



## Editorial

**Professor Christopher Howe, Professor of Plant and Microbial Biochemistry, President and Director of Studies in Preclinical Medicine**

As the Master commented in his Editorial in the last issue, our world has changed in a way that for most of us would have been unbelievable two months ago. The strength of the College in the face of that change has been truly impressive.

Inevitably, one core element of our life as a community, and one that is particularly important to me as President, has been suspended for the time being. That is the act of eating together. William Wilkins, as architect of New Court, regarded the Library, the Chapel and the Hall as the essential features of a College. The purpose of the College, as defined in our Statutes as the 'advancement of education, research, learning and religion' and represented by the Library and the Chapel goes on, although in ways that our Founders could never have imagined. (If Henry, Duke of Lancaster, had simply emailed the King to seek a licence for the foundation of the College, things might have turned out less well.) Eating together, however, is very different. We may meet each other over Zoom for a cup of coffee and a chat, or maybe even a meal, but it's not the same as a full and lively Hall on a Sunday after Choral Evensong, a quiet Monday evening with just a few Fellows at High Table, or a busy weekday lunch with people coming and going. Welcoming Old Members back to dinner in their College is another vital part of that communal eating, so it was a great disappointment that we inevitably had to cancel April's Beldam Dinner. The next few weeks will tell if we can hold any kind of MacCurdy Dinner in September. (We keep things under review and will let you know as soon as we can.) We plan to adjust the yearly schedule for the dinners as needed so no year groups miss out.

The current situation leaves me with even greater respect, admiration and gratitude for our Founders. Coming through a time that was surely even more terrifying than ours, their faith in the future was remarkable. In time, some kind of real, rather than virtual, community life will return for us, and we will share again in the privilege of eating together. I particularly look forward to seeing our Old Members back with us to join in that part of our life. Meanwhile, wherever in the world and under whatever conditions of lockdown you are, I hope you and your loved ones stay safe.

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## News from the College

**Dr John David Rhodes, Reader in Film Studies and Visual Culture, Warden of Leckhampton and Director of Studies in Modern & Medieval Languages**

I left Cambridge on 13 March. I had planned to leave it for a long-planned, and rather complicated trip to the US that was going to include giving a paper at a large academic conference in Denver, examining a doctoral thesis in Montreal, doing some work in an archive in Los Angeles and making a quick visit to see my parents in Louisiana.

But by 10 March, it became clear that international travel was imprudent. Instead, on the 13 March, I had a meeting at the Fitzwilliam Museum about a show I am curating for 2024, then grabbed a few things from my flat at Leckhampton, and jumped on a train to Brighton, where I live (when not in Cambridge) with my partner, another academic, in our flat on the seafront. I planned to come back to Cambridge on Monday for another few meetings, and then make a more considered decision about which books and which clothes to take back to Brighton for the Easter vacation. Across that weekend, however, the public mood shifted as did my own, and by Monday it seemed ill-advised to continue taking public transport. I spoke to Marina Frasca-Spada, the Senior Tutor, who said there was no point and no wisdom in returning to Cambridge for the time being. I have been here in Brighton ever since.

Most of our postgraduate students decided, for many different reasons, to leave Leckhampton, to return 'home', even though 'home' means many things to people. For some members of the MCR, however, Leckhampton is home: there is no other obvious or better place for them to ride this out. For these students - they are about fifty in number - Leckhampton's storied idyll of pastoral isolation has taken on a rather different resonance of late.



I know what has been going on in Leckhampton from phone conversations with those still resident and from weekly Zoom meetings with the MCR Committee and others. (Zoom, by the way, is a technology that most of us had never heard of eight weeks ago but which now dominates and mediates our waking lives). The conversations have addressed – honestly and collaboratively – the anxieties of locking down, often in a small single room, stranded in the spookily semi-deserted domain of Leckhampton's several acres. Timothy Ekeh, the Leck Soc Secretary, has kept the Leckhampton Society gatherings going via Zoom. Helen McGowan, the MCR Secretary, sends at the beginning of each week a calendar of the distant or virtual activities for the upcoming days: virtual formal hall (in gowns, even), virtual Welfare Tea, movie nights (the movies in question watched simultaneously if apart) and so on. None of these things, however, makes up for our physical presence to one another.

What Hannah Arendt calls the 'web of human relationships' cannot quite be fully constituted by the grids of human faces that necessarily substitute themselves for our being together in a time of crisis. But the ingenuity of these virtual, mediated, distant and distancing meetings and 'hang outs' testify to the longing for the life together – as scholars, thinkers, comrades, colleagues and friends – that animates the very idea of a college or a university, like Corpus, like Cambridge.

I miss our community at Corpus: talking political theory or talking movies at lunch; supervising my students on aesthetic theory in a room overlooking Old Court. Even more frivolously, given that it is the Easter Term, I resent that I will not see the lupins come up in Leckhampton's prairie-like expanse, or be able to take my daily dip in our notoriously frigid pool at the bottom of the garden. What is happening everywhere around us - death and suffering and the heroic efforts to thwart them - is so grave, in part, precisely because of the way in which death deprives us of the small pleasures and practices that make up a life, that make up life itself. The bravely modest attempts to keep things going at Leckhampton demonstrate a confidence in the value of that life, and a willingness to continue inventing and reinventing its rituals and pleasures during and - we pray - after the trial of the present moment. I am not, by nature, an optimist, but I enjoy doing what I do, what we do - that is, I enjoy participating in the life modelled by Corpus and by the University: a life of writing, making, inventing, thinking, talking, disagreeing, eating together, coming and going, etc., etc. All of this will be somewhat different in the time ahead, I suppose, and maybe some things we are learning right now will not necessarily make them better, but will make them seem all the more important when we meet again in the radical physical proximity that we once took for granted but that we now know is so precious.



## Reflections from the Fellowship

**Dr Paul Kattuman, Reader in Economics, Fellow and Director of Studies in Management, discusses The Judge Business School's work with the NHS and Public Health on the pandemic.**

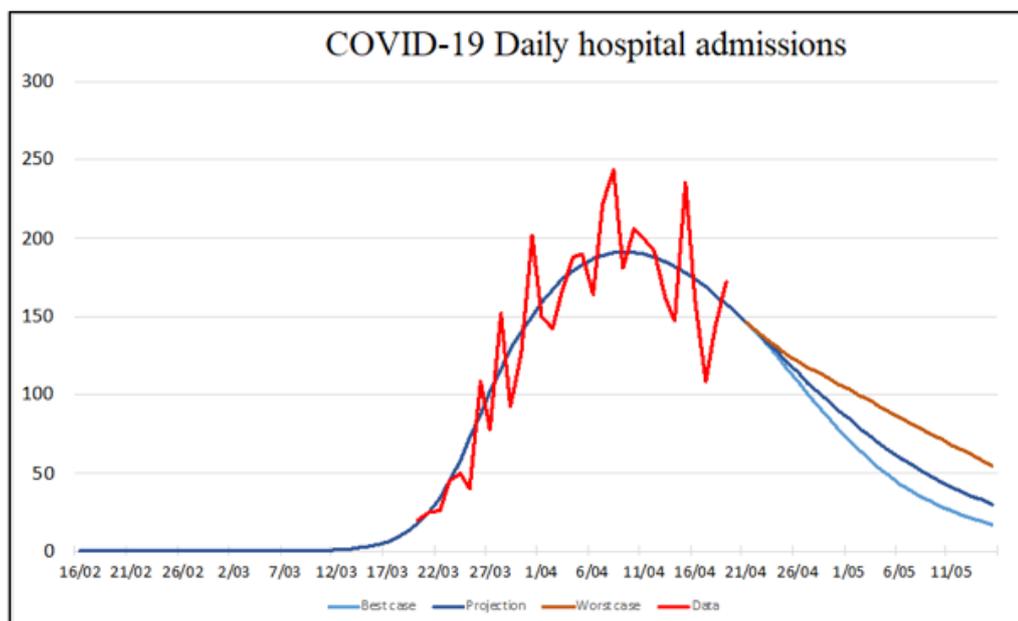
All through February I nursed a lament that the Lent Term was far too frantic. It was, it turns out, idyllic!

As the pandemic gathered strength, the health systems research centre at Judge Business School decided to rest some research programmes and reach out to the NHS and Public Health England, offering help with the extensive analysis that would evidently be required. I have no specialist knowledge of the systems and processes in healthcare delivery, but as an applied econometrician I was very happy to segue into this initiative. Our focus has been on the East of England region with its population of 6.5 million.

My particular focus over the last five weeks has been on generating daily forecasts of the expected demand across the region, for care pathway resources such as ICU beds and mechanical ventilators, looking up to two weeks ahead. Randomness is inherent in data of this type, with sharp day to day changes, and the purpose of time series modelling is to uncover the evolving trend. From early on, the challenging question posed by public health managers concerned the timing and the amplitude of the "peak". The last time I was even half as anxious about assessing when a peak would arrive was decades ago while trekking in the foothills of the Himalayas.

We use an ensemble of models to predict demand up to fourteen days ahead. Using a combination of models, it has been possible to offer reasonably accurate projections, uncovering an initially exponential growth path which tempered into a pattern that is characteristic of epidemics. Happily I have had the benefit of frequent counsel from Professor Andrew Harvey, Life Fellow. Andrew pioneered a family of time series models that have become very useful for epidemic modelling.

With the first peak negotiated, the policy focus is on the staged revival of the flagging economy. The policy challenge is of course to ensure that the NHS would be able to cope with the anticipated second peak. An epidemiologically based modelling approach has been brought on stream for this. This approach, which goes by the name of System Dynamics, directly tracks the diffusion of the virus through the susceptible population, and has been used with success to trace and understand all major epidemics in the recent decades. I had come to study System Dynamics a few years ago in order to understand the diffusion of innovations – it turns out that the diffusion of an infectious disease through a population has many structural elements in common with the diffusion of an innovation through a population of potential adopters. I had no idea then of how this modelling approach would come to be so useful in practical, day-to-day, sense.



*Figure: System Dynamics model projections on April 20 2020 of the immediate future daily demand for hospital beds dedicated to COVID19 in the region.*

Its advantage lies in its ability to go beyond delivering projections, to address counterfactual questions related to aspects of easing the lock-down. The variables that are increasingly important to assess, as the NHS looks ahead, go beyond the hardware of ICU beds and ventilators, to the stretched capacities of front line health care workers as they confront the virus relentlessly, shift after shift, day after day.

I am lucky to be working with an exceptional team of students and faculty, and collectively we are fortunate to be working, though far behind the frontline, with public health professionals of extraordinary calibre and commitment.

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## Student Voices

**Helen Magowan, MCR Secretary and first-year PhD student in Asian & Middle Eastern Studies, describes what life is like at Leckhampton under the lockdown in conversation with Liz Winter.**

The silence is unexpected. You can hear the birds singing in a way you never could before. And the streets are so empty and peaceful I am seeing Cambridge in a new way.'

Helen Magowan, first-year PhD student in Japanese studies and MCR Secretary, remains in residence at Leckhampton along with about 50 other graduate students. Although perhaps less has changed for graduate students than for undergraduates since they live in throughout the year, those remaining are now fractured into small groups for safety and obedience to the COVID-19 regulations and that has had the effect of dividing up the community they usually enjoy. 'It's very different,' she explains. 'We formed ourselves into small 'households' so as few people as possible have to share a bathroom or kitchen, and we don't use the communal areas at all.' Despite this, the sense of support is strong. 'We stay in touch, keep an eye on one another and if someone needs some shopping or help, we provide it quickly. This experience has had both the effect of splitting us up physically and bonding us together emotionally.'

Helen, whose PhD is on seventeenth-century Japanese women's calligraphy, finds the great redeeming feature of living at Leckhampton in these dystopian times to be the outside space. 'I walk through the garden daily,' she says. 'I always loved it but now I really notice it and enjoy the gradual changes. The tulips, then bluebells, then apple blossom, and now lilac. It is an excellent way to shake off the stress we all experience.' At first, she explains, the students were worried about what would happen and the uncertainty was hard to deal with. But the College was quick to reassure them they could stay in residence and would be supported by the Fellows and staff and now, she observes, people are largely settled and focused on their work. 'We all miss the normal socialising and very strong sense of community that is such a part of life here; anyone who has lived at Leckhampton will recognise that. But at least we still have a sense of being together even if we can't do things we used to do.'



The support they have had from the Warden and the Senior Tutor and her tutorial team, has made an enormous difference. 'They made huge efforts to reassure everyone and help us sort out problems. One of the best things about all this is the way I've got to know people I wouldn't have otherwise, and I really appreciate that.'

The situation, despite its challenges and the loneliness caused by isolation, has revealed some unexpected benefits: 'The vegetable patch was completely abandoned, but now it's been dug over and planted, and different people have their own beds. It's thriving – we've run out of space and need to expand'. The graduate community has had to develop new levels of creativity to maintain the sense of togetherness and Helen has been instrumental in organising social events remotely. 'We had an online formal last week on Zoom,' she says. 'We set our background images to pictures of Hall and wore gowns; some people dressed up, and everyone cooked two courses. We found a video of the gong being struck and played that. It was hilarious and the couple of hours of fellowship and fun in the middle of such a difficult time made our formal feel very special.'



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## Reflections from the Staff

**Head Porter, Simon Harding, reflects on the current environment at Corpus in conversation with Liz Winter.**

'When I walk around the College it feels like the world has stood still. Even the Chronophage stopped this morning.' Simon Harding, Head Porter, is reflective as he describes his daily routine during the shutdown. 'We only have eight undergraduates in residence at the moment, and fifty postgraduates at Leckhampton, so most of the rooms are empty but we still have to check them.'

The checking part is easy, but there is an eerie feeling when he opens a door and sees the personal possessions still in the rooms. 'It feels a bit like the *Marie Celeste*.... the occupants left unexpectedly and we are waiting for them to come back.' Simon remains on duty along with most of his colleagues, providing round the clock coverage between them for the College sites and the few occupants who remain. There's plenty to do; apart from manning the Porters' Lodge and checking the buildings, they help the maintenance team with the regular process required to prevent Legionella by running the water supplies. It's also part of their duty to make sure fire safety equipment is working and they deal with the post and administration that comes through the Porters' Lodge.

Simon came to the College after a long career in the police force where he was a Detective Inspector. He did a year at Trinity Hall as deputy head porter and then took up his role at Corpus. 'I've always lived in Cambridge or nearby and when I retired from the police I wanted something that used my skills, was local, interesting and worthwhile. This fits the bill on all fronts (though I don't expect to do any detecting, I hasten to add).' But people skills, good oversight of buildings and their operation, keeping a vigilant eye out for potential problems and perhaps most important of all, the ability to make decisions on the spot if necessary to avoid problems escalating are all essential components in a head porter's job description and Simon thrives on them. 'I've really enjoyed my year at Corpus,' he declares.

'Obviously this is a very unusual situation and I do miss the buzz of the students, Fellows and staff being around. But there are some compensating factors; it's very peaceful, and you can hear sounds you wouldn't normally hear, like birds singing. I've got used to the sound of no traffic....and it's very nice to be able to park easily at Newnham House. I will miss that when everyone comes back. But I won't miss the emptiness. It will be good when people return and life goes back to normal.'

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## Pelican Poets and Writers Society

**Catherine Olver (m 2011), alumna and current PhD candidate at Clare College in Children's and Adolescent Literature, writes about how the Pelican Poets and Writers Society brings the international Corpus community together through weekly studies on poetry and prose.**

The Pelican Poets and Writers Society is airborne again, Zooming through the clouds and down ethernet cables with poems and prose in its beak. Naturally, we miss the convivial spirit of D4's comfortable sofas, but our virtual meetings have thrown open the doors of sociability to the alumni who have flocked to join us. It is remarkable to hear the familiar voices of Pelicans from across the society's foundation in 2009 mixing together in discussion even when their wingspans at Corpus didn't overlap.

Elizabeth Stephan (Teacher Fellow, 1996) led our opening meeting on 'Time', which has been moving strangely during lockdown. We debated the apocalypticism of the "red wing" rising at dawn in Czesław Miłosz's *Encounter* and savoured the recording of the author reading his work, before enjoying the colloquial repetitions of Seamus Heaney's *Postscript* and puzzling over who is guilty of *Decades of Arrogance* in Emily Dickinson's *A Clock Stopped*: the humanlike clock or the godlike man repairing it? To finish, Elizabeth contextualised T S Eliot's *Burnt Norton* by revealing that Eliot's love letters to Emily Hale, the woman with whom he walks the garden, were opened only this year.



Defying time zones, Elena Kazamia (m 2004) led our second meeting, on 'Beauty in Absence,' from California. Opinions were divided on Anne Carson's Sappho translations, which employ square brackets to convey "the drama of trying to read a papyrus torn in half or riddled with holes" and to "imply a free space of imaginal adventure," as she explains in the introduction to *If Not, Winter*.

After musing on the depersonalisation of consciousness in Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, we were struck by the bleak but determined vitality in e e cummings' 'what if a much of a which of a wind'. The poem ends with the thought-provoking line "the most who die, the more we live."

We look forward to the next session (Tuesday 19 May, 8-9pm) on the intersection of writing with visual art and beyond that to considering how generational crisis manifests in writing (2 June), before concluding the term with poetry and prose written by our own members (16 June). New attendees are warmly welcomed for any meetings that appeal; if you would like to be sent the readings and Zoom link, please email Catherine at [co322@cam.ac.uk](mailto:co322@cam.ac.uk)

*Image: A pre-lockdown meeting of the Society*

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## **Delivering the Parker Sermons virtually**

**The Revd Dr Andrew Davison, Dean of Chapel, Fellow in Theology and Starbridge (University) Lecturer in Theology and Natural Sciences explains how technology enables him to deliver the Norfolk Course this year.**

The will of Matthew Parker is a cunningly devised thing. Although he thought that his College, where Parker (1504–1575) had been a student and later Master (1544–1553), was a more stable recipient of his extraordinary collection of manuscripts than either the Church or Crown, his bequest nonetheless placed the College under strictures: his famous audit, whereby everything is forfeited if more than a certain number of manuscripts or books are lost. Less well known is that he also required the College to arrange for four sermons to be preached each year: the ‘Parker Sermons’ or – because of their location –the ‘Norfolk Course’. The cycle runs back to the sixteenth century. This year, it is part-suspended, and part online.

Two sermons are delivered in Norwich, one at the cathedral and one at St Clement’s, where a prayer is said for Parker’s parents at their tomb. These were to be given by the priest and celebrated librettist Alice Goodman, rector of Fulbourn and the Wilbrahams (Corpus being the patron of Little Wilbraham). If I can travel to Norwich in the year ahead, I will make sure that the prayer is said at the graveside, in Alice’s stead.

As far as I know, a history of the Parker Sermons remains to be written, so I cannot say if there have been other intermissions, for plague or war. Parker’s Sermons have definitely not been delivered over video before now, as they will on 17 May, ‘in’ Thetford and Mattishall. I will be the preacher, and it will be a welcome opportunity for me to get to know these parishes again as Dean of Chapel. (I preached the Norfolk Course once before, in 2007.)

As with College and Faculty work, the use of video links in church takes some getting used to as the default way of working, but the technology has proved to be there when it was needed. For Chapel Compline and Sunday evening prayer, I have been gathering a group on Zoom, and livestreaming it to [FaceBook Live](#). Information is on [Twitter](#).



Nationally, [initial research](#) suggests rather an extraordinary level of participation in communal prayer and worship mediated online, not least among younger people, although that will certainly be the study of many a valuable PhD in the years ahead. Of course, not everyone has easy access to the internet. At a local level, clergy are mailing out weekly service booklets to parishioners without a computer, and last month saw the launch of a national telephone service ([Daily Hope](#)) to allow people to join in the daily prayer of the church without a computer.

Online services are not the whole story, however, although they get most coverage on social media. Churches are joining others in providing food banks and homeless shelters. In the Church of England alone, a survey from two years ago counted 33,000 social projects. Last term, chapel collections went to [Cambridge City Foodbank](#): not particularly a church charity, although it does have Rowan Williams as its patron.

So, in 2020, despite half the Norfolk Course being suspended, and the other half taking place over a video link, I hope we satisfy our obligation under Parker's will. English law is quite good at taking circumstances into account, and the oddness of those circumstances, and an attempt to work within them, will serve only to strengthen, I hope, the historic links of the College to a Norfolk town and village.

*Andrew Davison's recent contribution to a Church Times series on what is giving people inspiration during lockdown is available [here](#).*

*Image: Matthew Parker (1504 - 1575)*

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Pelican in Brief is available on our website and all issues can be found [here](#).

The next issue will be published on 21 May.

For further information, please visit our website [www.corpus.cam.ac.uk](http://www.corpus.cam.ac.uk) or contact

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