

columns

Hidden Cambridge

Zoah Hedges-Stocks slugs off her college and her faculty, but loves Downing

As I sat down to write this column, I realised, with a heavy heart, that this is the penultimate edition of the paper this term, and therefore also the penultimate edition of Hidden Cambridge. I still feel that the column and the city have so much more to share. But how to shoehorn all the things I want to say into my last two columns, whilst still maintaining some semblance of a theme? I'm just going to give up on being coherent and instead, I will just bombard you with Cambridge miscellanea. Deal with it. Get ready for the barrage.

Last week, we took a brief excursion to Oxford. Now, one of the areas in which Oxford can say it has beaten us is in the number of prime ministers it has produced: 27 to our 14. Personally, I think that

14 is none too shabby. Downing Street itself is named after Sir George Downing, whose grandson, also Sir George Downing, gave his name to a Cambridge college: Jesus. Don't worry, you only have one more week left of my terrible jokes. As well as a name, this family connection has given Downing one of the world's most famous doors, that of Number Ten Downing Street. When the door was replaced in 60s, a Downing alumnus in the civil Service arranged to have the door sent to his old college, where it now opens on staircase D.

I've always felt that Downing is a college that doesn't get its fair share of admiration. It has some great architecture. Downing gives good building. Look at those columns. Phwoar. Another college that

doesn't get any love for its buildings is my own, Murray Edwards. This is mostly because it looks bloody grim - except for our stunning white dome. Hailing as I do from Suffolk, this lofty white bowl wards off homesickness by reminding me of Sizewell B nuclear power station (with the added comfort that Murray Edwards is unlikely to blow up, unless in an explosion of bitchiness and sexual tension).

The cathedral-like aspirations are reflected elsewhere in the college - our library features two staircases, one particularly high and narrow, to create an optical illusion of height, so that the library looks more like a church. Unfortunately, this architectural choice means that the higher, smaller staircase is bloody dangerous to traverse with

my clumsy great size seven feet. Yes, the library looks great, but this flair is achieved at the cost of it actually being fully functional. The History faculty is similar. If anyone has considered growing marijuana to pay off those tuition fees, its library would be the perfect hothouse in Easter Term. Sadly, in winter, it is cold enough to freeze the ink in your pen. However, I can forgive the History faculty all this, because it looks like a book. Seriously, stand with your back facing the Law faculty and look at it. The bookshelves give the impression of pages in a half-open book. I'm going to repeat that because it is bloody amazing: *it is a library that looks like a book. The bookshelves are pages.* How is that not bloody awesome?

From architectural crap to literal crap: Sir John Harrington, a Kingsman, is credited with inventing the flushing toilet in the 1590s. His contribution to society was deemed so notable that another college has tried to claim him: he is incorrectly remembered as 'Harrington' on a stained-glass window at Christ's. However, Christ's isn't the only college to get a bum deal: James I recommended that one 'pray at King's, dine at Trinity, study and sleep at John's' - and 'stool at Magdalene'.



The Graduate

Sophie Clarke encounters her first graduate essay deadline and promptly panics

How did we get here? It's a question asked pertinently at this time in term as we sneak into week seven. Fresher's week seems so far away. I feel now like I've never been away - as if Cambridge has played host to me forever. Yet we're so close to the end of term, to my return to the north, that it's difficult not to start thinking about all the celebrations of Cambridge Christmas, and ignore my first graduate essay which is unfortunately due in the same day as the Selwyn Snowball.

If one more undergraduate tells me that I should be grateful it's just



one essay, I will have to restrain myself from Hulk-smashing them into a table. Sure, I know if you're an arts student it's entirely possible that you're writing over three thousand words a week, and so six thousand words for one little essay seems silly. I've been there, done that, and spilled coffee from the all-nighters down more t-shirts than I wish to count.

It seemed to be at

undergraduate I never had enough to say, had never done enough to fill up the word limits, would quote endlessly and ramble incessantly in what appears, reading my essays back, to be an extension of last week's column.

Yet now, I have too much to say. I barely know where to start. The books I've read and notes I've made are piled around me as I write this and I just don't comprehend how I'm going to sort them out. Alright, I know six thousand words isn't that much. But it's six thousand words which are worth around 25% of my course.

Oh dear. Maybe I've got PPA (postgraduate performance anxiety). This isn't like a supervision where I could just turn up and

explain the slightly dodgier bits of my essay with a dash of charm and appropriate worry and see my supervisor comprehend that I am just a rambling fool rather than a rambling fool who has done no work to back her argument up.

I haven't even located an argument yet for this essay. Or a title, come to think of it. I think it's lost somewhere around the trip to formal last Thursday with my undergrad posse who returned for one night only. It led to me crouching over an A1 sheet on which is based my essay "plan" frantically trying to cram in different colours of sharpies and quotes from at least seven different authors before running to a supervision and trying not to

sweat wine all over her sofa.

Actually, I don't think I have got PPA. It's definitely UD - undergraduate delusion. I just don't have the appropriately charming smile to get away with that shit any more.

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