

CENTRAL TO CRANBROOK'S DISTINCTIVE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY, WHICH REACHES BACK TO THE SCHOOL'S FOUNDATION, IS A COMMITMENT TO A LIBERAL EDUCATION: A VISION TO BE A WORLD CLASS SCHOOL THAT HELPS STUDENTS TO DEVELOP A SPIRIT OF INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY; INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE AN OPENNESS TO THE WORLD, RELISHING NEW CHALLENGES AND PLACES. IN OUR INAUGURAL ISSUE, WE TALK TO THREE OF OUR ALUMNI, AS WELL AS OUR HEADMASTER, ABOUT THE DECISION TO STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE, THE INTRINSIC JOY OF LEARNING, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF EMBRACING GLOBAL MINDEDNESS IN AN ERA INCREASINGLY PUNCTUATED BY TRIBALISM AND A NARROW PAROCHIALISM.

OPEN TO THE WORLD

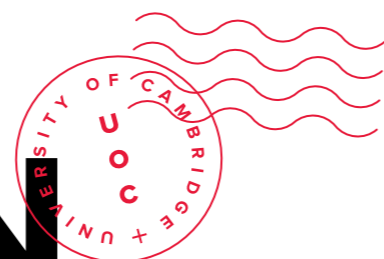
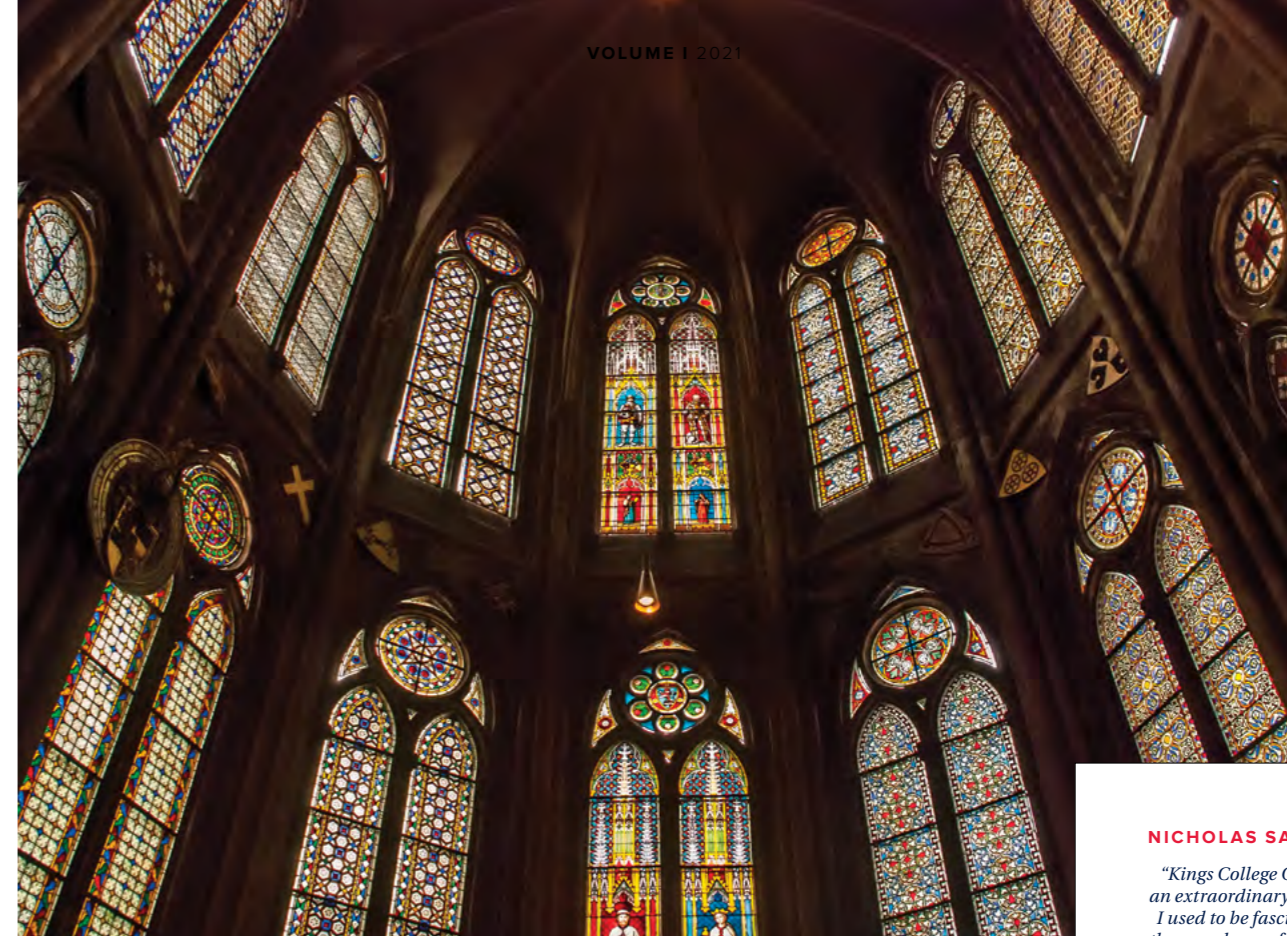


Photo by Sir Cam



NICHOLAS SAMPSON

"Kings College Chapel is an extraordinary building. I used to be fascinated by the symphony of light from the stained-glass windows, the play of reflected colour on to the stone of the Chapel. One hundred yards from there is a wonderful, vibrant marketplace ... you have a sense of Cambridge as a country town, with all sorts of different trades, bookstalls, fresh food."

CRANBROOK'S CAMBRIDGE CONNECTIONS

FOUNDED IN 1209, the University of Cambridge is the fourth-oldest university in the world, an iconic institution that attracts students from across the globe, boasting alumni from Charles Darwin to Jane Goodall, as well as over a hundred Nobel Laureates. Over the past few years, several of our Cranbrook alumni have chosen to study (or 'read') at the University. Ethan Tan (OC 2018) is reading Mathematics, while Jesse Caminer (OC 2019) is in his second year reading Portuguese and German Literature, Philosophy and Linguistics. Professor Richard Hunter (OC 1970) – who discovered a love of the classics at Cranbrook – went to Cambridge as a postgraduate and stayed at the University: in 2001 he was appointed Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge, a prestigious Chair founded by Henry VIII.

CRANBROOK'S HEADMASTER, Nicholas Sampson, is also a graduate of the University, and his commitment to a liberal education at Cranbrook was shaped by his time at Cambridge, where he read English Literature, Life and Thought. In his last year at a local selective school, Sampson found himself in the Headmaster's study: "He informed me that I was going to apply to Cambridge," he laughed. "I knew very little about the place, and I found my first year there fairly overwhelming, although I came to love it and hope that I made the most of it."

Nicholas Sampson cites the University's supervision system as key to showing him the importance of a broad liberal education. "Contrary to a reductive, utilitarian view of education, a liberal education celebrates a love of learning for its own sake, the capacity to think independently, the ability to test the truth, as well as creativity – the ability to make something new." He particularly enjoyed the freedom that came with the supervision system at Cambridge – he was taught to learn and explore through reading by his college tutor, an Australian academic from Melbourne. "At Cambridge we were encouraged to read widely, to follow niche interests," he said. "I read according to my interests and passions. There was a real sense of adventure." As a result of this tertiary education, reading and conversations about what he has read have become one of the cornerstones of his commitment to the learning process. Cranbrook's move to become an IB Continuum School reflects the Headmaster's deep commitment to an education that ensures students engage with different perspectives, pursuing the type of independent study that boosts creativity and critical thinking.



RICHARD HUNTER

"I am often found sitting at Desk 23 in the library of the Faculty of Classics ... but I think it is hard to beat a sunny early morning on the Backs near Trinity College where there are only geese for company and the buildings glow in the sun."

RICHARD HUNTER (OC 1970) went to Cambridge as a postgraduate, having studied Greek and Latin at the University of Sydney. At Cranbrook, noticing his aptitude at Latin, his teachers ensured the timetable was adjusted so that he could study Greek as well. He credits his time at Cranbrook as helping him to adjust to the demands of study at Cambridge. "I was always fairly self-driven", he said, "but Cranbrook had encouraged me to aim high academically, and that is very important when you move to a new context." He recommends Cambridge as a place to study because "it has excellent resources, and, in my experience encourages intellectual ambition and independence."

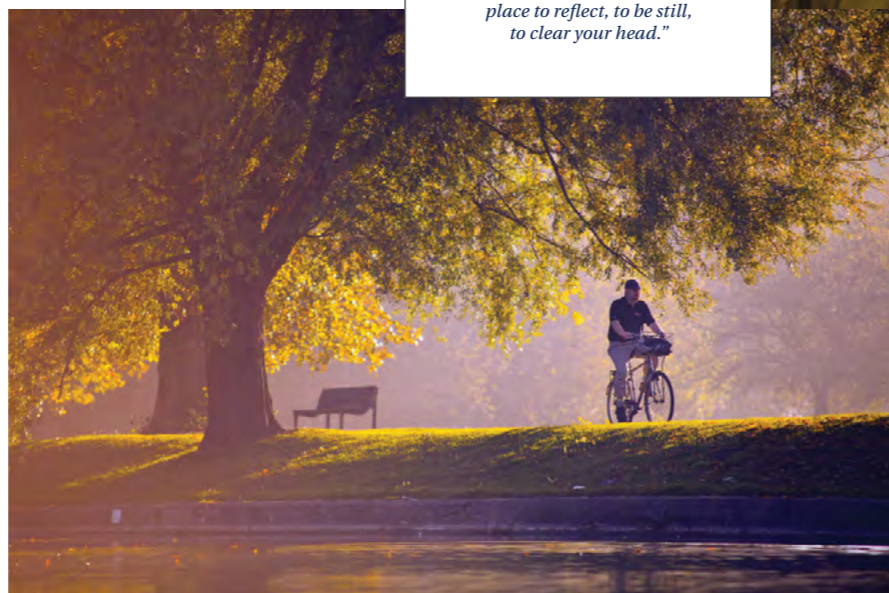
He too took some time to adjust to his new home. "The hardest thing is just getting used to a new place. It takes, for example, a very long time to realise just how deep are the differences between Australian and English society, which are to some extent concealed by the shared language." However, the best part of the move was connecting with fellow classicists. "I felt part of a significant community," he says. He loves his area of study for its breadth: "Classics is a subject which embraces all intellectual and material aspects of two extraordinary cultures – the breadth and variety are never exhausted." Like Nicholas Sampson, he believes in the importance of a broad education. "If you think that the purpose of going to University is to learn how to read and ask questions about what you read, to be exposed to whole cultures which are both very different from ours but also very important to yours, and to come to see how so many modern issues can only be understood from a historical perspective, the Classics offers remarkably concentrated value. The great majority of people who study Classics do not become professional classicists, but they never look at the world in quite the same way again."

JESSE CAMINER, Dux of Cranbrook in 2019, knew he wanted to study overseas after finishing the HSC. "As someone who is passionate about languages, culture and travel, it was important that I wasn't geographically isolated – as I felt in Australia," he said. Cambridge's proximity to Europe was key, as was the University's reputation. "It was ranked first in the world for Language and Cultural Studies, and it seemed the perfect place for me to cultivate my passions among equally ambitious individuals from all corners of the world," he said. He finds it "inspiring, energising, indescribable and admittedly quite stressful" to study in a place with such a long and auspicious history. "It is a privilege to sit at the same bench that Darwin himself sat at, to read a book under Newton's Apple Tree, to walk the same halls as those who have continued to shape our world for centuries." Jesse was drawn to his field of study by his exposure to different cultures, languages and influences from a young age. "For me places and spaces are defined by the people and customs that occupy them; language and culture are an insight into people and thus language and culture provide a unique opportunity to study the world and the history of ideas that have shaped it."

His love of learning was fostered at Cranbrook. "Cranbrook allowed me to pursue a niche set of subjects without compromise, which allowed me to explore what I was most interested in at high school. The appetite to learn is perhaps the most valuable attribute one can possess at Cambridge, and some may argue, in life. When the pressure is unbearable, the amount of work is unmanageable, the sleep deprivation is setting in, the love and will to learn is what will keep you going and remind yourself why you are doing what you are doing."

JESSE CAMINER

"Each and every little nook and cranny of Cambridge is special ... There is one place, however, that does come to mind – a wooden bench along the river at Jesus Green. At night, when everyone has gone home, the water is so still that it casts a perfect reflection of a stunning building across the road. You can hear the rushing water and the soft sound of swans gliding across the crystalline surface. It is a place to reflect, to be still, to clear your head."



IN 2018 ETHAN TAN was 15 when he became the youngest student to achieve the highest possible ATAR of 99.95. "The one thing special to Cranbrook is that it is willing to cater to the needs of the individual and embrace the talents of its students," he said. "Being able to accelerate my studies or attend Maths classes many years above my own meant that I was able to develop my own talents, and this is something that very few schools would consider in general," he said. He was drawn to Cambridge because of its reputation for Mathematics, however, after two years of study his outlook has changed. "I certainly enjoy the challenge that the course brings," he said, "but the true value of my time here lies in the people that I have met. The University attracts students from many different walks of life, and many students in my college come from all over the world. I have met some of the most interesting people I have ever encountered, each offering a unique perspective, yet all unified under a common love of learning," he said.

Like Jesse Caminer, Ethan finds it "quite surreal" to study in a place with such a history. "The architecture, dating back to the Middle Ages, is a constant reminder that this is no ordinary place, and it is humbling to study at a college whose library contains the original copy of Newton's Principia," he said. Ethan also appreciates the supervision system and the possibilities it opens for genuine exploration. "Mathematics is often perceived as dry and full of impenetrable equations," he said, "but Maths is, at its heart, built from creativity and insight. Simple and natural questions can often be fiendishly difficult to answer, and their solutions can often invoke completely unexpected areas of maths, or highlight mysterious connections between truths," he said.

Both Jesse and Ethan have an infectious love of learning. "I am currently keeping an open mind with regards to my future", said Jesse. "I feel it is a mistake to over-plan into the future and transform your degree into a means to an end, rather than something you are studying for the sake of it because it's what you love."

"Having a love of learning is a fundamental part of my own mindset," said Ethan. "I think it's central to one's ability to grow. In an age where change is occurring exponentially, being able to learn new things is key, and a love of learning is the root from which learning stems. This love is something that I have sought to maintain, first at Cranbrook, and now at Cambridge."

"A liberal education enlarges your vision of the world and of other people: it teaches you to search for the truth, not as an arid cerebral exercise but as a means of realising the bewildering range of humane possibilities offered by intellectual exploration" said Nicholas Sampson. "We are at a point in history when the value of the pursuit of truth is being eroded in a very dangerous fashion. Schools like Cranbrook must hold fast to the centrality of lively, courageous academic enquiry." ■

ETHAN TAN

"It's nice to sit at the fountain in Trinity Great Court at sunrise when nobody is around. This area is usually busy during the day, and there's something about being in such a grand place in the quiet hours of the early morning that appeals to me."