



40 YEARS *of* CHRIST'S WOMEN 1978–2018



CHRIST'S COLLEGE NEWSLETTER

# Pieces

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# FORTY YEARS OF WOMEN at Christ's



This year, Christ's marks the fortieth anniversary of the admission of women to the College as students: in October 1978, six women graduate students – and, rather by chance, a single brave undergraduate – came up. (She was holding a deferred offer for the following year, but the then Senior Tutor Kelvin Bowkett realized there would be a spare place, and so she arrived, a year early, to help make history.) The following year, more than thirty women were admitted to begin their studies at Christ's, and a decisive shift in the College's social and intellectual cultures was truly underway. As Professor David Reynolds (Fellow) writes in the landmark collection of essays produced a few years back for the 500th anniversary of Christ's, 'the admission of women will surely be deemed one of the most significant innovations of the College's first millennium'.

## CHRIST'S WAS OF COURSE FOUNDED BY A WOMAN, LADY MARGARET BEAUFORT, ONE OF THE SHREWDEST AND MOST POWERFUL OPERATORS OF THE EARLY TUDOR DYNASTY

It seems extraordinary to remember from this vantage point, but women were only permitted to take full degrees at Cambridge from 1948, just seventy years ago; it was not until 1972 that the first established colleges welcomed women as undergraduate members. Christ's was not in the vanguard, but neither did it lag too far behind the trailblazers of Churchill, King's and Clare. Dr Geoffrey Ingham, a young Fellow of the College at the time, remembers that some unorthodox methods of persuasion were used to accelerate the decision-making process. A group of young women, thought to have come from Girton, arrived in the Hall during High Table one evening; they demanded the immediate

admission of women, and emphasised their point by shaking the Fellows' chairs and assailing them 'with balloons on sticks', Dr Ingham recalls, 'in the manner of fools' bladders'. The porters were summoned, but had little experience of dealing with this kind of affray, and dignity was lost on all sides. A new Junior Research Fellow – dining for the first time that evening – turned visibly pale, excused himself, and was never seen at High Table again; a relatively small element of collateral damage, all things considered, in an episode of unconventional but effective advocacy.

Admitting women as students and then as Fellows to Christ's was a significant, even a seismic step: but, as Dr Harriet Lyon reveals in this edition of *Pieces*, that is not the whole story. Christ's was of course founded by a woman, Lady Margaret Beaufort, one of the shrewdest and most powerful operators of the early Tudor dynasty, but it is the legions of largely anonymous women on whose labour and care much of the running of the college has depended since its illustrious foundation – as washerwomen, as bedmakers, as nurses, and even very occasionally as porters and gardeners – that Dr Lyon's fascinating account celebrates. There are other figures we might pause to remember, too: the former Master of Christ's John Peile, for example, philologist and pioneer of women's rights in education. He argued as early as 1897 that women should be admitted to University Degrees, and became a member of the council of Newnham College, where a very handsome building is named after him still. He would surely have been delighted that, a century after his prosperous headship, Christ's is led by the first female Master in its history, Professor Jane Stapleton.



**“We are proud to mark, this year, the fortieth anniversary of something so profoundly transformative for Christ’s. The women of our College community”**

This anniversary is an opportunity to look forwards, as well as back. The advances that have been made in women’s education both by this college, and the University more widely, have been colossal: the principles of equality which we strive to defend and uphold would have been unthinkable in 1978. But there is little room for complacency, as the struggle to achieve a 50:50 gender balance in our student body should remind us. Attempts to understand and so address an entrenched gender disparity in some Tripos subjects (my own, English, among them) are also ongoing, and it would be dangerous to believe that what we have fought for and won over the last forty years cannot be eroded or lost. For Christ’s, though, there is good reason to hope for the future. In the current admissions round, just over half the direct applications Christ’s received were from women; ‘both the highest proportion and the highest number of female applicants we have ever had, by some distance’, Dr Emily Tomlinson (the College’s Director of Admissions) remarks.

The next few months will see a number of special happenings and events to mark this anniversary. In January, current students of both genders have the chance to invite a woman who has been influential for them, perhaps a teacher or family friend, to a dinner in Hall; in July there will be another celebratory dinner, this one for alumnae. This term the students are putting on a ‘feminist cabaret’ to mark the inception of the new Feminist Society; there will also be various subject masterclasses, where leading women academics will come and speak about themselves and their work. In November, there will be a special choral service in chapel, with music and spoken contributions from college alumnae; the College Choir will also be releasing a recording of Annabel Rooney’s (m. 1991) music, their first by a female composer.

One of the anniversary year’s most noticeable changes has already taken place: the portraits of our distinguished alumni have been moved, temporarily, from their homes in Hall; in place of Milton, of Paley, of Darwin; of Cudworth, Finch and Baines, is an exhibition curated by Dr Carrie Vout (Fellow) comprising instead various pictures, prints and engravings of Lady Margaret (you can read more about this on page 8). Many of these are from the College collections, another is graciously lent by the Master and Fellows of St John’s. Perhaps the most interesting set of images, however, is that created by our students in response to an invitation to reimagine Lady Margaret for our times. Such bold visual statements are important: but the anniversary will be noticed, too, throughout the year, in quieter though no less enduring ways. More of our speakers, our preachers, our visitors and guests will be women; in our rich academic and cultural life we will address, a little more frequently, their interests and concerns.

We are proud to mark, this year, the fortieth anniversary of something so profoundly transformative for Christ’s. The women of our College community – the students, Fellows, bedmakers and support staff, as well as latter-day gardeners and porters – are, thankfully, no longer an oddity, but an integral part of its fabric; wonderfully unexceptional, surprisingly everyday. Nonetheless, we can use this anniversary to celebrate their presence here – *our* presence here – and, after almost five hundred years, the right and privilege of belonging.

**Dr Sophie Read**  
(Christ’s Fellow in English and Chairperson of the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Steering Committee)



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# NEWS

## TELEPHONE CAMPAIGN UPDATE



This year's Telephone Campaign raised an incredible **£275,059** at the end of calling for the College, rising to **£302,750** at the close of the Campaign. We are so grateful to everyone who got involved; from the fourteen-strong student team who really enjoyed their conversations with alumni, to all those who answered the phone, and were kind enough to give to the Campaign. We look forward to getting in touch in the coming year with many of those we weren't able to call this time.

The recent results of the 2018 Tompkins Table revealed that Christ's has been placed first overall. The annual Tompkins Table is a league table that compares the examination results of all the students at each of the twenty-nine Cambridge Colleges.



**Simon Engelke** (m. 2014) was the leader of one of the winning teams of the inaugural Trinity Bradfield Prize in October. Three groups won the prize, which has been created to nurture teams of entrepreneurial students at the University who have developed ideas to address global challenges. The group led by Simon, have developed a method for battery electrode diffusion. (Simon; far left).



*Even Such is Time*, the Choir's latest CD, is now available. The CD contains a variety of repertoire including Leighton's *Crucifixus pro nobis* and Finzi's *Lo the Full Final Sacrifice*. Other works by William Walton and Herbert Howells are also included. To order a copy of the CD at a cost of £10, please email [choir.admin@christs.cam.ac.uk](mailto:choir.admin@christs.cam.ac.uk). Alternatively, you can purchase a copy from the Porters' Lodge.



The Cambridge University Women's Boat Club (CUWBC) Openweight Rowing Team began their 2018-19 season by racing at the British Rowing Senior Championships in Nottingham on 19 October. Two Christ's students, **Tricia Smith** (m. 2013) and **Pippa Whittaker** (m. 2018) were selected for the Women's coxless four 'A' crew which won gold.

AWARDS & HONORS



Master of Christ's, **Professor Jane Stapleton**, was awarded the prestigious Degree of Doctor of Laws *honoris causa* by the University of Adelaide in September for recognition of her contributions to legal society. Professor Stapleton also received the Fleming Prize from the University of California Berkeley School of Law in November.



The garden of **Dr Geoffrey Ingham** (Fellow) was awarded first place in the prestigious *Daily Telegraph* 'Best British Garden' competition this summer. It was judged by Adam Frost (a presenter on the BBC's *Gardeners' World*) and Bunny Guinness (from BBC radio's *Gardeners' Question Time*). As part of the prize Dr Ingham has received a year's supply of Yorkshire Tea, and the garden, with Dr and Mrs Ingham, featured in the Yorkshire Tea advertisement.

COLLEGE CONSERVATION PROJECT

THE COLLEGE HAS UNDERGONE A NUMBER OF CONSERVATION PROJECTS OF LATE.

This has involved the Great Gate and the stonework above the door to the Master's Lodge, as well as the gate to the Fellows' Garden. The paint was firstly removed from the Great Gate in the 2017, and then the same treatment was given to the stonework above the Master's Lodge. The painstaking removal of the layers of paint from both sites was fascinating; providing the College with a rich historical account of paint types and colours over the centuries. Both areas of stonework then remained uncovered for some time in order to carbonate before redecoration was able to begin. In the meantime, the project moved focus to the conservation of the Great Gate itself and the metal gate leading to the Fellows' Garden. Bolts, hinges and bracings were repaired on the Great Gate, as well as the wood being cleaned



and oiled. The Fellows' Gate received treatment to hinges and bolts, as well as the removal of paint layers which were obscuring detail in the decoration, and work to remedy areas of corrosion.

Finally, the redecoration took place, bringing everything back to life. This project, which has taken a lot of expertise, patience and cooperation, will significantly extend the life of these characteristic features of Christ's, and preserve them for generations to come, and has all been made worth it by the breath-taking results.

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THE HIDDEN WOMEN OF CHRIST'S:

# Female Staff and the Admission Book

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Dr Harriet Lyon

This year we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the admission of female students to Christ's. Shortly after these women first passed through the Porters' Lodge, the College also admitted its first female Fellows. Thus a college founded by a woman, Lady Margaret Beaufort, began to offer educational and academic opportunities to a new generation of women.

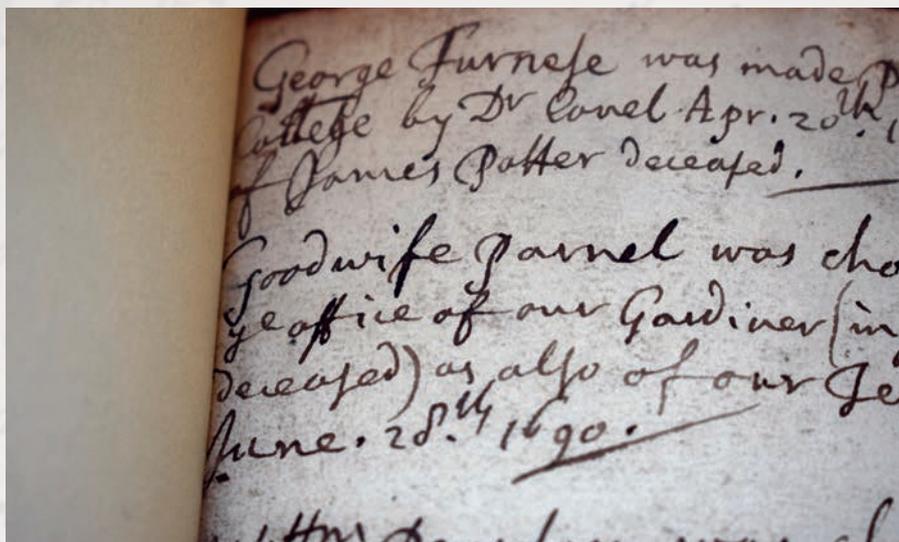
This was undoubtedly a transformative and profoundly important moment in the life of the College. And yet the admission of women in 1978 is only one significant episode in the long history of women at Christ's.

A small army of female staff has served the College since its foundation in 1505. In Lady Margaret's days, laundresses regularly appeared in the account books. In 1509, the stipend of the laundress was £2, 13 shillings, and 4 pence a year – not a great deal, but more than the wage earned by some male servants, such as the barber. In the decades and centuries that followed, women were employed as maidservants and later as bedmakers; the statutes permitted nurses entry in times of sickness; and a nanny and a governess served those Masters whose young families occupied the Master's Lodge. For centuries, then, women have been essential to the running of Christ's. Some of them even called the College home.

ALTHOUGH WOMEN HAD BEEN EMPLOYED BY THE COLLEGE SINCE ITS FOUNDATION, THE OFFICES OF PORTER AND GARDENER WERE NOT NORMALLY OCCUPIED BY WOMEN. INDEED, THE ONLY WAY THAT WOMEN COULD TAKE ON THESE POSITIONS WAS IF THEY INHERITED THEM FROM A MALE RELATIVE.

When I began researching these 'hidden' women, it quickly became clear that they were both everywhere and nowhere in the historical record. References to their existence are fairly common; details about their lives and their day-to-day work are not. This is not an uncommon experience for historians writing about women. However, the general lack of female voices in the archives makes the material that we do have all the more startling and poignant. The women of Christ's sometimes crop up in unexpected places.

There is a book that records the names of all those admitted to Christ's as Fellows as well as the names of students awarded scholarships. The first entries were made in the 1680s and it is still in use today. At first glance, this appears primarily to be a record of the exclusion of women from the College: more than four centuries worth of names account for successive generations of male Fellows and students, before women's names start to appear at the end of the 1970s. Read like a normal book, front to back, it offers a chronological history of Christ's in which women only enter the story in 1978.



Original text from the College Admission Book.

Turn the book over and flip it upside down, however, and there is clear evidence that women have been here all along.

Between 1689 and 1716, and for reasons known only to the recorder, the appointment of select members of staff was chronicled on a sheet of paper that has been bound into the back of the admission book. Of the ten entries, two are remarkable because they commemorate the employment of women in unusual roles. The first, dated 28 June 1690, records that 'Goodwife Parnel was chosen to execute [the] office of our Gardiner (in place of her son deceased) as also of our Tennis court keeper'. The second, written in the winter of 1710-11, notes that 'Goodwife Furnase was made Porter upon the death of her husband', presumably the George

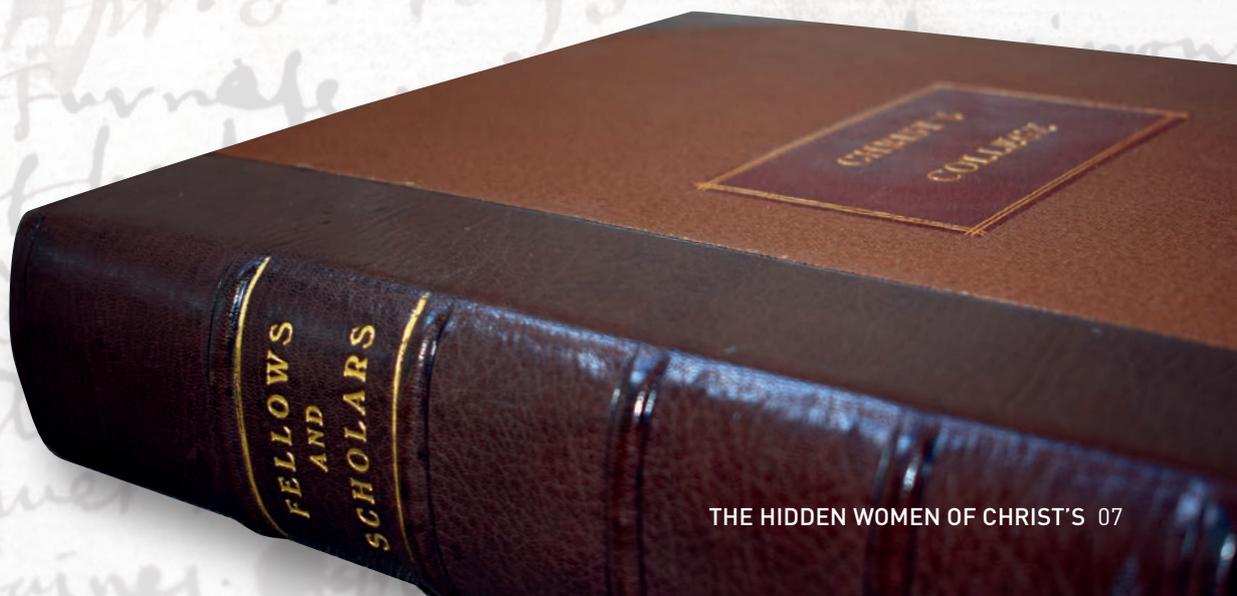
Furnase listed at the top of the page, who had first become a porter in the spring of 1689. These are two women about whom we know little else, but they must have been considered safe and skilled pairs of hands in which to entrust two of the most important roles in College.

Although women had been employed by the College since its foundation, the offices of porter and gardener were not normally occupied by women. Indeed, the only way that women could take on these positions was if they inherited them from a male relative, as was the case for Goodwives Parnel and Furnase. In an era when there were dynasties of staff working in the College, it was common to employ husbands and wives, sons and daughters, nieces and nephews. Certain jobs were passed down

and around these families. In the case of Goodwife Furnase, we can see that the job of porter was clearly intended to stay within the Furnase family because the admission book records that 'her son Thomas' should be 'allow'd to execute the place' of porter in the future. It seems that as far as the staff was concerned in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and by contrast with the all-male Fellowship and student body, College life was a family affair. In this context, women were afforded opportunities – albeit limited – to step outside the bounds of the conventional rules and traditions of female work.

Goodwives Furnase and Parnel belong to a history of Christ's in which women – far from being absent in the long centuries between Lady Margaret and the admission of female students – have played a central role. In the admission book, their names appear alongside generations of Masters, Fellows, and scholars. Indeed, the most striking and moving thing about the brief notes that attest to Goodwives Furnase and Parnel's existence at Christ's is that they appear in a document which otherwise suggests that women first set foot in Christ's just 40 years ago. Whilst their names only appear upside down and in the very back of the admission book, this rather poignantly underlines the fact that – although we have not always remembered or recognised their presence – there have always been women at Christ's.

**Dr Harriet Lyon (A H Lloyd Fellow)**

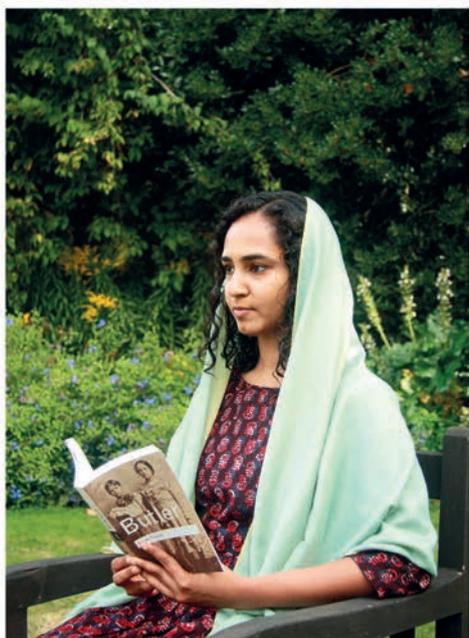


The Christ's College Admission Book.

# The Lady Margaret Portrait Prize

By Sebastian Marshall (m. 2015) and Leah Wild (m. 2015).

WHEN ASKED HOW SHE ORIGINALLY CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF CREATING A 'LADY MARGARET BEAUFORT PORTRAIT PRIZE' AS PART OF THE CELEBRATIONS SURROUNDING THE FORTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADMISSION OF FEMALE STUDENTS TO CHRIST'S, DR CAROLINE VOUT'S ANSWER WAS BOTH ARCH AND CANDID: 'DESPERATION'.



© CHRIS REEVE



Faced with a College picture collection containing few artworks either by or of women who are important in its history, Dr Vout (or Carrie, to all who have met her) chose to use the College's foundress – a crucial exception to this state of affairs – to

anchor a temporary re-hang of pictures of women, and only women, in College Hall, one of Christ's main communal spaces. In the prompt to make their own portrait of Lady Margaret, both graduate and undergraduate students were invited to reflect on her role as promoter of education, patron, mother, woman. The fruits of the competition – in a variety of styles and media – have been hung alongside examples of female portraiture from the College collection and from the other college Lady Margaret founded, St John's College. It is safe to say that the request for portraits that were 'innovative, beautiful, and relevant' was not in vain as 'desperation' turned to serendipity.

In some senses College Hall is a forbidding room in which to display art: cavernous space, variable light, awkward panelling, and restrictive picture-cables require a concerted effort if one is to create a coherent ensemble. Yet the re-hang sensitively engages with the symmetries surrounding high table, and takes advantage of the low side-panels to enable a more intimate view of some of the smaller portraits. Large scale representations, some of them certainly Lady Margaret and others more questionable in their inclusion, are juxtaposed with these smaller portraits, while works in different media such as acrylic and photography throw the more traditional oil paintings into relief. Members of the College are used to seeing images of their foundress peering down at them in chapel and at dinner, but leave these images in their usual positions, and they become part of the fixtures and fittings, wallpaper. This exhibition makes one look anew. For many students, Lady Margaret can seem an abstract, (literally) remote figure. The re-hang encourages reflection at the same time as humanising her.

Right: *Lady in Blue* (Margaret Beaufort) by Emil Sands (m. 2017).  
 Below: *Margaret Polyptych, 1968–2018* by Yasmina El Chami (m. 2017).  
 Bottom left: *Dr Carrie Vout*.



gaze, less severe expression, and gloriously ornate gilded frame, this portrait has a personal significance for Carrie. When interviewed, she remarked upon how this painting was special to her because it normally hangs in the college office of a close friend and colleague. For her, the choice to foreground this portrait speaks to her position as an academic woman in the university, bringing in the idea of female friendship. This led us to think about the portraits in Hall as a 'sisterhood' of images, standing (in) for and celebrating the women of all ages whose lively conversation now fills it on a routine basis.

The temporary nature of this project raises the important question of what will be next for the decoration of College Hall, or for public spaces in College

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more broadly. When asked about her hopes for the future of portraiture in College, Carrie said that as well as making the College's picture collection look its best and the College as beautiful as possible, she hoped that College would display 'a cross-section that is as representative as possible of its past, its present and its future'. A critical goal of the exhibition is to get everyone thinking about what that might look like. Referencing in passing the Rhodes debate in Oxford, she stressed that hangs are always political, but added that this is not something to be frightened of: 'we don't ever want to be in the position where we're censoring history, but we do always want to be in a position where we're understanding of the choices that we're making and the implication of those choices.' Christ's is a beautiful, uplifting built environment which members of the College are fortunate to enjoy, but this must not be taken for granted: 'one's feelings about the world and one's being in the world are very much shaped by what that world looks like, and that goes for what's on the walls of the space in which we live.'

A good example of this are the two prize-winning entries, by second-year classicist Emil Sands and doctoral student in architecture, Yasmina El-Chami. Emil's portrait figures as one of the most radical departures from Lady Margaret's traditional iconography. By focusing instead on the techniques shared by her most iconic images and emphasising pale skin to create a real contrast between lightness and darkness, Emil eschews the conventional image of an older lady in a position of religious contemplation and the profile-view to create a confident, modern woman. This 'Lady Margaret' gains poignancy by the fact that the model is a current undergraduate, whom some of its viewers may

recognise. Yasmina's entry also engages closely and imaginatively with the visual tradition. Her series of five photographs picks up many of the classic images of Lady Margaret, side-profile with a headdress and prayer book. But instead of representing religious devotion, El-Chami's polyptych represents five current graduate students in the Fellows' Garden, each holding a book that is special to them. In a masterfully self-referential way, these books range from Judith Butler, known for her work on the performativity of gender, to their own PhD thesis.

In the centre, above high table, hangs the loan from St John's College. Besides being notable for its steady outward



Page Nayme-Satterthwaite.

Page Nayme-Satterthwaite (m. 2014) read Part I in Anglo-Saxon, Norse and Celtic and Part II in Law at Christ's, before graduating in 2018.

## LIFE ON DEATH ROW: VOLUNTEERING IN VEGAS

During her time at College, Page was involved in a wide range of activities and initiatives, including addressing peers in the House of Lords regarding research about young people's attitudes to voting and social issues in her first year and being elected as the Youth representative to sit on the National Children's Bureau's Board of Trustees. Page was also elected President of the Cambridge Union in Michaelmas term 2017.

After graduating this summer, Page went to Nevada to embark on an extraordinary volunteering opportunity...



Next to Nevada Supreme Court, one of many wedding chapels in Vegas and a more standard reason to visit.

### WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE SUMMER?

Graduating from Christ's was an exciting time when everyone reflected on the past few years and was looking forward to the future. After the graduation ceremony, a common question was 'what are your plans for the summer?'. This year, thanks to the support I received from the G.R.N. Minchin Travel Fund, my response was going to Las Vegas...as a legal intern arguing death row appeal cases.

From July to September 2018, I worked in the Capital Habeas Unit (known as the CHU) in Nevada, USA. This is part of the Federal Public Defender's Office for the District of Nevada and consists of a team of lawyers ('attorneys' called public defenders) who manage the final appeals for individuals on death row, many with their execution dates fast approaching.

There are currently eighty-three people on death row in Nevada, which has one of the highest per capita death row populations in the US. Some of these people became my clients.

### WHY VEGAS?

The USA has a different system of law to England and Wales. From Law Tripos, I had no experience of American jurisprudence and Las Vegas is in the middle of the desert and at its hottest in the summer (when I visited) averaging forty degrees Celsius most days – so why did I intern there?

First, the law. Learning more about American law was particularly attractive to me, because I have an interest in constitutional law. The American legal system has a strong focus on the written constitution, whereas the constitution here is more composite from several written and unwritten sources. The constitution is key to death penalty appeals, either in arguing that an individual is innocent or that the death penalty is the incorrect penalty for the crime committed. Often both arguments are put forward. The Sixth, Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments became particularly familiar to defend the rights of criminal defendants, prohibit cruel and unusual punishment and ensure due process respectively.

Secondly, impact. Studying the law is interesting by itself, but it is ultimately a tool made by people that strives to help people. I wanted to apply what I had learned at Cambridge to positive effect. Supporting the death row attorneys gave me countless opportunities to do this in a much more direct way than I expected. Early on in my time at the CHU, I delivered a presentation to a team of attorneys in relation to particular legal restrictions regarding witnesses that the investigators used that day in their evidence gathering and I contributed to motions filed on behalf of our clients in US District Court.

### WHAT HAPPENED IN VEGAS?

No executions took place during my visit, although one execution was stayed due to the intervention of a drug company. Whilst these last-minute objections are increasingly common, recent surveys suggest that support for the death penalty is increasing in America and so such delays are only prompting a move back to the electric chair over lethal injection, rather than calls for the abolition of the penalty. By contrast, the death penalty was fully abolished by 1998 in the UK.



Page interviewing Baroness Hale, just after she started as President of the Supreme Court in October 2017.



Nevada Supreme Court.

Working on death penalty cases does not involve literally saving lives day to day because compiling appeals can take several months and sometimes several years. However, I did witness life changing work, such as major breakthroughs on evidence that could establish clients' innocence and attorneys in other parts of the office secured releases for family members improperly separated in Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention Centres.

To assist the death row attorneys, I worked on research projects, trial document analysis and drafted motions to be filed in court for clients. From a technical legal perspective, this was already very interesting. It gained even greater significance because every document formed part of an attempt to secure justice for someone on the row who may have served decades in prison (potentially innocent or unlawfully given the death penalty).

I gained a lot of insight from the public defender attorneys and investigators involved in supporting the appeals. In case meetings with them, it was fascinating and concerning to learn about new evidence that had only come to light at this final stage in the legal process and many failings earlier in proceedings.

Regardless of anyone's view on the use of capital punishment, the risk of executing innocent people is an indisputable injustice and a very real one. Since 1973 (after the death penalty was suspended by the US Supreme Court in 1972) one hundred and sixty-three exonerations of individuals wrongfully on death row have taken place, including findings of innocence after execution.

## REFLECTIONS

From US gangs and gun models to the interaction between state and federal laws, there was always something different to learn in Vegas. The aim was always to contribute to the client's claim and I experienced specific examples of the law's failure to provide justice, as well as the law being a remedy to injustice.

Using the law to achieve justice, whilst also recognising its limitations, is why I hope to practise as a barrister. Reading into The Innocence Project (in the US) and the cases of local law clinics and citizens advice bureaux here can give an insight into how the law does both.

The other dimension of learning was how to live in an American city. Las Vegas is very different to Cambridge. It was helpful to reflect on the law and its implications whilst in another environment, especially with contemporary legal events having such prominence. I blogged about the US/UK justice systems whilst a US Nationwide Prison Strike and congressional confirmation hearings dominated the news. I witnessed 'bail bond' shops and the police making arrests on a daily basis. Beyond the traditional social issues of gambling and excess associated with Vegas, I witnessed the visible effects of the social housing crisis that has resulted in many people living in the city's storm sewer system beneath the imitation Egyptian pyramid, Eiffel Tower and London Eye. Again, the law helps and hinders these issues: it is behind a lot of arbitrary housing evictions, but it also protects people's civil liberties.

The lesson that the law can be a solution but is also part of the problem is one that equally applies to the treatment of women at Cambridge. Just as it was laws and regulations that kept women from voting (achieved in law in 1918 for some women and then 1928 for all women) and out of universities, it is also law reform that was part of the solution.

Cambridge voted to allow women full membership of the university on the third vote about the matter in 1947. In 1976 Christ's voted to admit women to the College and award degrees, with the first female students matriculating in 1978. Again, this is illustrative of how the rules that institutions devise can create problems and yet be part of the solution.

Studying as a law student over the past few years, the law and its institutions have continued to develop. In 2018, Baroness Hale became the UK Supreme Court's first female President and many developments in gender equality (such as Christ's anniversary year this year) are reaching commemorative milestones. But it is just as important to question and challenge the systems that made these notable achievements that had to be won in the first place.

Systemic failings of the law to provide justice were evident on a very different level to me in the US. But in a Christ's context, I am also reminded that I gifted Helena Kennedy QC's *Eve Was Framed* (a personal critique of the British legal system, focussing on the treatment of women in UK courts) to another Christ's law student in our Secret Santa last year. Neither of us would be allowed to study at Christ's had we been students forty years ago. It is a significant milestone.



W1 crew (Emily second from right)

## TAKE 2

# WOMEN'S ROWING

PIPPA MICHAELS (NÉE CRIBB) MATRICULATED AT CHRIST'S IN 1980. SHE BECAME THE FIRST EVER FEMALE WOMEN'S BOAT CLUB CAPTAIN IN HER SECOND YEAR AT COLLEGE (THE FIRST WOMEN'S CAPTAIN WAS SHANE MACSWEENEY, M. 1978). After graduating, Pippa took a graduate trainee position in marketing at Johnson & Johnson in Slough where she stayed for over ten years, before moving to the US with her American husband, Paul. She has lived there for more than twenty-eight years and the couple have two children, Alex and Rebecca, now 17 and 16 years old.

Here Pippa gives us a glimpse of what it was like to be one of the early female rowers at Christ's, both on and off the water...

"It was great to come back to Cambridge for the Christ's College Blades Regatta and Dinner this September, having not visited in over thirty years. It gave me the opportunity to revisit Christ's and show my 16-year-old daughter Rebecca, around the College and I was struck by how much had changed and yet how much remained exactly the same!

Recently I read a book called *The Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown. It is the true story of a crew of working-class boys from University of Washington, who rowed for the United States at the controversial 1936 Olympics in Berlin. There are many great quotes from the boatman, a gentleman called George Yeoman Pocok. He wrote, 'every good rowing coach imparts to his men the self-discipline required to achieve the ultimate from mind, heart and body. Which is why most ex-oarsmen will tell you they learned more fundamentally important lessons in the racing shell than in the classroom.' I have always said I put way more time and effort into winning



the May Bumps blade in 1983, than I ever did into my history studies. Not that I would tell that to Sir David Cannadine! It was without a doubt one of the greatest highlights of my time at Christ's. It was the hours spent on the river and not in the library, where I learned so much about working hard to achieve goals, while making lifelong friendships along the way. I recently pulled out a lot of old photo albums from our days on the river to remind me of those great times.

Over the years I have learned a great deal about training, with more research and science being applied to sports of all kinds. But to me it all started back at that boat house on Victoria Avenue. I asked Emily (the current Women's Captain, from whom we will hear from later in this article) to tell me about their current training programmes and other aspects of rowing life. As I had suspected everything has changed! I first got into rowing at the recruitment event, known as 'going to the buttery to meet people!' That is where, in the



Above: 1983 May Bumps – Pippa Michaels at stroke.  
 Below opposite: L to R Helen Saul (m. 1981), Lisa Arnold (m. 1980),  
 Shane MacSweeney (m. 1978), Emily Marr (m. 2013) and  
 Pippa Michaels.

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first week, I met Rosemary Rogers (m. 1979), who was doing a great job of generating interest. I told her I wanted to cox a men's boat but she told me I had to learn row first. Of course, I never did cox and it seemed as if almost every woman fresher was asked to get into a novice eight! Communication about rowing outings were simply posted on the notice board and that was it. Now I understand that recruitment is a lot more systematic, using social media like Facebook. As Women's Captain in my second year, I felt as though I had to fight for the men to take us seriously at all. Back then the men took priority and women were fitted in only if and when there was time or space. I had to push pretty hard to get use of boats and to find coaches. One of our biggest supporters was the quiet and unassuming boatman Dick Kelly. I believe I was in fact the first person to persuade him to start coaching again. I recall he said something about the women being better at listening than the men! It was my job to recruit coaches and organise outings, but it sounds like the current boatwoman, Kate Hurst, takes on a lot more of this role now. As the women remained lower on the totem pole for getting coaches, we often looked outside the College. We got Jane Nicholson from Girton, and Tim Lucas from LMBC, and Ian Bernstein from CUBC, and we were always very happy when we got Chris Lloyd (m. 1959) and Derek Manning to coach us for a week, which was usually the result of few trips to the Free Press!

Our training was primarily on the water. After we rowed we sometimes went for a run and I think I was the only one who liked doing that! There were no ergos (ergometers or indoor rowing machines) for us, nor weights, nor flexibility training that are all included in the women's training programme now. It is terrific to see the amazing brand-new boathouse and all



Above: 1982 Lent Bumps – Pippa Michaels at stroke.

the facilities that the students can use. Our clothes were all cotton or nylon. No wicking or performance fabrics back then! I can remember my frozen hands sticking to my oar on some of those bitter January days on the Cam. I have photos of us looking like eight snowmen in the novice boat. Our nutrition consisted of bottles of Coke and Mars Bars; I'm not even sure bottled water was sold here back then. In 1983 Lisa (Arnold, m. 1980) proudly held the record of the most Mars Bars eaten of anyone at the Boat Club, male or female! In that year with a lot of effort by Lisa as Captain, we were able to get our first shell built just for the women. Dick Kelly was very proud of the *Lady Todd* and we were ecstatic to win the first ever women's blades for Christ's in the May Bumps of 1983. That oar is now proudly on the wall in my house in New Jersey, and though it cost me more to ship than it did to buy, it was worth every penny.

The key social event for the Boat Club was of course the legendary Boat Club dinners. Now as I understand it, there are ladies Boat Club jackets, which didn't exist in our day. Indeed, all of the formal photos show us swamped, wearing borrowed large men's jackets! One of the advantages of being among the few women in College was that we got invited to a lot of parties, including the legendary Marguerites cocktail parties.

Looking back now I see we were pioneering women's rowing at Christ's. At the time we just thought we were trying to give women here an opportunity to begin to compete with the power houses like Newnham and Girton or long-established mixed colleges like Clare, Kings and Churchill. It is so great to see how far women's rowing has come at Christ's. I was really excited when I learned that the women had rowed to take the headship in the Lent Bumps of 2015. It was almost inconceivable back then that this could ever happen. I sincerely hope that this legacy will continue and we will see many more women continue to excel and make the Boat Club members proud! Work hard and play hard: that really was one of the best lessons that I learned and what I remember most from our days on the river! It taught us that hard work pays off and gives you a sense of achievement and feeling of self-confidence that you can succeed in anything if you just put your mind to it."



**EMILY MARR (M. 2013) IS A CURRENT GRADUATE STUDENT HERE AT CHRIST'S, UNDERTAKING A PHD IN PLANT SCIENCES. SHE ALSO READ NATURAL SCIENCES AS AN UNDERGRADUATE AT COLLEGE AND IS THE WOMEN'S BOAT CLUB CAPTAIN FOR 2018–19.** Here, she takes the opportunity to reflect on her time at College as a female student over the past few years and her reaction to the equality between the sexes that has changed dramatically since the first women were admitted to Christ's forty years ago.

"Reflecting on the 40th anniversary year of women being admitted to Christ's, I am aware that my experience has been immensely different from that of women thirty or forty years ago. It is a testament to the success of creating equality between men and women that I have never felt a hint of sexism during my time in the Boat Club. Indeed, in the five years that I have been at Christ's, we have had an equal number of male and female whole Club Captains and a female Boathouse Manager. We have the same facilities, the same methods of recruitment and a sense of camaraderie between the men and women's sides. I know that women haven't always had such an established place in rowing and I was shocked to read the article, *Pulling together – a history of women's rowing in Cambridge*, in edition 74 of CAM. In it was a quote from a Cambridge College Boat Club Captain who had written to the Cambridge University Women's Boat Club (CUWBC) in 1967 saying, 'I personally do not approve of women rowing at all. It is a ghastly sight, an anatomical impossibility and physiologically dangerous.'

However, this hardship is outside my experience and I want to focus on the positive time that I have had in Christ's College Boat Club (CCBC).

When I first came to Cambridge, I had no intention of rowing; I thought it was far too mainstream and anyway, I was a runner. However, as I began my second year of study, I felt the need to join a team sports club, not least because I no longer had Saturday lectures nor Sunday supervisions and two whole commitment-free days were a very daunting prospect! In the first week of term, I bumped into my neighbour who was on his way to the boat club freshers' barbecue and he persuaded me to go along too. The friendly community of CCBC drew me in. Nowadays, a lot of our publicity is done online but I think the most effective and engaging recruitment method is still by speaking to people in person, whether at the freshers' barbecue or during conversations in college. After all, the people you row with are a huge part of your rowing experience: I may not

have been so keen to put up with the early mornings, the long river queues and the biting winter cold if it had not been for the pleasure of being part of a crew and a wider community.

Of course, I don't only row for the people; I also enjoy keeping fit. Rowing has historically been considered unfeminine and I admit that I was initially apprehensive about developing bulky musculature. I remember a friend commenting that female rowers were 'big'. However, far from the comment from the Boat Club Captain in the 1960s mentioned previously, there has been a recent shift in perceptions of female strength. I have sensed the trend towards strength training among women and feel that muscle is being viewed more positively. Our training facilities have certainly evolved since Pippa's day. While I've been in the Club, we have always had eight ergo machines in the Boathouse for whole crews to train together. Since the beginning of 2018, the refurbished and extended Boathouse has been in use and boasts a large gym with sixteen ergo machines, two Wattbikes and extensive weights equipment. I'm at the Boathouse every day as we have four water sessions, two erg sessions and two weights sessions each week. It is such a fantastic place that I enjoy going to exercise there as much on my own as with the crew, and such is the feeling of a home from home that I have even spent a night there! I have also been lucky enough to be able to learn to scull and use the singles and doubles. Our training is physically and mentally intense, yet there are also opportunities to simply paddle in a single scull and be at one with nature.

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On a more personal note, I have developed a lot as a person thanks to rowing, or rather, thanks to fellow rowers. I'm sure people from my undergraduate days will remember me as a shy person. Through the Boat Club, I have discovered that I love making connections with people, I have forged friendships across boat clubs, and I have rowed with many different colleges. I have grown in confidence, I've discovered that I can be a leader and enjoy it, and I hope I can inspire people to feel enthusiasm for the joys of life, one of which is rowing.

It is still seen as an achievement for women to reach roles of importance and indeed I have been congratulated by some on becoming captain despite being a woman. However nowadays, I do not feel that being a female Captain in CCBC needs celebrating. The achievements of men and women should receive equal amounts of celebration because men and women should have equal opportunities. I believe this is currently the case in CCBC and I hope that this will soon be the case across society and across age groups, particularly during those formative years that impact so much on the rest of our lives."

The Christ's College Fisher Society is our exclusive membership group, for those who are kind enough to leave Christ's a gift in their Will; entrusting us with their support for the College's future. We asked one of our alumnae, Helen Little (m. 1988), a member, what motivated her to remember Christ's in this way.



I came to study Architecture at Christ's College in 1988 from the Abbey School in Reading. My enduring memories of College are of 'burning the candle at both ends': the Architecture Department

demanded long hours and the social life at College continued in much the same vein. Along with designing and building theatre sets for the ADC and joining the Officers' Training Corps Infantry core as their first and only female member, the three years passed quickly in a busy and energetic blur of creative output.

Somewhat exhausted by this intense whirlwind, I found myself living in London for the first time and thinking I should take a Year Out, something many of my contemporaries had broadened their horizons with before Matriculation. Little did I expect to spend this gap year as a London Bus Driver!

By 1998 I had qualified as an Architect and I now run my own business as a sole practitioner in south-west London, where I specialise in residential work. Since graduating I have also spent many years working

as a Lecturer and Examiner in Architecture, both overseas and in the UK, and it was through this role that I became a mentor at the Stephen Lawrence Centre in East London. Stephen was an architectural student, murdered in 1993, and the Centre was set up to improve opportunities for aspiring architects from disadvantaged backgrounds.

It was particularly this, together with overseas work that I undertook for NGOs in deprived and war-torn countries (Tanzania, Kosovo and Iraq), which inspired me to leave a legacy to the College through the Fisher Society. I wanted to ensure that others less fortunate than me could have access to some of the benefits I have been so privileged to have experienced and enjoyed.

On the 40th anniversary of women being admitted to Christ's, if I had any advice to give new female (or male) graduates, it would be that: Sometimes you find out what you are supposed to be doing by doing the things you are not supposed to do.

If you are interested in learning more about leaving Christ's a gift in your Will, feel free to contact Robert Smith at [rs2@cam.ac.uk](mailto:rs2@cam.ac.uk), or on 01223 334919.

# Stay connected

## DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

2019

19 JANUARY  
Inspirational  
Women Dinner  
for students

14 MARCH  
Alumni  
Evensong

30 MARCH  
MA  
Congregation

13 JUNE  
Alumni  
Evensong

15 JUNE  
May Bumps  
Picnic

22 JUNE  
Reunion  
Lunch for  
matriculation  
years 2006-2010

29 JUNE  
College  
Association  
Dinner

6 JULY  
40 Years  
of Women  
at Christ's  
Celebration

# 40 YEARS *of* CHRIST'S WOMEN 1978–2018

