



Features 10th March 2014

Cambridge's Most Eccentric Professors - Part 2

by **Bex Sentance**

BEX SENTANCE rounds up some more of our most wonderfully weird academics.

Last time around we brought you a posse of eccentric male academics. This time it's the ladies' turn.

Department of Natural Sciences – Professor Nicola Clayton



The Darwinist Dancer

Nicky Clayton is a Professor of Comparative Cognition and a NatSci

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...s of being the most... Scientist in Residence at Lambert Dance Company. In 2009, to celebrate the bicentenary of Charles Darwin, she collaborated on a “Darwinist dance”. In her research work on bird cognition, she has developed behavioural tasks “to test whether jays can plan for tomorrow’s breakfast.” She describes the brains of birds as being more like a “fruit cake” compared to the layered “chocolate cake” of apes and humans. According to Professor Clayton, it is but an evolutionary accident that we didn’t end up as the Planet of the Crows – which would make Cambridge University look a bit different to say the least.

Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies – Ms. Emma Wu



A languages teacher in Chinese Studies, Emma Wu is renowned for her cutting sarcasm, sharp wit and unending supply of memorable quotes, which feature references to *Star Trek*, *The Big Bang Theory*, *Friends* and more. She encourages students to “have laser eyes” in order to see the structure of a sentence – “like James Bond” – and explains which particles go together grammatically by describing who they “go to Cindies with”. She isn’t above telling a dirty joke about old women and David Beckham in order to liven up a class, and once punished a student who was late by making him stand on a desk and sing a Communist anthem (the best part being that he actually did it). When asked by a class whether she would take them on a trip to the Fragrant Hills in Beijing, she replied, “If I had a spaceship. Like Captain Picard.”

Department of English – Dr. Jennifer Wallace



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Basically Harrison Ford, but female and less grumpy

Jennifer Wallace is basically Cambridge's answer to Indiana Jones – a super-sharp academic who moonlights as an archaeologist (possibly without the whips, but you never know). Or maybe that should be moonlights as an archaeologist who moonlights as a journalist, since she has also written freelance articles on everything from a copyright war over a dead poet to Slovenian punk philosophy. She once spent half a supervision talking to a student about which literary figures they would most like to go for drinks with (in the end, it came down to Ben Jonson versus Shakespeare). As well as penning articles, she has also been the subject of them, such as this 1999 *Times Higher Education* article about the horrifying imposition of women on Peterhouse's manly traditions, '[Intrigue in a Cambridge Rose Garden](#)'.

Department of Classics – Professor Mary Beard



The smile of a thousand BBC2 documentaries

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seen by The Guardian, but here to mention simply as “Laura”. Once labelled “the classical world’s most provocative figure”, she has a reputation for being forthright, outspoken and saying that the United States brought 9/11 upon itself. She read Classics at Cambridge as an undergrad, and described the faculty at that time as being run by “curmudgeonly old sods”. She confesses to a fascination with bad breath, Roman sex, and where exactly Romans went to the loo in amphitheatres.

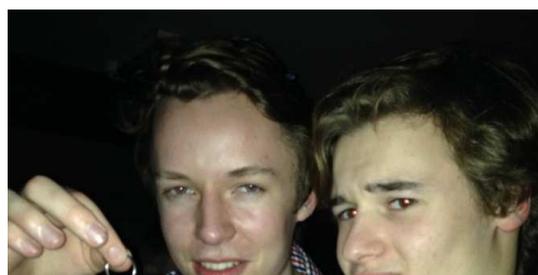
Outside of the academic world, she is a strong supporter of grey hair – she slammed an M&S fashion campaign on Twitter for its lack of grey-haired women, and has praised Kate Middleton for being unafraid to let grey hairs show.

When AA Gill branded her too ugly for television, she suggested that he should be forced to watch all of her programmes from start to finish, be force-fed all of his least favourite dishes – “like a goose destined for pâté de foie gras” – and worst of all, be made to attend a supervision in her study to justify his comments. Anything but that!

—More of our famous journalism—



**Diary of a Reluctant Virgin:
Week 7**



**College Swap: King's VS St
John's**



**Tit Hall's Status
Leaving Others
Chasing**



**Chase & Status to
Headline Trinity
Hall June Event**



**Lauren Chaplin –
the butterfly effect**

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Dave Green · a month ago

Dave Green is so cool he has an entropy of zero

<http://www.srcf.ucam.org/daveg...>

8 | · Reply · Share ›



astonished vet · a month ago

WHERE IS DJ CHIVERS????

6 | · Reply · Share ›



Every single... · a month ago

... member of the plant sciences department.

4 | · Reply · Share ›



Better with a Beard · a month ago

Mary Beard didn't say that the US had it coming for 9/11, she said that some people would say the US had it coming. Really, do you not fact-check anything you write, especially something as contentious as that?

3 | · Reply · Share ›



Sinologist · a month ago

Emma Wu is a legend. Once when the class slumped, she suddenly looked at one of my classmates and said, "[name redacted], you have such bright eyes... I feel like a cat is looking at me."

3 | · Reply · Share ›



Piers Bursill-Hall · a month ago

The fact that Piers Bursill-Hall hasn't been mentioned just means that none of you have met him yet. You haven't done a mathematics degree at Cambridge until you've been to one of his history of mathematics lectures.

3 | · Reply · Share ›



Historian · a month ago

Where is Craig Muldrew?

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Anyone else · a month ago

think this list is way better than the men's one?

2 | · Reply · Share ›



how have none · a month ago

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Tab Meets: Somebody Else's Cambridge

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EDL Can't Even Spell 'Britain'

2



Mary Beard: We don't get free booze!

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Dystopia: The Musical! (a sketch show)

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Revealed: Who Works Hardest

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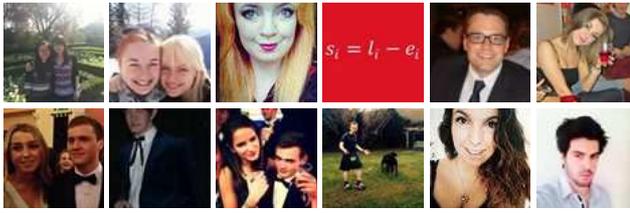
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CULTURE



What's On Week 7

Forget the hail, it's raining culture this week, hallelujah!



What's On Week 6

All aboard the culture train for another week of (worthwhile) procrastination!

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Tab Meets: Somebody Else's Cambridge

PATRICK BROOKS chats to the creator of a blog full of Cambridge students' private dreams, tragedies and darkest secrets.



Dystopia: The Musical! (a sketch show)

From executive producer Michael Bay, a brand new sketch show-cum-musical by Footlights regulars, coming soon to a Corpus Playroom near you.

NEWS



Mary Beard: We don't get free booze!

Beard has this week launched a staunch defence of Cambridge dons, insisting "We're not port-swigging freeloaders."



Sexual Assault in Cambridge: A chance for students to speak out

CUSU Women's campaign are running a survey about sexual harassment and assault.



Killer shrubbery drives King's potty

Outrage after falling plant pot almost decapitates Kings porter

DEBATE

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JESSICA O'DRISCOLL-BREEN explains her motivations for taking part in CDE's notoriously angry protests.



Why protest matters

CHAD ALLEN and **FLO SWANN** defend telling George Osborne to "fuck off".

SPORT



Women's Blues Basketball sweep away their competition

Cambridge Women's Blues Basketball complete a hugely successful season by winning the Conference Cup.



Varsity Football: Match In Pictures

Couldn't make it to Varsity? Don't worry, the Tab's own snappers were there to capture all the action. Here is our pick of the best photos.

TABTV



Dystopia: The Musical! (a sketch show)

From executive producer Michael Bay, a brand new sketch show-cum-musical by Footlights regulars, coming soon to a Corpus Playroom near you.

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Already bored of the holidays? OLIVER TAYLOR has turned the entire Cambridge experience into a video game...

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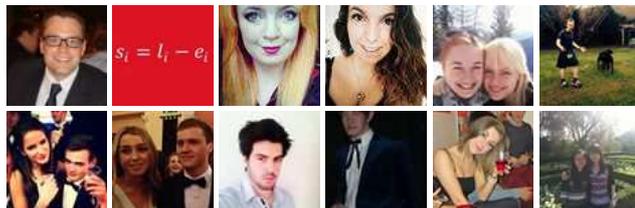
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