

Winter 2024



# KING'S PARADE

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS & FRIENDS OF KING'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

*In this issue*

**"EVERYONE HAS  
TO UNDERSTAND  
POLITICS"**

**MUSIC AT KING'S**

**BRINGING JOY  
TO HUMAN-AI  
INTERACTION**





Contents

3

NEWS IN BRIEF

4

A WIDE MUSICAL RANGE

6

THE HIDDEN HISTORY OF THE CHAPEL'S EAST END

8

MY PHD WITH KATIE COLLINS

10

PROFESSOR JOHN DUNN IN CONVERSATION WITH ARTHUR WONG

13

KEEPER OF THE KEYS

14

Q&A WITH DR NADIA MOHD-RADZMAN

16

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT  
SAVE THE DATE  
GET IN TOUCH



**Editor:** Rachel Gardner Dalton

**Design and print management:**  
H2 Associates (Cambridge) Limited

**Editorial Board:**  
Tess Adkins, Laura Davies,  
Lorraine Headen, Peter Jones  
and Robin Osborne.

**Photography:** Stephen Bond.  
Additional photography by  
StillVision, College Archives,  
and Cristina Travieso-Blanch.

**On the cover:** Adam Howell,  
Kenzie Robertson, Eleanor Mackey  
and Spencer Lee Boya.

King's Parade 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 Vice-Provost*



The rain is pouring down. I've suffered two punctures to my bicycle tyres in three days. Welcome back to Michaelmas Term! Many Vice-Provosts before me might have written these sentences. Neither weather nor Cambridge roads change much. And College routines can seem unchanging too.

Yet, last evening, I attended only the second 'Postgraduate Matriculation Dinner' that King's has ever held – splitting off the new postgraduates from the new undergraduates – a mark not simply of the greater numbers of postgraduate students, now that a Master's degree has become an essential gateway for many careers, but of the distinct needs of postgraduate students. Acknowledging that has also led us to appoint the first Head of Graduate Affairs, English Fellow Laura Davies, leading a team of Graduate Tutors.

Yesterday afternoon I chaired the first ever Michaelmas Term meeting of the E-lab Committee (King's enthusiasm for committees does not change!). This committee has been formed to oversee the integration of the wide array of extremely popular activities that very generous external donations to the College, and the energies of Fellows Kamiar Mohaddes, Thomas Roulet and now Kate Herrity, have enabled. We now have workshops (including Lego™), speaker meetings, residential courses, pitching, and a 'hackathon' (you might find Wikipedia useful here) populating the College calendar to encourage undergraduates from King's, and from the wider University, not to squander their bright ideas but to develop them, not just for their own profit but for a better world.

When you come back to King's, the visible changes that will strike you may be the Visitor Guides, managing increasing visitor numbers, and the bar, which is no longer the bar you knew and loved, but, thanks to a Fellowship and student body that remain as lively as ever, and to King's NRMs who push us, and fund us, to think and rethink, the old student experience – and even the old Fellows – has anything but fossilized.

Enjoy the window *King's Parade* opens for you – and come back and see for yourself.



# NEWS IN BRIEF

## Expanding career and personal development for students

Rachael Maggs has been appointed to the new role of Futures Tutor. She will work alongside the Tutorial and Development offices to coordinate and develop our current range of career and personal development support, which includes internships and alumni mentoring, and will develop new initiatives and support structures as well as working with the University's Career Service.

Senior Tutor Myfanwy Hill commented "The role is intended to provide our students with careers advice and coaching to support them in their personal and professional development. We're excited to welcome Rachael to King's and appreciate the generous donation which has made this post possible."

## New Head of Graduate Affairs

Dr Laura Davies (Fellow in English) becomes the Head of Graduate Affairs. The newly created post will oversee the strategy for graduate education and the provision of pastoral care in the College. She has served for five years as a Graduate Tutor. "I'm delighted to move into this role, aiming to improve our delivery of graduate-specific support both academically and pastorally, and helping to ensure they're a full part of the College community."

## Support for researchers with young families

The new Childcare Support Fund for Graduate Students is now available to help with academic-related short-term childcare needs and one-off support for child-related costs. Seed-funded by an alumnus who was a new parent while working towards his PhD, this initiative is helping young families face the rising costs of childcare.

## Three new Research Fellowships

King's is particularly well set up to host and nurture post-doctoral Research Fellowships, which are generally for a four-year term within two years after the award of a PhD. Generous donations from two King's alumni will endow in perpetuity three of these posts for early-career academics, including funds for equipment, conferences and travel, and research and administrative support.





# A wide musical range

**"Music in College is more than just vocal music; and neither is music-making confined to students reading for the Tripos."**

involved with the Indian Classical Society, and hopes to be able to stage performances of some of his compositions in the Indian tradition.

The importance of music across the whole College has recently been reinforced by a generous prize established by Susan Tomes (KC 1972), the first woman to read Music at King's, who has gone on to become not only a celebrated pianist but also the author of several penetrating books. The beauty and originality of Susan's idea is that it aims to recognise not necessarily outstanding talent or achievement but rather the positive impact that all forms of music have on our community. Students, Staff and Fellows nominate individuals or groups whose music-making has impressed and moved them, in all sorts of contexts: maybe a formal concert setting, or hearing someone practising in their room or just playing for their own pleasure. KCMS Co-President Spencer Lee Boya, percussionist Kenzie Robertson and trombonist Adam Howell, featured here with KCMS's other Co-President Eleanor Mackey, received one of the inaugural Susan Tomes prizes. As one of the judges, I'm well aware not only of how difficult it was to make our decisions but also of how much the Tomes prize helps to expose the astonishing amount of 'musicking' that continues to be such a vital part of life in King's.

Nicholas Marston

**The roll call of internationally-leading composers who have passed through the doors of King's College is nothing short of astonishing. It includes George Benjamin, Errollyn Wallen, Thomas Adès, Julian Anderson and Judith Weir.**

Two of these exceptionally distinguished alumni have recently been recognised at the highest possible levels: Errollyn Wallen (KC 1999) was this year appointed Master of the King's Music by King Charles III. Aside from being a hugely important landmark 'first' (Wallen is the first black composer to hold the Royal appointment) it is also a very special and unrivalled 'second' here at King's: Wallen's predecessor Dame Judith Weir (appointed Master of the Queen's Music by Queen Elizabeth II in 2014) also studied at the College between 1973 and 1976.

The latest in a long list of honours awarded to Thomas Adès (KC 1989) was the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gold Medal. It was presented to Thomas by Sir Simon Rattle onstage at the BBC Proms following the UK premiere of Adès' new orchestral work *Aquifer* conducted by Rattle with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Richard Causton

If you're standing at the Front Court end of the College bar, look to your right and you will see on the wall a poster advertising a performance in Hall by the legendary Stan Tracey Quartet.

Organised by the King's Jazz Society, it took place on Sunday 30 October 1977, just one month after I'd matriculated in Corpus. I ate a swift dinner there and then headed across the road to King's for a memorable (and noisy) evening, for which I paid £1. The Hall – and King's in general – has since become less of a venue for external groups. We remain, you might say, a net exporter of music, most obviously through our globally famous Chapel Choir, currently in the expert hands of Daniel Hyde (KC 2000), which has for decades been a career cradle for singers, organists and conductors of international renown. Henry VI, you could say, built music into the very DNA of his College. Today the College supports two further choirs: King's Voices and King's Women and Marginalised Genders (KWMG), both of which widen not only the repertoire choices available, secular as well as sacred, but also the levels of expertise reflected in their memberships.

Widening of musical range is something that I've increasingly noticed over the past twenty-odd years as I've sifted applications from those hoping to read Music at King's. Much more so than the applicants of my generation (though my undergraduate LP collection included Dylan, Nico, Genesis, Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and Leon Redbone, to name a few, alongside Beethoven and the rest), our students these days tend to recognise only the most porous of boundaries between, to put it crudely, 'classical' and 'pop', and appreciation ranges widely across western and non-western genres and styles. One of the founders of KWMG, Didi Robinson (KC 2021) may have had singing lessons at the Royal Academy of Music, but she also fixed up DJs including Ivicore for the Bunker (did I really bop there with composer Sir George Benjamin (KC 1978) back in the day?), and served as President of the University Jazz Society; earlier, Hetty Gullifer (KC 2011) was as happy scatting at an open mic night in the bar – let's have these back, please – as holding down the alto part of a Byrd motet. Meanwhile, Patrick Dunachie (KC 2012) maintains the countertenor line of the King's Singers, distant successor to those Choral Scholars who definitively collapsed

the classical/pop divide nearly sixty years ago; and Sir David Willcocks (KC 1939) told them that it would never last ...

But music in College is more than just vocal music; and neither is music-making confined to students reading for the Tripos. In King's we're lucky to be able to offer each year music scholarships up to the value of £1,000 supported by the generous legacy of Derek Cornwell (KC 1944), the terms of whose bequest specifically rule out vocalists in order to favour instrumental players. There's no restriction whatever on repertoire, academic discipline or status (undergraduate or graduate), and over the years the applicants for these awards have demonstrated very vividly the remarkable depth and range of musical prowess that pervades the student body. That range is also frequently showcased by the long-standing Provost's Lodge concerts, organised by the College's Music Society (KCMS) usually on Sunday nights: a great way in particular for Freshers to set out their wares and get themselves known in the community. Of the latest intake, Rich Mandal (KC 2024) has plans not only to join jazz and folk groups but is already



# The hidden history of the Chapel's east end

Although much of King's College Chapel remains as it was when completed in the early 16th century, parts of it have evolved substantially throughout its 500 year history.

The antechapel (barring the nineteenth-century glass of the west window) is almost exactly as it was when completed shortly after 1500; the windows retain their resplendent glazing; the screen is as created under Henry VIII (albeit topped by a later organ) and the Tudor choir stalls were only given minor modifications in the 17th century.

Contrast the Chapel's east end. We do not know how it was configured and furnished when the construction was completed, but changes were made under Edward VI, Mary and Elizabeth I, and later Oliver Cromwell.

Woodworker Cornelius Austin was commissioned in the 1670s to carve canopies for the choir stalls and panels which covered the north and south walls from the choir stalls to just beyond the doorways to the easternmost side chapels. He had carved the canopies behind the choir stalls first, decorating them, in the words of the late College Archivist John Saltmarsh, 'with foliage and flowers, cartouches and urns, roses and portcullises and fleur de lys'. These motifs continued into the panelling beyond the choir stalls.

The earliest major design programme for which we have substantial evidence was installed in the 1770s by James Essex. He was at the forefront of the 'Gothic' revival taking hold in English architecture, and his design featured extravagant wooden panelling described as a 'forest of crocketed pinnacles obtruding into the view of the east window'. He also rearranged the black and white marble floor slabs to create a diamond pattern that echoed the woodwork.

By the late 19th century, Essex's work had come to seem out of place. After considerable debate and consideration of several designs, the College replaced it in 1911 with panelling by Detmar Blow, an Edwardian facsimile of Renaissance woodwork. Although intended to pick up the arcading of the organ screen the work was variously described as 'heavy-handed' and 'inappropriate', and the

Roman Corinthian columns of the panelling were a quirky juxtaposition with the Perpendicular architecture of the Chapel. A further stylistic intervention came in the form of three modernist sculptures of Christ, the Virgin Mary and St Nicholas by John Skeaping placed behind the altar between 1957 and 1960.

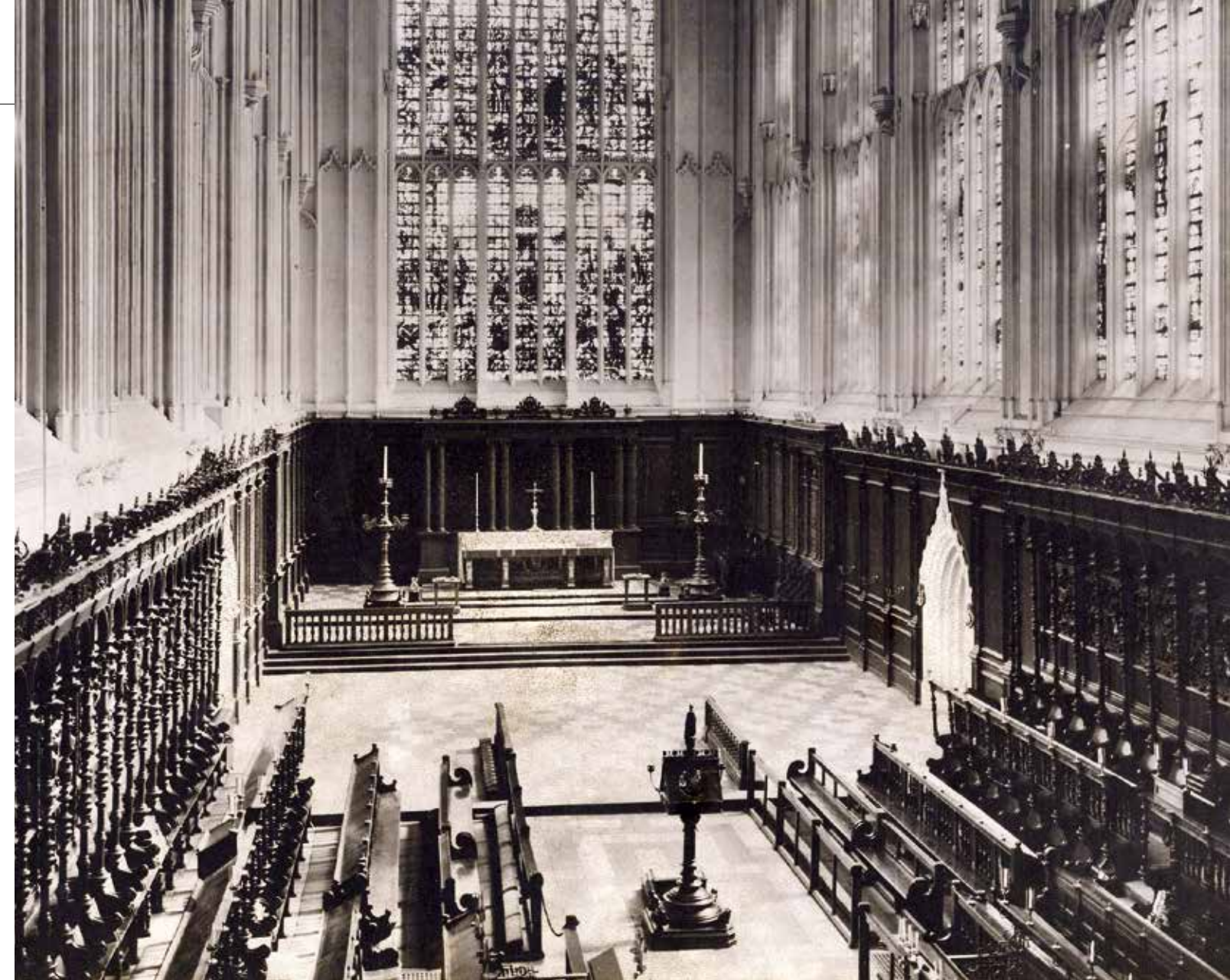
In the 1950s, changing tastes and a strong desire from the Dean, Alex Vidler, to practice a more inclusive form of worship, led to a moment of reckoning for the College. The Dean considered the altar, reached by successive sets of steps and guarded by rails, far too dissociated from the rest of the Chapel, making it impossible for the congregation to feel fully part of the eucharist as a communal act. As the east end had already undergone so much change in 400 years, what now might be possible?

*"How would 'Adoration of the Magi' sit alongside Anglican forms of worship? And would it fit in the Chapel without making substantial alterations to the east end?"*

And then came an extraordinary offer. Major Alfred E. Allnatt had purchased Peter Paul Rubens' *Adoration of the Magi* at Sotheby's in 1959 for the then-record sum of £275,000. Originally painted by Rubens for the convent of the White Nuns in Louvain, Allnatt decided to gift the painting to King's with the intention of the work once again being the altarpiece of a great church. The Governing Body unanimously accepted the painting in May 1961 with the condition that it be displayed prominently on the Chapel's central axis.

How would a great work of the Counter-Reformation sit alongside Anglican forms of worship? And would it even fit in the Chapel without making substantial alterations to the east end?

Architects had been retained to explore redesigning the east end even before the Rubens was offered to King's.



The east end of the Chapel, photographed for the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, 1949.

The proposed scheme to situate the Rubens as the new altarpiece involved lowering the floor to remove five steps up to the altar and reinstating the floor pattern east of the choir stalls to the 1702 design. But it also called for removing Tudor brick arches that supported the sanctuary floor and reburying human remains interred under the sanctuary, along with stripping out the remaining Cornelius Austin panels and the Detmar Blow woodwork to expose the original ashlar masonry. The scheme was controversial. A paper submitted to the Annual Congregation in 1965 called for the entire project to be abandoned. In the end it only passed by three votes and the panelling removed from the Chapel was put in storage, in case it was ever decided to reinstate it.

The east end of the Chapel today looks as it did when the alterations were completed in 1968.

The building in which the woodwork from the Chapel was stored for many years was demolished when new accommodation, Stephen Taylor Court, was built for postgraduate students and Fellows. This raised the question

of whether the woodwork should be retained. A working group was formed to grapple with some fundamental questions about historic preservation – could and should any of the woodwork be put back into the Chapel? On what grounds? After inspecting the woodwork, talking to some who remembered the Chapel before 1968, and reconsidering the Chapel space, the working group recommended, and the College agreed, that King's would not retain the Detmar Blow woodwork, and is now seeking a new home for it.

"'Classical' architecture, particularly for new religious buildings, is having a revival" remarked Vice-Provost Robin Osborne who chaired the working group. "Rehoming the Blow woodwork would be ideal in one of these establishments or in another heritage or liturgical context."

In parallel, the College decided to retain the 17th century Austin woodwork with the thought that one day it might be used in a future College building project, a coda to the colourful history of the Chapel.





# MY PhD

with Katie Collins

**Photographed outside Turing's old staircase in Bodley's Court, Marshall Scholar and third-year PhD student Katie Collins tells us about bringing joy and enthusiasm to her research in human-AI interaction.**



**A**lan Turing and Geoff Hinton have been tremendous inspirations for me in my research, and I'm honoured to be able to live and learn in similar communities to them. Both are deeply interdisciplinary and had the courage to go against the grain in their research – and are two of the deepest thinkers about thinking. Reading Andrew Hodges's biography of Turing

*"In the coming years, I hope to continue to work at the interface of cognitive science, particularly computational cognitive science, and human-AI interaction – with an eye towards translational applications in education and medicine."*

in high school really fuelled my interest in computation and human and machine intelligence, and reading Geoff Hinton's deep learning work back in my senior year of high school – and seeing that he did the work from a cognitive science background – was one of the key motivators for me to major in cognitive science. I was fortunate to go on a walk with Geoff when he visited King's last year, which was incredibly fun! I admire his infectious curiosity and enthusiasm and resilience to push on ideas that others may pass by. I also am continually inspired by other great computer science thinkers from King's, like Leslie Valiant, Murray Shanahan and Phil Woodland, and appreciate how Gillian Tett has been greatly advancing the discourse around human-AI interaction and AI's impact on society.

I absolutely love living in College accommodation and attending King's (famously themed) formals, having conversations with other young and old scholars across a range of disciplines (not just STEM) and backgrounds. As a researcher in AI, it has been invaluable for me to have these conversations to inform and challenge my work, helping me really grapple with the broader implications, and potential societal ramifications, of my research. It also helps that King's, and Cambridge overall, is such a beautiful place to go on great thinking walks!

My parents cultivated an environment that exuded a love of learning, a joy in your work, and a deep empathy for others. I'm fundamentally interested in both helping people and understanding people, which I see as closely intertwined. I'm particularly excited about two research directions: one around human-AI interaction, and one around the flexibility of human cognition, what drives us to work on some problems – to play certain games – and what motivates us to stop, or not stop. I see these two directions as fundamentally related. On the first point: I'm particularly interested in how we can build AI systems that meet our expectations and compensate for our limitations. To do that, I think we benefit from looking to the behavioural sciences – what are our expectations for other humans when we interact, and how may those expectations carry over (or break down) when we move to artificial settings? How is it that humans can reason so flexibly about new situations, with new partners? And across these, I'm motivated by applications in cognitive science, education, and medicine – and am fortunate to work with a wide array of amazing, inspiring collaborators who, together, make all of this work and its translational potential possible.

**I am optimistic about the future of AI systems working alongside people, especially to compensate for our fundamental limitations on time and energy – so long as they meet our expectations.** However, I do worry that there's a real risk that we turn over more of our thinking to these systems without really understanding when we can rely on them or not. I think it's crucial that my current generation, and younger ones, still develop core critical thinking abilities and not outsource too much of what we do, what we create, what we write to these systems. I think there's much clarity of thought that can come from writing and reading, and I hope we don't lose sight of that.

Since the rise of ChatGPT and techniques like "reinforcement learning with human feedback", I've seen growing appreciation across the AI community for careful consideration of the kind of data that we elicit from humans and train/adapt models from. However at the start of my PhD (pre-ChatGPT), I found it was harder to get some AI audiences to take questions of human feedback and "human in and over the loop" designs seriously. This is changing, but I hope there is a broader understanding and deeper appreciation for thinking carefully about humans – and a diversity of humans – when we think about who may use these systems, and what they were trained on. I also hope that there is more emphasis on the use of AI systems and a growing, rigorous science of AI evaluation – not just focus on building more models. I also think we need to be very careful, as a field and a society, in assessing the energy demands of training and running these large-scale models.

In the coming years, I hope to continue to work at the interface of cognitive science, particularly computational cognitive science, and human-AI interaction – with an eye towards translational applications in education and medicine. I've been playing with calling some of this direction "applied computational cognitive science." And I'm especially interested right now in games: how do we play games we've never played before? How do we decide which games to play? How do we create games? Understanding how humans flexibly play, evaluate, and create games and problems, with others (and at times against others), can have broad implications for our understanding of human reasoning, what makes us human compared to non-human animals, and other elements of society such as economics, politics, even mathematics.





## PROFESSOR JOHN DUNN (KC 1959) IN CONVERSATION WITH ARTHUR WONG (KC 2023)

**A**rthur Wong is a former international lawyer who was inspired to study international politics following a visit from US Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi to his native Taiwan. He's now pursuing a postgraduate degree in international relations and is the current Chair of King's Politics. He sat down with one of King's pre-eminent political thinkers, John Dunn, to consider the prospects for democracy around the world, as well as hear what keeps him teaching year after year. Their conversation has been edited for length and clarity.

**You've said that "democracy is not a secure and reliable framework for political life." How do you view Taiwan's new administration framing the situation as a global struggle between authoritarianism and democracy, as the "first victory of the democracy camp in the election year of 2024 with major elections in over 92 countries"? What impact do you think this narrative has on Taiwan's international relations?**

I don't think it's the right way for Taiwan to speak to the rest of the world, because it has to speak to, most importantly, the People's Republic of China. To attack the legitimacy of the PRC is, in my view, completely unjustified. It has a lot of limitations; all states have plenty of limitations, but the PRC is a country which has been ruled now for 75 years by the Chinese Communist Party, and in many ways the last 45 or so of those have been one of the most remarkable political success stories in the history of the world.

Taiwan is a very different place, socially and politically. It has very remarkable achievements and you could say that they're connected with its being a representative democracy in a quite straightforward sense, but they're not achievements which depend upon the PRC and nor are they achievements which take away from what the PRC has achieved.

**How do you see the possibility of China evolving into a democratic country? To some extent, the Chinese Communist Party has achieved a form of internal democracy within its 98 million members, which surpasses the population of many middle-power nations. What are your thoughts on this model's sustainability and potential future?**

The PRC is not a representative democratic structure. Most of the citizens of China have absolutely no possibility of affecting what the CCP decides to do. Actually almost none of the membership of the CCP have any prospects of affecting what the party decides to do so that is definitely not a democratic structure for a political society.

I think it's very unlikely that the PRC will become in that sense a democratic structure, certainly not in my lifetime. But it might actually in your lifetime, which has plenty of time stretching ahead of it as long as the world remains humanly inhabitable.

If the PRC is to acquire a representative democratic structure, it will have to do so through a process of political choice that takes place inside the CCP. It can't do so some other way because the CCP is the political authority of China and that authority would have to collapse. No sane person should want that because the fate of the world rests on the governmental success of China more than anywhere else.

**Is there some other model that could be suitable for this size of the Chinese population?**

I don't think the problem is actually the size of the population. It's not necessarily any easier to coordinate the population of let's say Switzerland than the population of China. Switzerland does its coordination in a very intricate and very historically distinctive way but I think what is fundamentally important for the government of any country is the flow of information from the population as a whole to the government and the way the government processes that information. The political structure of the PRC has one very big advantage from that point of view and one very big disadvantage. The advantage is that the government of the PRC has a lot more information about some aspects of the population than the government of the United Kingdom or actually the government in the United States. It has invested very heavily in acquiring this information and can see a great deal about what is going on in China. What it can't see is what its local representatives wish it to be unable to see. It can't see what most of the population feels about how circumstances are because there's not a way of seeing that. Because it governs in such an intimidating way it means that actually there isn't a good flow of information from the bottom of society.

The point of representative democracy is for the government to be maximally aware of what the population thinks and feels and the practical circumstances in which the population is living. I think that that can't happen in a very repressive political structure.

**How do we improve the political insight of the citizen body?**

It requires a lot of different things, many of which we don't talk about any more. But it requires that citizens as a whole have the opportunity to learn to understand their position in the world, which depends upon the education systems in society. It isn't possible to have a good educational system that addresses this in a repressive society.





*“Everyone has to understand international politics for themselves”*

**How do you see US – China strategic competition in the broader context of global governance?**

Both systems have major defects of a very conspicuous kind. It's unsurprising the interaction between the two is very dangerous. I can speak more confidently because I can see more clearly the changes in the United States' position or in the United Kingdom's position.

A dozen years ago, the relationship between the UK, the US and China was based on illusory hopes and expectations. There has been increasing fear of military vulnerability in the US and the UK, but I don't think the US would decide to attack China, even under Trump. I think it is entirely credible that the president of China will decide that Taiwan is increasingly close to declaring formal independence from China and that is grounds for invasion.

The point of having American warships in the area and American bases in the Philippines would be to fight a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Both the United States and China are arming for a full scale naval and military confrontation. I don't think it's plausible that either has already decided to initiate that but I do think that both of them are running increasingly high risks, which is an incredibly dangerous state of affairs.

As an undergraduate myself I was very involved with politics. I debated at the Cambridge Union against people

who ended up in Margaret Thatcher's cabinet. I was also chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in the University at the time of the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was very agitated about the level of danger then, and as we now know, it was a very close run thing.

I do think it's likely that there will be more nuclear powers in the future – Iran, possibly Korea or Japan. The world is going to go on being a dangerous place.

**You've had a distinguished career at King's. What attracts you to teaching now?**

I teach because I like doing it; it's a very rewarding thing to do. I teach the introductory politics paper and many of those who are admitted to study HSPS at King's are very interested in thinking about politics. I've been interested in politics for a long time myself – since well before I came to King's - and I've been very deeply sensitive to the thought that people actually understand politics very poorly. So I'm still trying to understand it myself. It's good to teach people knowing that your own comprehension is highly imperfect. Everyone has to understand politics for themselves and it's always a challenge.

Just yesterday I got an email from a former student who I taught in her first year, and she was prompted to write and say thank you. It's nice to get things like that at my age and hear that you are making a difference for people.



King's Politics is hosting a wide range of talks and webinars this academic year, with a focus on US-China-Taiwan relations in Michaelmas 2024. <https://www.instagram.com/kingspolitics>



## KEEPER OF THE KEYS

The job can cover everything from security guard and tourist guide to postal worker and student counsellor. Ahead of his retirement after 10 years in the role, Neil Seabridge reflects on what it's like to be King's Head Porter.

Weeks after joining King's in 2014, Neil Seabridge found himself dressed in uniform and top hat and carrying a silver-topped mace, leading a very formal College procession. It wasn't something that had been mentioned in the job description – but as Head Porter, dealing with the unexpected comes with the territory.

After 30 years in the Metropolitan Police, in a wide variety of roles that culminated in being part of the command team for the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics – 'a career topper' – Neil takes surprises in his stride. "We get a lot of calls in the Lodge – it can be anything from fire alarms and security issues to being a one-stop shop for tourist information, which you often think they could have just as easily found on Google! There are only two of us on duty at any one time, and we often need to be dealing with several incidents at once." With thousands of visitors a year, King's can offer a particular challenge in terms of security. "We want to be welcoming, but we're also here to ensure the safety and security of the College

and its members – 24/7, 365 days a year. No one can quite do that completely, but I hope some of the measures put in place during my time here have made things safer, for everyone."

Above all though the job is about people, and especially the College's students. Over recent years the pastoral side of the role has become increasingly important. "It's a privilege and also humbling when students feel comfortable coming to us to share their troubles." One of the highpoints of the year for Neil has been leading the procession out of King's Front Court to the Senate House on graduation day – seeing the students he watched arrive as nervous freshers three years previously about to receive their degrees. "I love to see returning alumni who have been students during my time here. They often think I won't remember them, but I do!"

Neil will miss the team in the Porters' Lodge – "We're lucky in having people who are steady and reliable and used to dealing with the public – I've been very grateful for the team over the past 10 years" – and the spectacular working environment; as well as the daily interaction with so many different people. "And maybe some of the cerebral challenges as well!" In his retirement, Neil says he plans to be travelling, playing more golf and finally, becoming more proficient on his guitar than the two chords he excels in at the moment.





# Q & A with Dr Nadia Mohd-Radzman

*A postdoctoral researcher at the Sainsbury Laboratory  
Cambridge University (SLCU), King's E-Lab  
Research Associate Nadia Mohd-Radzman  
wants us all to be much more aware of  
the potential of amazing legumes.*



**You've been called a 'botanist on a mission' and your campaign to boost the British broad bean has really caught the media's attention in recent months. What are you hoping to achieve?**

I'm passionate about improving food security and obsessed with the potential of legume crops! The broad bean has been grown in Britain for hundreds of years and used to be a big part of our food culture, but has largely been forgotten about. It has so many health benefits – from chemicals that can help with our mental health to the high levels it contains of the ingredient levodopa, or L-dopa, which is used in the clinical treatment of people with Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. I want to persuade people to eat more! I'm launching a website shortly, Broad'n Mind (broadnmind.com), which will have recipes and resources.

But more broadly, legumes have a vital part to play in addressing the big questions around how we produce enough food for a growing global population without destroying the planet. Current food production traditionally uses large amounts of nitrogen fertilisers, which are not sustainable and have caused adverse environmental effects. Legumes work with microbes in the soil to take nitrogen from the air – 'fixing' – and create their own fertilisers. By growing more, we can reduce our nitrogen fertiliser use. It can be hugely important, especially for food producers in the Global South.

**You recently founded a start-up to develop new technology to accelerate genetic improvements in challenging crops such as legumes. Has being part of the King's E-Lab helped with this?**

It's playing a big part in how I build this venture. Climate change means we need to be able to improve our crops faster and cheaper. To do that, we'll need new technologies. Current technology has at least two bottlenecks that need to be addressed – it is slow and does not work for all plants. Using plant peptides as versatile molecules, we can release these bottlenecks and provide a better method to improve our crop plants. My start-up is a plant peptide company developing innovative bioswitches for controlling plant growth. I'm currently focused on two complementary peptide-based technologies – a peptide bioherbicide with a non-toxic mode of action, and a gene-editing platform to accelerate breeding in any crop species. When combined, I can use the gene-editing platform to make crops 'blind' to the bioherbicide.

The key difference is that, unlike conventional transgenic herbicide-tolerant crops, this system does not introduce foreign genes. Instead, the crops are edited for improvements such as bioherbicide

resistance and enhanced climate resilience. So they can be grown here in the UK! There are only a handful of eco-friendly and sustainable bioherbicides so I'm excited to develop this technology further.

The Research Associate role gives me a day a week to focus on the project, away from the lab, and a physical base in College. I'm incredibly grateful for it – it's allowing me to do the things I'm doing now. The E-Lab looks for impact, and that very much aligns with my vision for my start-up and the technology I'm developing.

As well as helping with resources and knowledge, it's great to be part of the E-Lab community – the other two RAs are also involved in start-ups, although in different sectors, and we're all going through some challenges that are very specific to building a venture. Having the support system really helps and conversations with King's Fellows at lunchtime are great – the other day I was talking to someone who knew all about the historical context of the broad bean and its part in the culinary culture of the Middle East. I learnt so much!

**What has made you want to take your work out of the lab and into the world of entrepreneurship?**

A few years ago I worked on a project in Nigeria and Ethiopia on the rehabilitation of the neglected legume crop of Africa, the African Yam Bean. It's drought-tolerant and produces high-protein beans and tubers and has great potential to help solve food insecurity within Africa.

Farmers were asking me about how they could grow plants that are adapted to increasingly extreme dry seasons, but there wasn't sufficient funding to roll out the research – several stakeholders including major NGOs were surprisingly reluctant to put money into what's regarded as a forgotten crop. I realised that there was a space for innovation here, that I could – and should – do something. We have the solutions in the lab – we can't just keep them there.

**In five years' time, what would you like to have seen happen?**

I'd like the technology to be out there, and being used. I really want it to benefit people. Ultimately, we need a solution to improving food security that benefits farmers, is good for the planet, and benefits the public who are eating these crops. I want to be part of that solution.

**With thanks to all at the SLCU for facilitating this photo shoot.**



# IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...

Next time you're back in College, you might notice something different in the entrance to the Hall.

Up on the wall on the east side of the entry corridor, 50 photographic portraits of King's women now hang together. The portraits, by award-winning photographer Jooney Woodward, were commissioned to mark the 50th anniversary of the admission of women as students to the College and were photographed between March and May 2023, in Cambridge and London.

They reflect a broad cross-section of the King's community, from the trailblazing women who first



arrived in 1972 to some of the newest undergraduates. The subjects include Fellows and students, alumnae from an array of different disciplines, careers and generations, and the staff who work behind the scenes to keep the College ticking.

The portraits are now an important part of the permanent art collection at King's, helping to address the balance of visual representation of women on the College's walls.

## Save the Date

### 2025

#### 22 March

Foundation Lunch

#### 29 March

20th, 25th & 30th Anniversary Reunion

#### 17 May

King Henry VI Circle Event

#### 31 May

10th Anniversary Reunion

#### 25 June

King's Affair

#### 28 June

Members' Afternoon Tea

#### 26 September

50th Anniversary Reunion

#### 27 September

35th, 40th & 45th Anniversary Reunion

#### 29 November

1441 Foundation Dinner

#### 30 November

Procession for Advent

Find details of alumni events in Cambridge and beyond, including upcoming reunions, at [www.kings.cam.ac.uk/members-friends](http://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/members-friends)

To update your contact details please email [members@kings.cam.ac.uk](mailto:members@kings.cam.ac.uk)

## Get in Touch

### General Enquiries

[members@kings.cam.ac.uk](mailto:members@kings.cam.ac.uk)  
+44 (0)1223 331100

### Events and Reunions

[events@kings.cam.ac.uk](mailto:events@kings.cam.ac.uk)  
+44 (0)1223 767497

### Making a Gift

[giving@kings.cam.ac.uk](mailto:giving@kings.cam.ac.uk)  
+44 (0)1223 331247

### Leaving a Legacy

[legacies@kings.cam.ac.uk](mailto:legacies@kings.cam.ac.uk)  
+44 (0)1223 331481

### Communications

[communications@kings.cam.ac.uk](mailto:communications@kings.cam.ac.uk)  
+44 (0)1223 767491

**KING'S**  
**COLLEGE**  
CAMBRIDGE

