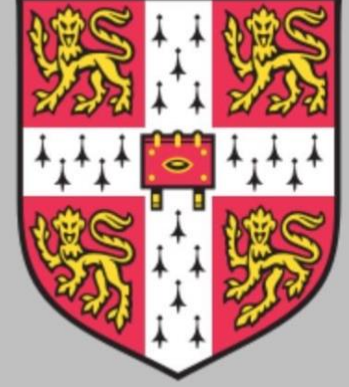


Norfolk Cambridge Society

Autumn 2020 Newsletter



From the Chair

Dear Fellow Alumni,

It is clear that we will remain unable to reconvene physically for quite some time yet. However, I suspect no virus in history has encountered an enemy quite as formidable as the human race today. Perhaps we will be out of the worst of it sooner than we think. I certainly hope so. In the meantime, many are going through great difficulties, particularly the less well-off and the sick. It has prompted me to re-read *Journal of the Plague Year* by Daniel Defoe, published in 1722. The conversation between John 'the soldier' and a constable on the road near Walthamstow in 1665, might well have occurred today concerning as it does John's worries about not being able to beg freely because of government restrictions on movement and quarantine regulations.

In 2020 by contrast many of us can remain safe by staying indoors and having our food delivered. We can also enjoy online events organised by the Norfolk Cambridge Society! One such event was held on 24 September, when Professor Richard Harvey of the UEA delivered, as a webinar, the lecture on Artificial Intelligence, that he was originally due to give in the Blake Studio, Norwich School, in April. It was watched by an estimated 180 people (one can never be sure with webinars!) of whom probably at least 50 were students. We have also continued to run our four Zoom-based discussion groups, tackling subject matters of great variety and interest (see pages 2 and 3)).

As I wrote in our last quarterly newsletter, this is a great time to make new friends online and discover the wide range of interesting Norfolk-based Cambridge alumni. Many of our events are also open to others of like mind. You can find a list of our forthcoming activities later in this newsletter and online at the NCS Alumni website. I hope to meet you at one or more of these.

Wishing you all good health and happiness for the coming months

Geoffrey

From the Editor

As we head into Winter I hope you are all keep well and continue to enjoy your NCS membership. Thanks to the good auspices of the University Alumni Office we are now able to distribute the newsletter to all our 1500 Norfolk alumni rather than just to NCS member who currently number about 250. We would love some of you to join us particularly while so many 'real world' activities are circumscribed. Details of a proposed walking club are included below. I know it's a bit premature (!) but I wish you all a safe and happy Christmas and look forward to catching up in the January newsletter. Please feel free to email Geoffrey or me with any material for inclusion. Kathy

ajskcm@btinternet.com

Seventh NCS Lecture and Future lectures

Our Seventh NCS Lecture was delivered in September, by webinar, by Professor Richard Harvey of the University of East Anglia and Gresham College London, on the subject of **Artificial Intelligence - How Much is it Likely to Impact Your Life?** For the first half hour, we were treated to a very interesting technical history of how AI developed and how it works. During the next fifteen minutes we were shown examples of its power in recognising and classifying objects and in surveillance. Finally, Professor Harvey spent twenty-five minutes entertainingly answering questions submitted online by the audience. Many people wrote in afterwards to say how much they had enjoyed the lecture and the subsequent Q & A, although some admitted they found the first part a little beyond them! Professor Harvey has very kindly provided written answers to many of the questions that were sent to him in advance. They can be found on his website at <https://www.prof-richard.org/post/ai-questions>.

We have yet to choose a lecturer and date for our January webinar. All members are very welcome to make suggestions. Please email geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com

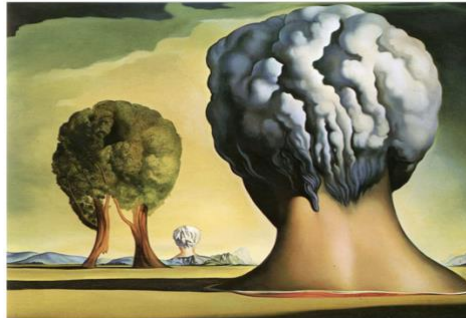
NCS Socratic

Stimulating discussions on things that matter - over a glass of wine



NCS Symposiasts

Stimulating discussions on things whimsical - over a glass of wine



NCS Sceptics

Stimulating discussions on things current - over a glass of wine



NCS Socratic

Stimulating discussions on things that matter – over a glass of wine

At our last meeting we discussed 'What constitutes lying and when is it morally justifiable?'

The background reading was 'Lying is Wrong and 'Lying is not Always Wrong' in Joseph Margolis *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* Vol. 23, No. 3 (March 1963), pp. 414-418. Opinions forthcoming on the night were, as always, wide and sometimes deep. A summary of the views expressed at all Socratic meetings is routinely prepared and circulated by the Chair, Geoffrey Smart.

If you wish to receive a list of all the topics discussed since their inception and a summary of the views expressed at any, please email geoffreyjnsmart@gmail.com.

Our next meeting is on **Thursday, 12th November** when we will be discussing one of the questions set in past examinations for fellowship at All Souls College, Oxford 'Is militant atheism just another form of religious extremism?'

NCS Symposiasts

Stimulating discussions on things whimsical – over a glass of wine.

We last met on 30th September, when we considered ‘Which work of art has moved you the most and why?’

Works discussed were *Winter in the Woods* by Denise Watkins-Pitchford, *The Siesta* by Vincent Van Gogh, *Self-Portrait* by Rembrandt, *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank, *A Man Escaped* (directed by Robert Bresson), the East Window of Winchester College Chapel, Edvard Munch's *The Scream*, Bruckner's 9th Symphony and Lisa Reihana's video, *In Pursuit of Venus (infected)*. The discussion was fascinating and we learnt as much about our fellow contributors as we did about this eclectic selection.

Our next meeting will be held on **Wednesday 28th October**, when the topic will be ‘Which fictional character do I find the most fascinating and why?’

NCS Sceptics

Stimulating discussions on things current – over a glass of wine

We last met in August, when we had a very lively discussion, chaired by Tim Cawkwell, which ranged over the following:

- If Take Back Control justified the UK's secession from the EU, would it not also justify Scotland's secession from the UK?
- How worried should we be about the rise of China and what should the West's response be?
- Why is Cancel Culture happening, and should we be worried enough to do something about it?
- To what extent do recent events support the belief that "democracy is the worst form of government apart from all the others"?

Our next meeting is on **Thursday, 8th October** when we will be discussing

- What news media do we follow and why? How is news consumed?
- What are the chances of a dictatorship emerging in the USA?
- What does national sovereignty really mean in the modern world?

Cultural events

Undaunted by the Covid hand grenade lobbed into her meticulously organised programme for this year Mu Gurbett has been resolutely putting together suggestions for 2021. All dates tbc!

She is hoping to rearrange cancelled visits to John Inness, and Glemham Hall although the death of the owner of the Hall may mean this is no longer available and is exploring the possibility of reinstating the proposed walking tour of Norwich subject to restrictions around social distancing and how loudly the guide is allowed to talk!

Other ideas under consideration are visits to the National Horse Racing Museum in Newmarket and/or Elton Hall near Peterborough and a tour of a Cambridge College with a meal if circumstances allow.

As and when it becomes possible to resume these activities details will be posted on the website and included in future newsletters.

Book Club

Our numbers continue to grow and we now have 11 members with 6 or 7 generally attending each meeting. Since the last newsletter we have met twice to discuss *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind* by Yuval Noah Harari and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahari. The latter was new to most of us and produced a wide-ranging discussion about additional language use, cultural identity, gender roles and the irritating nature of younger siblings!

We are now meeting 6 weekly with the day and date agreed as we go. Our next meeting when we will be considering *Why I'm No Longer talking to White People About Race* by Reni Eddo-Lodge coincides with the publication of this newsletter. Our final meeting of the year will be in **the week beginning 23rd November** when we will discuss *Circe* by Madeline Miller. If you would like to join us please check on the society website for the date after October 19th or email Kathy Moyse at ajskcm@btinternet.com

Walking Group. New!

This excellent suggestion has been made by Emily Norton (Trinity Hall 1997). She suggests meeting maybe monthly with members taking it in turns to organise and lead us on a favourite route. At the time of writing Covid 19 regulations suggest that groups of 6 are fine and that more of us may meet to walk if we are socially distanced from each other. This is not as clear as it might be so the suggestion is the you contact Emily if you're interested and we'll cross the numbers bridge when we get to it! Ideally the route should be circular and offer the chance for people who want to do so to drop off part of the way round. The fine details will depend on the fitness and abilities of those who express an interest. Apart from anything else this group will allow some of us to meet in person and to get to know new parts of the county. **Once the first date and route are confirmed details will be posted on the website.**

Emilv's email address is e.m.norton@btinternet.com

Annual General Meeting

Our annual general meeting was held online by Zoom on 16th September and attended by just 10 people. It was a good-humoured and uncontroversial meeting. Concern was expressed as to whether the society's main income stream from the quarterly lectures can be maintained through webinars, until such time as the pandemic is over. Our finances are currently very healthy, however, and continuing with the NCS Student Awards for 2021 was therefore approved. A copy of the minutes can be found on our website <https://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/group/norfolk-cambridge-society>.

Contacts

geoffreygnsmart@gmail.com

ajskcm@btinternet.com

mugurbutt@hotmail.com

pdgsmith@hotmail.com

e.m.norton@btinternet.com