are significant concerns about water shortages both for farming and domestic use, with the latter leading to a vast new reservoir being proposed.

Thus, a complicated set of environmental challenges are intertwined with questions regarding how the land is best used and managed into the future. There is a growing consensus that urgent action is needed to arrest peat loss, conserve water, reduce emissions, and help biodiversity recover. The Fens are not just a place of intensive agriculture; they are a dynamic region at the forefront of exploring how to balance food production with environmental stewardship in the face of a changing climate, while also addressing social inequalities in a region characterised by significant deprivation.

Important policy decisions must be made today, but those decisions need to be supported by an evidence-base that considers the intricate landscape system in a holistic way. In response to this challenge, over the past three years, the Centre for Landscape Regeneration has immersed a highly interdisciplinary team in the Fens, bringing together researchers from across 15 departments of the University, alongside the RSPB, the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology and the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB). They are working closely with others in the landscape, including local and national government,

Grasshopper warblers have a very distinctive song. The species has suffered a serious decline in recent years.

Musk Beetle (Aromia moschata)*, a type of longhorn beetle, Wicken Fen.*

© TOM MARQUAND

Fens fieldwork.

businesses, conservation organisations and farmers, and have undertaken consultation events with the local community to help direct the research.

The team has gathered a vast dataset of observations across different land types, including by developing and deploying novel low-cost greenhouse gas sensor networks, conducting extensive surveys of plants, birds (covering 130 km) and insects (covering 25 km), and using new technology such as bio-acoustics and environmental DNA. Laboratory-based studies have probed critical processes such as the production of methane in waterlogged peat soils. Satellite data has been processed using machine learning in a novel way to estimate water table depth across the Fens. Focused ecological and hydrological studies have been conducted on key components of the landscape such as the drainage ditches.

On the socioeconomic side, in-depth interviews with over 70 landholdings across the East Anglian Fens have been undertaken to understand the farming system and its role in food security and a sustainable and resilient future. The survey gathered details of agricultural production, opportunities of business diversification, uptake of regenerative farming practices and participation in environmental land management schemes, and the results have been considered alongside other regional economic data.

State-of-the-art computational modelling is being used to support efficient drainage and irrigation planning and to assess flood risk, to identify the risks posed by future climate change, and to assess the impact of strategic land use choices at a landscape scale.

Together, the research is building a picture of the benefits and trade-offs, and the acceptability to different stakeholders, of alternative land management approaches and farming methods in the Fens, including regenerative farming, habitat restoration, solar farms, specialty crops, and wetter farming. The aim is to inform future strategies for the Fens, empowering policymakers, landowners, farmers and local citizens to secure a thriving, resilient, and sustainable future for this treasured landscape, while preserving its essential role in safeguarding the UK's food security. At the same time the project is creating a template for how to undertake a comprehensive, policy-relevant systems analysis of a landscape. The approach is now being applied the different but equally complex landscapes of the Cumbrian Lake District and the Cairngorms.

The Centre for Landscape Regeneration is a 5-year research programme, funded by the Natural Environment Research Council with additional support from Quadrature Climate Foundation, and co-led by Professor Emily Shuckburgh and Professor David Coomes.

Professor Emily Shuckburgh OBE
Director of Cambridge Zero, University of Cambridge

Alongside being Director of Cambridge Zero, the University of Cambridge's major climate change initiative, Professor Shuckburgh is the Professor of Environmental Data Science at the University's Department of Computer Science and Technology. She also leads the Institute of Computing for Climate Science. She is a Fellow of Darwin College, the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, the British Antarctic Survey and the Royal Meteorological Society and an Honorary Fellow of the Energy Institute.

clr.conservation.cam.ac.uk
linkedin.com/company/centre-for-landscape-regeneration
zero.cam.ac.uk

TRINITYPLUS: EXPANDING HORIZONS

A New Initiative Enhancing Student Experiences at Trinity

Trinity has long been synonymous with academic excellence. Now, a pilot College initiative, TrinityPlus, is providing new opportunities for students in Entrepreneurship, Policy, and Musical Theatre. With experts from both inside and outside the University, students from different fields of study learn together, complementing and enhancing their academic work. These programmes are open to all students – both undergraduate and graduate – with the Musical Theatre programme also open to students outside Trinity.

"The Trinity Entrepreneurship Programme has been established to support the culture of entrepreneurship at Trinity, to provide a rich experience for those members of the College interested in the benefits of entrepreneurial thinking and to enable access to a wide variety of initiatives."

Richard Turnill, Trinity Senior Bursar

THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME: DEVELOPING BUSINESS SKILLS

The Entrepreneurship Programme aims to encourage and nurture the success of future entrepreneurs, whether they have an existing idea, are interested in building a venture, or are simply curious to discover more about business and innovation.

With around fifty students participating in its first year, this strand of TrinityPlus helps students harness their academic knowledge in entrepreneurial contexts while developing complementary business skills.

Students are guided through applying their academic understanding to entrepreneurial challenges including idea development, investment acquisition, market entry strategies, and sustainable growth. The College has developed collaborations across the University and with organisations including the Cambridge Science Park.

Learning and Networking

Students advanced their entrepreneurial skills through a dynamic 2024-2025 programme. A visit to London-based venture capital firm, Creandum, and participation in the King's College Cambridge E-Lab programme provided deep insights into innovation and startup development.

Students also networked extensively at Cambridge Science Park, engaged in the Bradfield Prize competition, and launched the Trinnovate Society – also open to members from Trinity Postdoctoral Society. The *Vision to Venture* event brought together successful entrepreneurs Lorna MacLean (2024/25 Bradfield Prize winner), Molly Haugen (2021 Bradfield Prize runner-up), and Jane Hutchins (Cambridge Science Park Director) to share their insights.

Throughout the year, these activities, alongside drop-in sessions at Trinity Bar, have started to create an entrepreneurial ecosystem, equipping Trinity students with practical insights, valuable connections, and a deeper understanding of transforming innovative ideas into successful ventures.

"For me, the programme helped bridge the gap between a start-up and the skills you develop at university. In your final year, you're approached by a plethora of companies, yet you often overlook the option in-between academia (and a PhD) and working in the City – the middle path where you tackle high impact, fast-paced projects at the cutting edge, while accepting the greater risk and instability of a startup. Above all, it gives you the confidence to weather the challenges of building your own company and embeds you in a supportive community of peers facing the same journey."

Aprajit Mahajan (2021)

Trinity Senior Tutor, Professor Catherine Barnard, who directed the programme alongside coordinator Sian Gardner, emphasised the transformative impact of TrinityPlus:

"Trinity students change the world in small and large ways, whatever they do. This programme provides them with some of the skills necessary to make that impact as well as opening them up to the world and value of public service. It has been excellent to watch the students grow and flourish with this input."

THE TRINITY POLICY PROGRAMME: ADDRESSING "WICKED" PROBLEMS

The Trinity Policy Programme focuses on helping students connect their academic studies to complex "wicked" policy problems – difficult social and environmental challenges characterised by complexity, uncertainty, and conflicting values. It is designed to give students the opportunity to learn how to apply their academic skills to tackle significant public policy challenges and to transition to careers in public policy and research.

For two weeks in Lent 2025, students – both undergraduates and graduates – learned how to apply their academic expertise to policy analysis, systems thinking, futures thinking, communications, and social innovation. This was complemented by seminars and discussions with, for example, Sir Laurie Bristow, former UK Ambassador to Russia and Afghanistan, and Susanna McGibbon, Treasury Solicitor and Permanent Secretary of the Government Legal Department.

Students collaborating during a policy workshop.

The programme was designed and led by Dr Rob Doubleday, Executive Director of the Centre for Science and Policy (CSaP) at Cambridge, with support from colleague Christian Neubacher. CSaP fellows contributed as guest speakers and workshop facilitators, showing students how academic knowledge informs real-world policy challenges.

Programme Outline:
The first week of the programme focused on foundational concepts like wicked problems, systems thinking, and design methodologies, culminating in a deeper understanding of policy challenges.

The second week built on these foundations with specialised workshops on food policy, futures thinking, and a tour of parts of Whitehall, including visits to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, and Parliament.

The programme concluded with a case study review and attendance at the Bennett Institute for Public Policy Annual Conference, providing participants with a holistic view of contemporary policy-making approaches.

"The inaugural policy programme put on by the College for a diverse group of students exposed us to the personnel and processes of public policymaking. Through presentations and workshops delivered by experts – whether civil servants, politicians, special advisors, or academics – we were privileged to gain a view of this crucial sector. The trip to London was a personal highlight, especially the roundtable with the former UK Ambassador to Russia, Dame Deborah Bronnert. I would like to thank alumni for their generous support which, alongside the hard work of the policy programme team, made the programme possible."

Zach Foster (2023, History)

THE MUSICAL THEATRE PROGRAMME: EXTENDING MUSICAL EXCELLENCE

Trinity is renowned around the world for its choral tradition. Through the Musical Theatre Programme, the College is now utilising its expertise and networks to further the ambitions of aspiring musical theatre stars of the future too.

Through the academic year, the scheme offered 17 talented undergraduate and graduate student vocalists from across Cambridge the chance to work with internationally recognised voice teacher, and Head of the Musical Theatre Programme, Cameron Richardson-Eames (2011), known especially for his work with students on Broadway, the West End, and Hollywood, for film and TV.

Auditions were held at Trinity in December 2024, and throughout the Lent and Easter terms of 2025, participants each received six individual coaching sessions with Cameron. Each participant also had a masterclass with West End star and singer, Emma Hatton, and the chance to record a solo track in a London studio. To share their musical talent and celebrate their achievements, they each gave solo performances in a final Showcase Concert in Trinity Chapel on the 8th of May, performing alongside Queen of the West End, Kerry Ellis, and the UK's 'Queen of Soul', Mica Paris.

Throughout the pilot programme, students have benefited from Cameron's vast experience of the Musical Theatre industry and have been able to make professional contacts to help with future career aspirations.

"In May we had the showcase performance, which was a success beyond what any of us could have hoped for. The Chapel was transformed into a satellite of London's West End, and students performed phenomenally well to a sell-out audience, giving world-class performances that demonstrated the strength of talent in Musical Theatre in Cambridge.

It was a true privilege to work with all the students and I applaud them wholeheartedly for their extraordinary work and dedication.

The setting of Trinity, and having the Chapel as the performance space, made this a genuinely unique experience."

Cameron Richardson-Eames (2011)

Supporting TrinityPlus

TrinityPlus represents the College's commitment to developing well-rounded individuals by complementing academic excellence with practical skills and experiences. It's been made possible thanks to generous donations from alumni and friends, including, crucially, time and expertise. These three programmes enrich students' time at Cambridge, providing valuable opportunities alongside their academic studies.

For more information about TrinityPlus and how you can support these initiatives, please contact **alumni@trin.cam.ac.uk**.

The curtain call from the Musical Theatre Programme showcase concert.

Shaping the future

In November 2024, Trinity College and the University of Cambridge launched a new £48 million programme to create fully funded PhDs. Collegiate Cambridge is seeking the brightest minds from across the world to conduct ground-breaking research, creating the next generation of pioneering treatments, technologies and services. You can read more about the scheme and its impact here: **www.cam.ac.uk/stories/PhD-funding.** In honour of this groundbreaking funding commitment, we meet current Trinity PhD students and learn how they are helping to advance knowledge and develop innovative solutions to pressing problems.

Woody Zhidong Zhang (2025), PhD student, Somatic Evolution Monitoring (SEM) lab

I grew up in Hubei, China – a region with one of the highest rates of cancer incidence and mortality in the country. Witnessing the impact of cancer on my family and community motivated me to become a biomedical scientist focused on improving cancer care.

I'm now a second-year PhD student in Oncology at Trinity College, working to understand how cancer evolves over time and how we can track that evolution non-invasively. Just like species evolve through natural selection, the 30 trillion cells in our bodies accumulate mutations and undergo clonal selection as we age. Some of these mutations are harmless, but others occur in cancer-driver genes and can lead to disease.

My research focuses on lung and oesophageal cancers. I use non-invasive samples, such as blood (circulating tumour DNA), and a novel device called the capsule sponge – to study how cancer evolves from the earliest stages. I'm developing novel computational methods to sensitively detect traces of tumour evolution in these samples. By doing so, I hope to uncover when and how harmful mutations arise and ultimately develop biomarkers to identify individuals at high risk of cancer before symptoms appear. My aim is to make early detection more accessible, giving people the chance to treat cancer while it's still curable.

Bjorn Fraser Olaisen (2023), Krishnan-Ang Scholar and PhD student in Epigenetics, Ageing, & Rejuvenation

I dedicated my career to ageing research when I read that many scientists reasoned that ageing would be reversed within a few decades. I realised the need to develop novel technologies, rather than single drugs, to reverse the thousands of age-related changes that accumulate in cells, causing decline in organ function and diseases. I work with Prof Sir Shankar Balasubramanian and the rejuvenation company Altos Labs.

The epigenome is the collection of DNA-associated molecules and processes that control the activity of genes and thereby cell function and identity. I am developing an epigenetic profiling method to enable scientists to obtain deeper insights into how to counteract the drastic epigenetic changes that contribute to diseases, ageing, and other biological processes. I also work to uncover novel mechanisms that drive ageing and ways to improve cellular rejuvenation strategies.

I am seeking philantropic support to do lab experiments and build a Cambridge-based company to develop a novel therapeutic strategy that reverses ageing, to broadly reverse diseases and extend our healthspans and lifespans. Slowing ageing by just one year is worth $38 trillion (Scott et al., 2021, *Nature Aging*), which could be spent on other global problems.

Simone Castagno (2023), PhD student in Surgery and Machine Learning

My research explores how artificial intelligence (AI) can help us better understand and manage musculoskeletal conditions, especially osteoarthritis (OA).

I use AI techniques, specifically machine learning, to analyse large amounts of health data. This includes information from clinic appointments, medical images like X-rays or MRIs, and data from wearable sensors that track movement. By processing this complex information, we aim to train algorithms to spot the earliest signs of OA, predict how the disease might worsen for an individual patient, and even identify different types of OA that might need different treatments.

The main idea is to move away from simply reacting to symptoms towards a more proactive approach. We want to identify those at high risk or in the very early stages of OA so we can intervene before serious joint damage happens, tailoring care to each person's specific needs.

Ultimately, my goal is to create practical AI tools that clinicians can easily use in their daily practice. This could lead to earlier diagnoses, more effective treatments, improved patient quality of life, and potentially reduce the substantial impact OA and similar conditions have on individuals and healthcare systems.

This work, supervised by Professor Andrew McCaskie, would not have been possible without the generous funding from the LV Freedman Studentship in Medical Sciences and the ORUK/Versus Arthritis AI in MSK Research Fellowship.

Muzi Xu (2021), PhD student in Engineering

My research highlights my strong interest in flexible bioelectronics, which I arrived at through an interdisciplinary academic background.

Omnidirectional strain sensing and direction recognition are key features of natural human tactile sense and are essential for addressing the complex and dynamic requirements of the real-world we inhabit. However, most existing machine sensors are limited to uniaxial strain sensing, severely restricting their performance in the multiaxial environments, which also limits their applications.

To address this issue, I developed a biomimetic stretchable device that enables simultaneous isotropic omnidirectional hypersensitive strain sensing and direction recognition, by mimicking the human fingers from three dimensions.

This work was published in *Advanced Materials* and featured on the front cover. The design principles can be easily adapted for various applications by modifying materials and dimensions to meet specific needs. In the future, I plan to integrate this sensor into prosthetics and robotics, where its ability to detect and respond to complex strain and force patterns could significantly enhance functionality.

Ultimately, I hope my research will contribute to advancing dynamic, adaptive strain and force sensing in healthcare monitoring, human motion detection, and human-machine interfaces.

Matt Blacker (2021), PhD student in Applied Maths and Theoretical Physics

I'm a theoretical physicist, so my goal is to write down mathematical rules describing the universe. We have a really good way of describing how small, energetic things like electrons work, called quantum theory. We also have a really good way of describing how big, low energy things stars work due to gravity, called general relativity. The problem is that when you try and make these theories meet at an energy somewhere in the middle, they each start spitting out infinities that we can't really control.

But is there a time where big things, like stars, start to behave like energetic things, like electrons? Well, it turns out as a star gets heavier and its gravity gets stronger, it pulls in more stuff, until it eventually collapses under its own weight to become this really dense object that sucks in even light. You've probably heard of these 'black holes'. Stephen Hawking figured out that a lot of energy is thrown in (and out) of these black holes, and so we can use our rules of quantum theory to talk about them!

In my research, I'm looking at quantum effects in black holes in two different ways. Firstly, if you appropriately tune properties of these black holes like mass and charge, the surrounding space and time can be deformed in various ways, which I'm trying to count (this is called their entropy). Secondly, all the possible ways of configuring the inside of the black hole can be encoded on a slice of distant space (this is called holography). Better understanding each of these quantities will take us closer to building a bigger theory that includes both quantum theory and gravity.

Juan Carlos Rueda Silva (2021), PhD student in Genetics

Have you ever wondered if the experiences and environment in which your ancestors lived can have an impact on your own life? Did you know that people whose parents or even grandparents experienced famine during their lifetimes have different propensities to some diseases?

What is written in the genome is only part of what defines us. Genes can be turned on and off in response to environmental stimuli. So, how can specific genes be turned off and others on? Within a cell the DNA is not on its own, instead it's wrapped around a special type of protein called histones, which can be modified to turn the genes 'on' or 'off'. Every time a cell divides into two cells, they need to make a copy of their DNA.

Recently, it has been discovered that the same machinery used to copy the DNA is also responsible for distributing these modified histones between the two new cells, keeping the genes 'on' or 'off'.

But is this machinery also responsible for allowing the same pattern to pass through generations? That is the question I'm working to answer. Using a special type of worm, called C. elegans, my lab has made CRISPR-Cas9 mutant strains which don't allow modified histones to be passed from one cell to another. I grow these worms in multiple conditions and compare them with unmutated worms across multiple generations. I also look at the position and number of modified histones across the genome, comparing them with unmutated worms to look for changes in particular genes.

With this I aim to gain some insight into the mechanisms behind epigenetic inheritance.

Mohammad Zaid (2023), Krishnan-Ang Scholar and PhD student in Quantum Physics, Engineering and Nanotechnology

My academic interests lie at the intersection of photonics, nanotechnology, and Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems/Nano-Electro-Mechanical-Systems, with a focus on advancing diagnostic technologies. My research is centred on the development of photoacoustic ultrasound sensors for high-resolution biomedical imaging.

The core innovation lies in combining photoacoustic imaging - a modality that leverages the optical absorption properties of tissue to generate ultrasound waves. By tailoring the mechanical, electrical, and acoustic properties of the Piezoelectric Micromachine Ultrasource Transducers (PMUTS) through geometric, material, and electrode-level optimisation, I aim to overcome longstanding limitations in existing imaging systems.

My current work includes the design, fabrication and optimization of multi-generation PMUT prototypes. The broader goal is to realise a fully integrated photoacoustic imaging sensing ensemble. Such a system has the potential to transform early-stage cancer diagnostics, vascular and neurological imaging, and point-of-care screening, especially in resource-limited settings where conventional imaging infrastructure is unavailable or impractical. It aspires to deliver both foundational insight and translational impact in next-generation medical diagnostics.

The Krishnan-Ang PhD Studentships

Two of the researchers featured in this article are recipients of The Krishnan-Ang PhD Studentships, generously supported by Tzo Tze Ang (1997) and Eashwar Krishnan (1996).

Learn more about the Krishnan-Ang Foundation: **www.krishnanang.org.**

The College is grateful for all studentship opportunities made possible through philanthropy. If you would like to discover more, please get in touch: **alumni@trin.cam.ac.uk**.

DIGITISING THE WREN LIBRARY

By Anne McLaughlin, Digitisation Services Manager

Ten years ago, the Wren Digital Library started from a seemingly simple proposition: to create an online catalogue that would allow researchers to see images of the medieval manuscripts that had been described by M.R. James between 1900–1902.

Since August of 2023, I've had the distinct privilege to look after a digital library and a project that has grown and expanded to include both our print and modern manuscripts collections, seeking to share the incredible collections held within the walls of the Library and Archives via our three online platforms, all of which are open, accessible, interoperable, and freely available worldwide. Alongside the library's team, I'm proud of the strides and the work we've accomplished, and I am excited about the new initiatives and new opportunities that are on the horizon.

Through the James Catalogue Online, our Library Catalogue, and our Archives Management System, we currently offer 5,472 individual manuscripts, letters, documents, and printed books, online, in full, and free of charge – an increase of 816 items in the last nine months alone, including 33 new medieval manuscripts.

Our efforts have been rewarded: The James Catalogue of medieval manuscripts had a record year with 13,000 unique visitors, an increase of 23.5% from the previous year, 1500 of which visited our site in the last month alone. Our users come from 109 countries across the globe and have consulted our online catalogue 173,000 times this year, viewing the records of 1473 unique manuscripts. Of the 1720 records on the James Catalogue Online, there are 565 manuscripts that currently lack digital images, all of which we hope to be able to capture and present online in the coming years.

The current set up of our PhaseOne camera and specialist book cradle, allowing us to capture high-resolution images while ensuring rare books and manuscripts are properly supported.

Detail of the silver hallmarks in the binding of Thomas Cromwell's Book of Hours (C.30.9).

Beyond the James Catalogue – the only site for which I am able to capture analytics – we've also started engaging more fully with our printed books. This year we've captured Thomas Cromwell's personal *Book of Hours* (C.30.9), at a high enough resolution to see the silver hallmarks pressed into its binding (see last year's *Fountain* for a description of this book), and a copy of Galileo's *Difesa* (T.3.134), signed and presented by the author himself to a dear friend. As part of a new initiative, we've begun digitising the items from our printed collections of which we hold the only extant copy. At the time of writing, I'm pleased to confirm that the first two unique incunabula, both printed in Paris, around the year 1500, are now online (VI.13.169 & VI.13.171).

Similarly, our digitised modern manuscripts are linked to the archives catalogue. In simply digitising a single box we now can showcase letters and correspondence by founding members of the Royal Society (Edmund Halley, Isaac Newton, and Robert Hooke), a geologist who is also a priest (Adam Sedgwick), a mathematician who is also a philosopher (Bertrand Russell), a Lord Protector (Oliver Cromwell), and a naval officer (Horatio Nelson).

Beyond the library, this year has also seen us engage with the wider scholarly and academic communities within and beyond Cambridge.

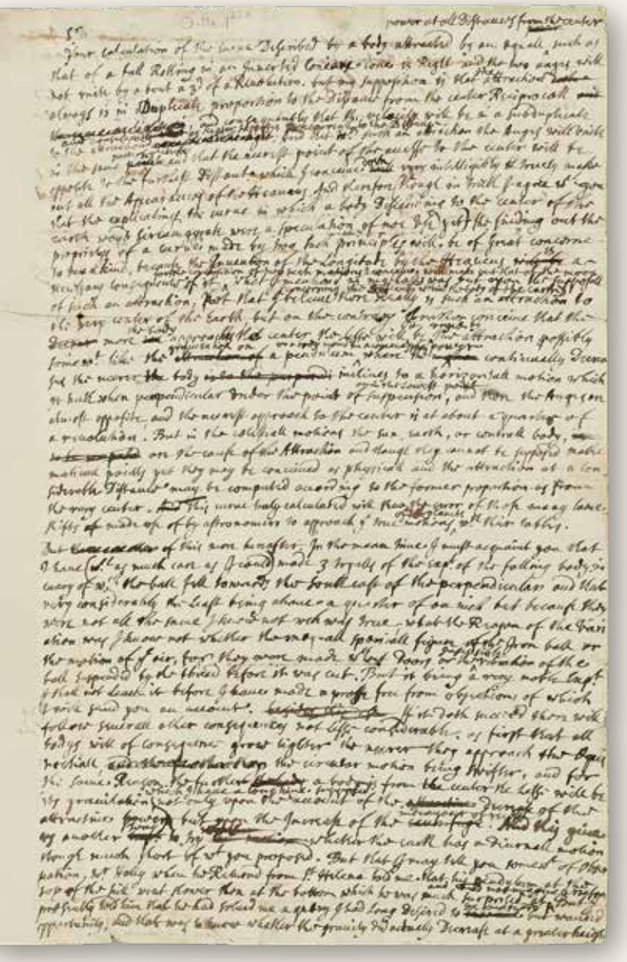
We have taken part in the University Library's Curious Cures exhibition*, a Wellcome Trust funded project to study medieval medical recipes, and, alongside the Royal Society, provided images of the Herschel family's correspondence as they seek to understand their own collection more holistically. For the first time this year, we also experimented with imaging in more than two dimensions: working with researchers from the University of Aberdeen to capture one of our cuneiform tablets using Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) – a process in which raking light images are digitally aligned to allow the viewer to explore the surface of an object in an entirely new way.

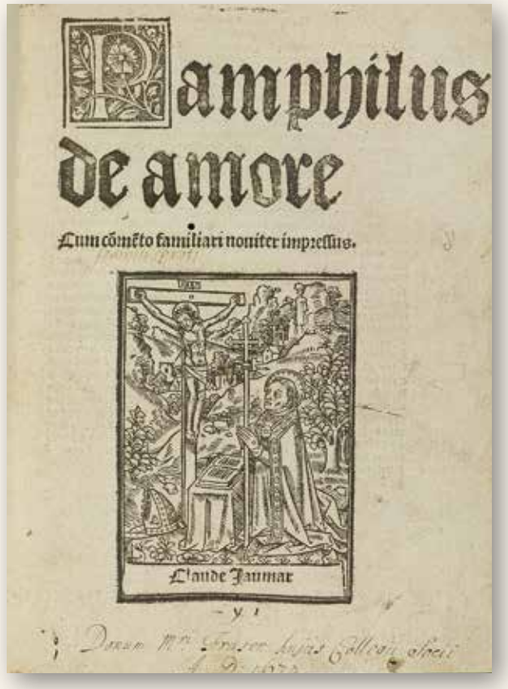
The next few months will see us rebuild, test and release a new technical architecture to underpin the Digital Library, sitting behind a new front-end platform that will allow us to bring together the collections of our digitised medieval and modern manuscripts, along with our digitised print holdings and search them together – erasing the divisions within our digital collections and allowing researchers and visitors to seamlessly search all of Trinity's Digital Library. However, this update not only represents an improvement for our users, but also for the functionality, security and sustainability of all of our digital holdings, as well as the creation of a platform with the ability to adapt to the challenges that new digital initiatives will bring.

** You can visit the University Library's exhibition 'Curious Cures: Medicine in the Medieval World' until 6 December. Entry is free but booking is essential:* **www.lib.cam.ac.uk/curiouscures**.

While we've focused our efforts previously on digitising our western holdings, the Wren Library also is host to world-renowned collections of Hebrew, Arabic, Coptic, Chinese, Persian, Sanskrit, Shan, Slavonic, and Urdu print and manuscript material. The new platform architecture provides support for non-western languages, and reading directions from right to left and vertically. Engaging with our non-western collections also serves to provide an opportunity to broaden our understanding of the collections themselves, as specialist conservators and cataloguers bring their knowledge and expertise to preserve these objects and build upon the records of them that we already hold – most of which date from the end of the 19th century, if they even exist at all.

So, after 12 years of dedicated work, innovation, discovery, and delivery, with regard to the Wren Digital Library and the vast wealth of the Library and Archival collection, there is no shortage of work to do, no shortage of scholarship to support, and no shortage of discoveries to be made. We will continue to work to share our collections in new ways to serve researchers and visitors alike, no matter where in the world they may be.





Above: Frontispiece of VI.13.169 – the first of our unique printed items put online in April 2025.

Left: Robert Hooke's draft of a letter to Isaac Newton (MS 0.11a.1/23A).

The Trinity Digital Library in numbers:

1
decade of digitisation

2
image servers

3
different access platforms

1155
digitised medieval manuscripts

76
printed volumes

29 TB
the current storage needed for just the images

4241
archival items

50 MB
the average size of one of our images

816
new items online in the last 10 months

260,000
the number of images taken with a single PhaseOne camera and specialist book cradle

trin.cam.ac.uk/library/wren-digital-library

If you would like more information on supporting digitisation projects, or you want to learn about other opportunities to support the Library, please contact us at **alumni@trin.cam.ac.uk**.

STUDENT SPOT

Sophie Rayner

(2022, English)

© OWEN WRIGHT

I am an English Literature finalist at Trinity, currently working towards papers in Tragedy, Lyric, and Prose Forms.

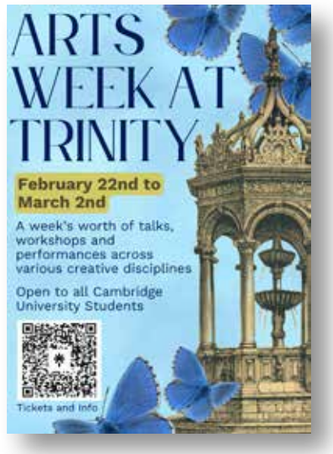
After enjoying the medieval literature paper in my second year, I completed a dissertation this year on the production and preparation of food in Langland's *Piers Plowman* and its relationship with 14th Century practices and teachings about the Eucharist. From classes looking at original manuscripts in the Wren Library to taking part in the 24-hour Byrothon reading in the middle of the night, studying at Trinity during the last three years has been a remarkable and unique experience.

Alongside my degree, my time at Trinity has been nourished by rich opportunities. Remembering my own inspiring offer holder day, in my very first term I decided to become a student ambassador supporting and, more recently, leading outreach events. This has included: open days, interview week, school visits, residentials and mentorship schemes. This experience has been greatly rewarding as I have since welcomed current undergraduate students who I encouraged to apply.

One of my favourite times of the week is Saturday morning, when I captain our Women's Netball Team – a welcome and refreshing break from work. Our team is fuelled by our relentless positivity and laughter, and we have been proud to see back-to-back promotions recently from Division 4 to Division 2. We are also still riding the glory of beating Christ Church Oxford two years in a row on our annual sports day.

My most enjoyable and fulfilling experiences in the last three years have been with the Dryden Society, Trinity's resident Theatre society. I had the pleasure of reviving the society after COVID-19 and over the last two years, the society has grown from 3 to 95 members. During my time as President, I led a committee of 12 in organising over 40 events and productions in the arts and theatre sector. My highlights include directing and producing the first Shakespearean play in Trinity Chapel, *Romeo and Juliet*, which later led the way for a resurgence of chapel productions including the Cambridge American Stage Tour (CAST) preview of *Julius Caesar*, and most recently, *Timon of Athens*. As well as organising the Dryden Society's first Scratch Night, working with writers and our Shaffer playwright-in-residence, Aisling Towl, to showcase new student writing. We are now proud to regularly fund and produce a couple of productions a term, as well as a range of social and networking events. The support and inspiration from members of College, of note Professor Adrian Poole (both my supervisor and senior treasurer of the society), has been invaluable.

Perhaps the event I'm proudest of to date has been establishing and organising the inaugural Arts Week at Trinity in February 2025, which was a busy, exciting and vibrant week celebrating our students and alumni in the arts, including in: theatre, film, music, literature, fine art and photography. We hoped to showcase our range of active college Arts societies and in doing so, show that Trinity is a college where not only STEM, rowing, and rugby thrive. The number of successful alumni in the arts is testament to this, and one of the week's highlights was the Creative Careers Dinner that welcomed 10 alumni and 40 current students for an evening of conversation, story-sharing, networking and great food! As well as a poetry night with James Harpur (1976), Rebecca Watts (2001), and Trinity Fellow Commoner in the Creative Arts, Mona Arshi (e2024). We also were honoured to welcome director Rupert Goold CBE (1991), and professional theatre company The Mango Ensemble, respectively.



The butterfly on the poster designed by Owen Wright (2022) is the Karner Blue, identified by Trinity alumnus, writer and amateur naturalist, Vladimir Nabokov (1919).

Directing Romeo and Juliet in Trinity College Chapel.

© DIK NG

The week saw the return of our annual LGBTQ+ Arts Night in Trinity Chapel, an evening of poetry, music, monologues and readings in celebration and remembrance of LGBTQ+ artists, which led the way for the first Celebrating Women's Voices Arts Night, a similar night of celebration for International Women's History Month.

We hope this week is an annual event that is here to stay and grow, attracting more of the wider University community and public, and with more events connecting students to alumni.

As graduation approaches, I am eager to start working in events and production in theatre and the arts. I have greatly enjoyed the creative and organisational aspect of my extracurricular pursuits at Trinity and thrive when I am busy. There is no doubt that people are at the centre of the arts. Throughout my three years, I had the privilege of working with so many talented and hardworking individuals, fostering both professional relationships and long-term friendships. Together we have created exciting and prolific work both within and outside of our degrees. In the near future, I look forward to joining a new team of people who are just as passionate and ambitious.

trin.cam.ac.uk/news/arts-week-at-trinity
varsity.co.uk/theatre/27256
instagram.com/dryden.society
instagram.com/trinartsweek

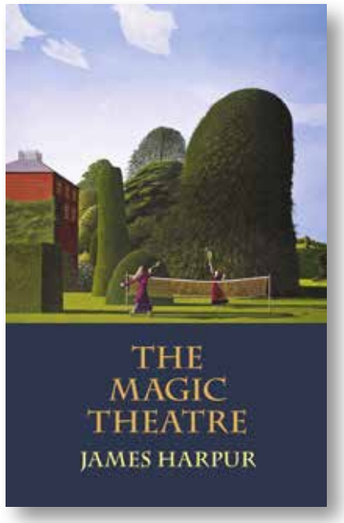
ALUMNI PROFILE

James Harpur

(1976, Classics and English Literature)

Multi-award-winning poet James Harpur talks about his new verse memoir, *The Magic Theatre*, which evokes his time at Trinity and Cambridge in the late 1970s.

My first home at Trinity was K5 Whewell's Court ('Blackstained as if by bathroom mould / The Gothic annex made of rain / Rises high through clouds across the road / In central Transylvania …'), where I discovered I was on Wittgenstein's old staircase. Dazed and confused by Cambridge grandeur and personal self-doubt, I changed from Classics to the sunny uplands of English almost straightaway – a world of Redpath and Ricks, Prynne and Poole – then wondered if I'd made a mistake. I also didn't know whom to hang out with, or what to wear. I ditched my post-hippie claret corduroy jacket and pink loons for tweedy Pitt Club garb, for at least six weeks. That didn't work. I wore this and that, even Footlights-style dungarees.

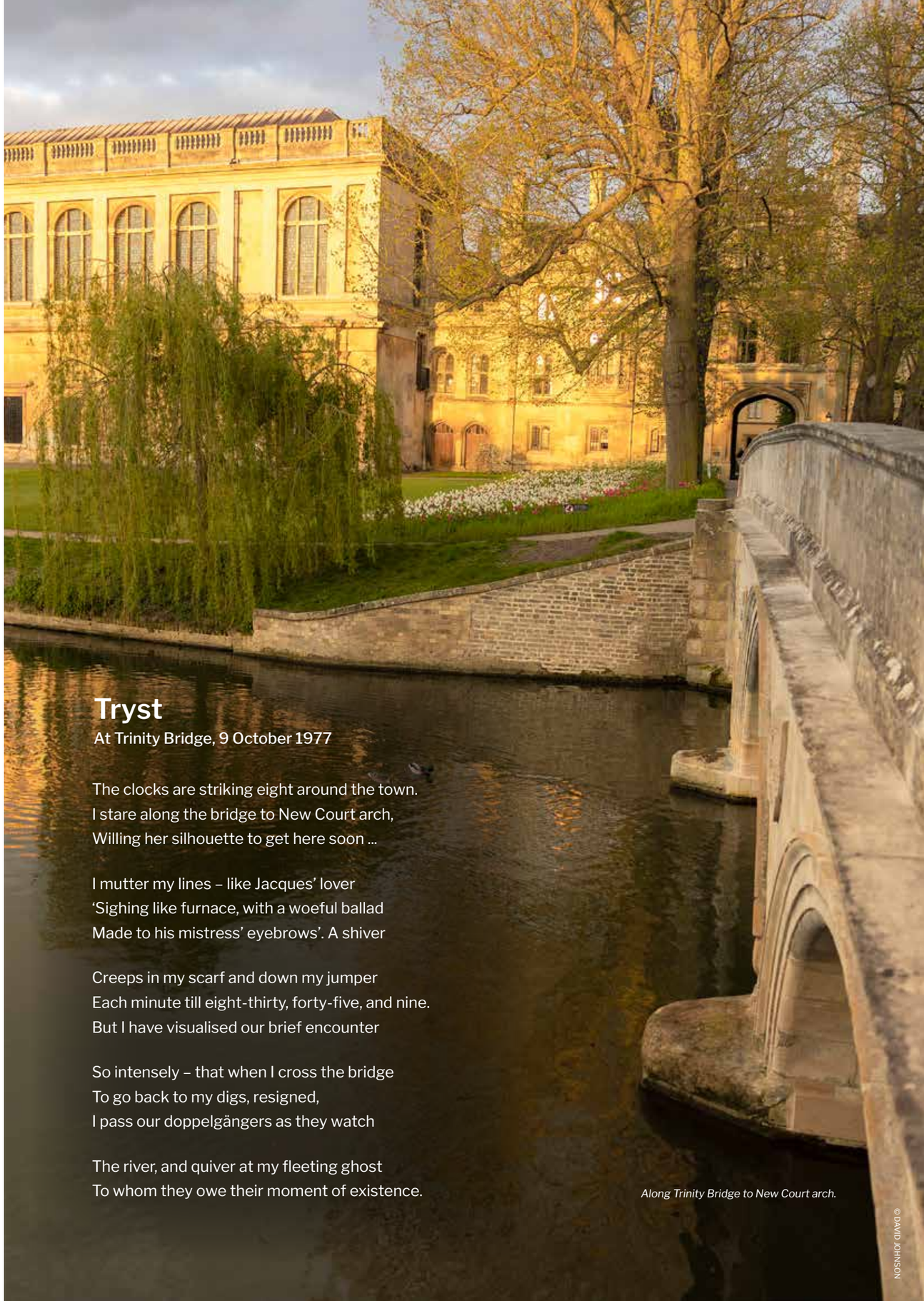


I bumbled along in English Literature, finding my first ray of inspiration in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* – but only through a passage of Boethius he had translated about providence, fate and fortune. This inspired me to write *The New Oracle*, a short play about computer dating (very new in those days!). Trinity's Dryden Society accepted it for production, and, lo, my writing career began. Yet the world of drama didn't suit my temperament. Too many accidents lurked (missed lighting cues, forgotten lines), and I turned to poetry, prompted by the Powell Prize for Poetry, a College competition founded by Enoch himself. My first-ever poem (about St Patrick getting rid of the snakes in Ireland) came first equal, and that was enough to encourage me, after I left Trinity, to write poems on the island of Crete.

The Magic Theatre describes my three-year journey through Trinity – at a time when the country was beset by industrial unrest and the Troubles, and morphing from Prog Rock to Punk and Disco. It tells of scary tutorials (Mr Salingar, and Dr Casey in Caius), a broken love affair, crashing May Balls, Bacchic parties, theatrical pratfalls, discovering poetry, and most of all, friendships. My era was that of The Whim restaurant, the Arts Cinema in Market Passage (I saw *Death in Venice* nine times); *Broadsheet* (for which I drew cover illustrations and cartoons) and *Stop Press*; Belinda's and its cherry cheesecake; the Sidgwick Site to hear Ricks on Bob Dylan and Jeremy Prynne on 'Jack and Jill'; playing 'Pong' in the Baron of Beef; seeing the Footlights parade the likes of Jimmy Mulville and Rory McGrath, and Stephen Fry and Emma Thompson tread the boards of the ADC.

In retrospect I feel as if I had wandered into a play with a backdrop of palaces or atmospheric local settings (Kettle's Yard, the Eagle), not knowing what my role was and who the director or playwright was. Perhaps that explains my obsession with acting on stage (from the ADC to the Shirley Society), for which I had no talent at all? I hope the book will stir memories of what were, in my case at least, three chequered, topsy-turvy, bamboozling and, most of all, formative magical years.

The Magic Theatre is published by Two Rivers Press:
tworiverspress.com/shop/the-magic-theatre
www.jamesharpur.com



Tryst

At Trinity Bridge, 9 October 1977

The clocks are striking eight around the town.
I stare along the bridge to New Court arch,
Willing her silhouette to get here soon …

I mutter my lines – like Jacques' lover
'Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrows'. A shiver

Creeps in my scarf and down my jumper
Each minute till eight-thirty, forty-five, and nine.
But I have visualised our brief encounter

So intensely – that when I cross the bridge
To go back to my digs, resigned,
I pass our doppelgängers as they watch

The river, and quiver at my fleeting ghost
To whom they owe their moment of existence.

Along Trinity Bridge to New Court arch.

© DAVID JOHNSON

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF

Jon Witherley, Trinity Executive Head Chef

My mum told me, “When you were little and I used to plop you down to play with your toys, as soon as my back was turned, you’d be in the kitchen getting all the pots and pans out.” So, I think I found my calling early!

I grew up in Monmouth, a small town in South Wales. My mum was not the best cook, but I used to love going with her to the butcher’s and watching him prepare the meat. It was fascinating seeing him sharpening the knife, preparing a leg of lamb, rolling it, and tying it, and I thought, “that’s a great trade”.

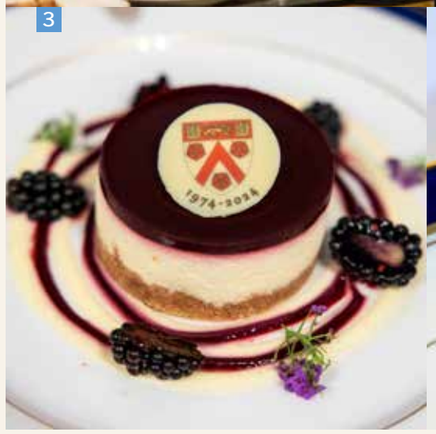
When I was 14, a friend told me about a part-time hall porter role at the local King’s Head Hotel. I got the job. One of my tasks was to clean the kitchen floor. Once I finished mopping, I’d always end up watching the chefs and chatting to them. The Head Chef asked me what I was doing when I left school because he’d like to start me on an apprenticeship. Part of the apprenticeship was to go to college, so I went to Newport.

Where I really learned to cook was during my second role at The Bear in Woodstock. I was a commis chef for three years. I worked under a very good head chef who had a French brigade, so that’s where I learnt the true fundamentals of cooking. It was a wow moment for me – entering a world of like-minded people, all wanting to create fantastic food.

I’ve been Executive Head Chef at the College for eight years now. Between The Bear and Trinity, amongst other things, I’ve worked in Michelin Star kitchens in restaurants in Aylesbury, Upper Slaughter, and Bagshot; I spent time working in the United States and France; I was Senior Sous/Head Chef for the Intercontinental Hotels Group; I moved to Cambridge with my family and headed up the kitchens at the Hilton Hotel on Downing Street; and I was Head Chef at Queens’ College.

When the Trinity role came along, I knew that if I didn’t go for it, I would regret it for the rest of my life. I think you are destined for something, and it was what I’d worked my way up for, why I’d sacrificed all those evenings and weekends.

No two days in the Trinity kitchens are the same, but I start every day in the same way, walking through the kitchens and saying hello to everybody in the team – there are about 35 of us. Once I’ve checked in with everyone and know they have everything they need, it’s on with daily tasks including quality checking the deliveries, and meat preparation. Next, I’ll meet with the head chefs and other team members who are running the services throughout the day, to discuss our plans and address any issues. It’s quite a task feeding such a large and diverse community and catering for different dietary requirements and preferences each day, but we’re up for the challenge. It’s a case of meticulous planning, selecting the right ingredients of the best quality, keeping menus seasonal where possible, and regularly introducing new dishes.



We recruit people from around the world because we want a multicultural and vibrant kitchen. I encourage everyone to contribute new flavours and ideas. Colleagues will come in and say they’ve got a favourite family dish, put on an apron, and get cooking. It’s amazing what they produce from scratch. The beauty of it is that we can create authentic regional dishes. Those new ideas and tastes are what keep our kitchens fresh and what excite us as cooks too.

I think my love of experimentation and different flavours helped me to get the job here. As part of the interview process, I was asked to create a dish that I thought represented Trinity. I suspected other candidates would make a Trinity Burnt Cream, so I

1. *Adding finishing touches to dessert.* © David Johnson.
2. *Piping and preparing a plate for Honorary Fellows’ Dinner.* © Paul Ashley.
3. *The special 50th anniversary pudding we created for the 1974 Annual Gathering, September 2024.* © David Johnson.
4. *Trinity table setting.* © James Appleton.
5. *All hands on deck to get the first course ready to go.* © David Johnson.

planned to do something different. But then I thought, Burnt Cream *is* Trinity. So, I did it with a twist, hoping to knock everyone's socks off. I used ingredients including cherry and lime, in tribute to the trees lining The Avenue, and apple, for Sir Isaac Newton, but instead of a traditional Brûlée method, I set it alight in front of people's eyes, to add a little bit of magic. We also created the Trinity Trindle from these ingredients. That's what I love about this trade, it's where you let your imagination take you. I try to instil in the team that we should always be asking how we can innovate and make a dish even better.

Once my meetings are over, I'll head to my office to review what else is planned for the day, including any functions taking place. If the Master is hosting a special event, I go to the Lodge to cook the dishes myself. I'll have written the menu in consultation with Dame Sally, thinking about seasonality and any Trinity traditions appropriate for the occasion. I take a different commis and section chef with me each time, because it's important that everyone gets the chance to experience those exciting opportunities. Or I might be meeting with one of our Fellows celebrating their 80th birthday, to help plan the dinner the College holds to mark that special moment. We'll design the menu together and Fellows often mention a favourite dish they haven't eaten since their student days – we'd recreate it for a really personal touch.

Of course, we try to make every meal special. Eating together is as the heart of every home and it's the same for the College community too – sharing good food and conversation brings us all closer together. So, I tell my team that whatever they cook, whoever it's for, and wherever the ingredients are from, they've got to do it justice. We work for Trinity, renowned worldwide, so our love of food and hospitality must shine through, whether we're producing burgers for the lunchtime student service or a seven-course formal dinner for 200 people.

If it's a day when we are hosting a large-scale event, such as a College Feast or an Annual Gathering Dinner, everything must run like clockwork, and I'll be constantly here, there, and everywhere through the day, checking our different sections are running smoothly so we stay on schedule. We'll have two full brigades preparing, chopping, and cooking non-stop, getting ready for the guests' arrival. I'm chief taster of course. I taste everything, especially the sauces, to ensure quality and consistency.

Sometimes, I'll run the dinner service rather than one of my head chefs. Because of the pace of life at Trinity, the pressure is often on, but I love that extra bit of adrenaline, and I think it helps us to deliver – the atmosphere will be absolutely buzzing. It's a bit like being a conductor. I must shape the tempo throughout, so we work in unison with our front of house colleagues and every element is perfectly timed; if all our guests are to have the best possible experience, we can't be out of sync. Once the evening draws to a close and I can stand back and watch everybody working as one, it makes me feel incredibly proud of what we've created together.

I end each day by saying goodbye to all my colleagues before I leave, to thank them for their work. Hospitality is a great career. I've been able to travel, work in amazing places and meet fantastic people. I've learnt so much. That's why I want to give back, and why the Trinity kitchens are a creative place where we nurture talent and try to pass on the joy of food. Feeding the College community day in and day out is hard work, but seeing so many people coming together, eating our food and enjoying it is the thrill of the job.

Seeing everyone come together to enjoy Trinity's hospitality is a great feeling.

STEM SMART: LEVELLING THE PLAYING FIELD

Trinity's Admissions Director Dr Glen Rangwala (1993) has welcomed new research showing that Cambridge's STEM SMART programme has enabled more than 700 state school students to achieve better A-level results and secure places at leading universities.

To date, 6,500 students have taken part in the free 16-month programme, which includes online tutorials with Cambridge academics, the opportunity to stay at a Cambridge College and attend academic sessions in departments, as well as mentoring from current students.

UCAS, the UK's university admissions service, has analysed the first two years of STEM SMART data and found that 'STEM Smarties' – as participants call themselves – were more aspirational, received higher grades, and were more successful at securing places at top universities.

Sixth formers from the most deprived backgrounds in the UK saw the biggest average grade boost in their A-levels across Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology, with Physics students on average achieving a grade higher.

Cambridge launched the programme in 2022, with the online platform Isaac Physics, to help bridge attainment gaps in maths and science A-level subjects, and mitigate educational disruption caused by the COVID pandemic. Co-founder and Director of Isaac Physics, Professor Lisa Jardine-Wright OBE (1994) said:

"We are helping to bridge that gap through free, weekly tutoring that would otherwise be unaffordable for A-level students from these backgrounds. STEM SMART has the capacity to support every STEM sixth former in every state school for free.

This is about levelling the playing field and enabling students from educationally disadvantaged and under-represented backgrounds to access Cambridge and other competitive universities. We're providing top quality support through subject specific tuition and resources, mentoring and encouragement, and getting students from a B to an A, and from an A to an A."*

To date, Trinity has hosted more than 100 students on the STEM SMART programme. Dr Rangwala said:

"Trinity hosts one of the largest intakes for the summer residential and a significant number of students go on to receive offers from Cambridge. I am delighted the STEM SMART programme has enabled many students to engage with Cambridge academics in weekly tutorials and then feel able and inspired to apply to leading UK universities including Cambridge."

The UCAS research compared the outcomes of more than 1,000 sixth formers who joined STEM SMART in its first two years with those of around 9,000 demographically matched students who did not.

The analysis shows that students most engaged in the programme – more than 360 – saw their results jump by a grade on average across Maths, Further Maths, Physics, Chemistry, and Biology.

They were more than twice as successful in achieving an A* in Maths, around four times as successful in achieving an A* in Physics, and around twice as successful in securing a place at Cambridge or Oxford than students from similar backgrounds who did not join the programme. A total of 80 students from the first two STEM SMART cohorts secured a place at Cambridge or Oxford.

STEM SMART and Isaac Physics are free to students, following support and funding from the University, the Colleges, alumni, The Ogden Trust, Raspberry Pi and previously the Department for Education.

Discover more: **isaacphysics.org/pages/stem_smart**

Professor Lisa Jardine-Wright with students.

CELEBRATING **GREAT COURT**

Each spring we look forward to welcoming members of the Great Court Circle to College for an annual lunch, a celebration of legacy and the generosity that sustains Trinity's future.

However, this year the Hall underwent significant renovation, and the works meant we were unable to host the event in its traditional form. Rather than let the occasion pass unmarked, we were inspired to celebrate in a different way.

During our Winter Telethon in December 2024, one of our student callers, Tudor Lazar, revealed not only a gift for conversation but also a remarkable talent for painting. So, with the Hall now restored to its original glory, we invited him to capture Great Court in all its splendour. The result is a striking watercolour painting, sent as a small token of our gratitude to members of the Great Court Circle. It serves not only as a reminder of the enduring beauty of the buildings, but also of the living legacy made possible through alumni support.

Tudor's beautiful painting to say thank you to members of the Great Court Circle.

MEET THE ARTIST
Tudor Lazar (2023, History & Modern Languages)

I'm currently a second-year History and French student. I row for First and Third and enjoy painting in my spare time – especially landscapes and historic buildings, which, as a student of the past, I'm quite passionate about.

Though I've dabbled in painting since childhood, it only became a serious hobby around 2021. I find it meditative – when you're focusing on tiny details you can hardly worry about the outside world (or your impending exams). It has really helped me relax, especially after intensive terms here at Trinity.

I painted my first watercolour of Great Court in December 2024. I chose a view that highlights how uneven – yet beautiful – this place really is. The main aim was capturing a certain mood that I think I first felt coming in for my interviews and wandering around the College after dark.

My latest painting of Great Court captures a very different atmosphere: the grandeur of the court on a bright, still morning. There's no one else around but the College is slowly coming to life – notice the lights are on in the far corner of the court. It's based on a photograph I took on the morning of one of my interviews. Briefly forgetting my nerves, I remember pausing in that moment of quiet to reflect on and to stand in awe of the enduring presence of Trinity's architecture.

As with many scenes of Trinity, the College's lack of symmetry and the mixture of different styles is visible here too, highlighting its rich historic fabric. Preserving and restoring a place like this is a monumental and continuous effort – one I am deeply grateful for, as it allows us all to enjoy its beauty to this day.

Leaving a legacy

The Great Court Circle was founded to celebrate those who decide to remember Trinity in their Will. In appreciation of their intended gift, all members are invited to an annual lunch at the College, followed by afternoon activities.

To learn more about leaving a legacy to Trinity, please visit the website or email us at **legacies@trin.cam.ac.uk**
trin.cam.ac.uk/alumni/supporting-trinity/legacy

© JAMES APPLETON

GOODBYE **SCAFFOLDING!**

Visitors to Trinity over the past few years will have noticed the persistent presence of scaffolding, particularly externally and internally around the Hall. In April this year, the long-awaited moment arrived, a Great Court in all its glory, free from the scaffolding screening. More glorious still in the May sunshine. We look forward to welcoming you back to a restored Trinity in due course, and to sharing more of this journey with you in our other digital and paper publications.

TRINITY **CRYPTIC CROSSWORD NO. 11**

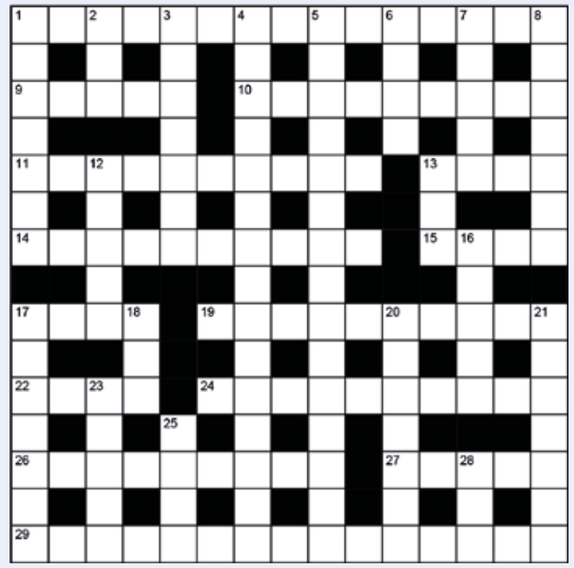
ACROSS

1 When rich porters represented library's designer (11,4)
9 Floor-covering of school (5)
10 Perhaps Shaffer's small drink to begin with? (9)
11 John's charter gets graduate to introduce tin back into silver art (5,5)
13 Order twenty-pence piece (4)
14 Freak pole that's often found not so far from the Cam? (10)
15 School's Out (reprise) bags top spot in Norway (4)
17 8-bit effect on the radio (4)
19 Tutor and Grace running here? (5,5)
22 Angers tender neuron endlessly (4)
24 In more ways than one, used to help control Rover's progression? (5,5)
26 Some form of rock artist – Frenchman – appears during Middle East show (9)
27 Provide joke online? (5)
29 Course ordered in issued subsets (8,7)

DOWN

1 Hard material isolates gate from core memory chip (7)
2 Served up fish *this* week in Lent? (3)
3 Broadcaster covering mischief shown by winger (7)
4 River god heard the flotsam crashing about (3,6,6)
5 Doctor thanks readers of novel (5,2,8)
6 Examine free hands, ignoring the odds (4)
7 Like a shower? It's smart to remove boxers first of all (5)
8 Upset cardinal and worthless person plan to control greenhouse gases (3,4)
12 Enormous pair of soldiers? (5)
13 Couple of willow tits hiding around (3)
16 Refreshment place serves an unexpectedly nice apple-pie for starters (5)
17 Powder-blue robe occasionally worn in real ale venue (7)
18 I say nothing (3)
20 Month in college / East Anglia university for French playwright, novelist and film director (7)
21 Some self-important Piscean characters so much the worse (4,3)
23 Accommodation in 19 for one, 22 and 11 perhaps briefly (5)
25 Recollected seaweed was tough (4)
28 One's up here shortly (3)

Visit *The Fountain* web page for a Word version of the crossword: **trin.cam.ac.uk/alumni/publications/the-fountain**



Please email your entry to **alumni-comms@trin.cam.ac.uk** or send it to us:

The Editor, Alumni Relations & Development Office
Trinity College,
Cambridge CB2 1TQ

Entries are due by 30 September 2025.

The first correct entry drawn will win a copy of *Trinity Poets*, and the winner will be announced in the next issue of *The Fountain*.

For the solution to Cryptic Crossword No.10 visit *The Fountain* web page listed below, or email us at **alumni-comms@trin.cam.ac.uk**

WINNING **ENTRIES**

Alumni competition
Congratulations to **Jonathan Desler (1991)** who successfully completed Trinity Cryptic Crossword No.10, winning a copy of *Trinity Poets*.

Student competition
Congratulations to **Bright Ni (2021)** and **Toby Collins (2022)**, winners of the seventh student crossword competition in memory of avid crossword fan John Grenfell-Shaw (2011). The prize of a generous Trinity catering credit is kindly supported by John's mother, Jenny.

Tim King (1980) is the Ipswich-based professional crossword compiler *Encota*. Tim also sets personalised puzzles as unique and thoughtful gifts. If you'd like to know more, contact him at: **specialisedcrosswords@gmail.com** and visit his website: **www.specialisedcrosswords.co.uk**

TRINITY **GIVING DAYS 2025**

Make our third Giving Days our most successful yet!

TRINITY COLLEGE
GIVING DAYS
11–12 JUNE 2025

Trinity's Giving Days take place on 11–12 June, bringing together alumni, students, and friends for 36 hours of support and celebration. With special challenges and matched funding, every gift will go even further to support undergraduate bursaries, graduate studentships, access and outreach initiatives, student life, and more.

Last year, 419 of you came together to raise £305,759. We hope to go further this year, to ensure that Trinity remains a place of world-leading education, where cutting-edge research thrives, and our scholars continue to help tackle urgent global challenges.

If you're reading this after Giving Days, you can still make a difference! Your gift will help to sustain and strengthen Trinity for future generations. Visit the website today or scan the QR code: **givingday.trin.cam.ac.uk.**

© DAVID JOHNSON

FORTHCOMING **EVENTS**

June 2025

Sunday 29 June
60th Anniversary Reunion Lunch for 1965.

July 2025

Saturday 12 July
Annual Gathering for 1993, 1994, 1995.

Wednesday 16 July
50th Anniversary Annual Gathering for 1975.

Saturday 26 July
Annual Gathering: 1978, 1979, 1980.

September 2025

Saturday 13 September
Annual Gathering for 1981, 1982, 1983.

Weekend, 20 & 21 September
First and Third Trinity Boat Club Bicentenary. Saturday, Celebration Dinner (sold out). Sunday, Family Brunch.

December 2025

Monday 8 December
London Alumni Carol Service.

For all events and to book, please visit: **trin.cam.ac.uk/events**

STAYING **IN TOUCH**

Please make sure that the Alumni Office has your up-to-date contact details and let us know your communication preferences. We take the protection of your data very seriously. We use it to keep in touch with you, and to keep you informed of College news and activities.

Full details of how your data is held and used are set out in our Data Protection Statement at **trin.cam.ac.uk/alumni/information/dataprotectionstatement**

You are welcome to request a hard copy from us. Some sensitive personal information may be held in the database. You have the right to contact us at any time to change how your data is used, or to tell us that you do not wish to receive a specific communication. Please contact us using the details opposite.

TRINITY **ONLINE**

- **trin.cam.ac.uk/alumni**
- **linkedin.com/school/trinity-college-cambridge**
- **Trinity Connect – trincam.aluminate.net**
- **@Trinity1546**
- **TrinCollCam**
- **facebook.com/TrinityCollegeCambridge**

If you would prefer to read *The Fountain* and/or the *Annual Record* online, please let us know by email: **alumni@trin.cam.ac.uk**

Don't miss out on our regular email communications – make sure we have your email address.

Alumni Relations & Development Office
Trinity College, Cambridge CB2 1TQ
E alumni@trin.cam.ac.uk **T** +44(0)1223 761527