Norfolk Cambridge Society

NCS AGM - September 2022

Chair's Annual Report

Inflation may be high, the world may be in a mess but, thanks to vaccinations, we appear for the time being at least, to have emerged from the worst of Covid. NCS lectures are back in the Blake Studio and our joint boat trip on the Broads with the Oxford University Society of Norfolk was a great success. As a result we remain in excellent financial health and should be able to maintain the NCS Student Awards for the foreseeable future. These are run by Dr Annie Grant and offer up to three £500 prizes, for the best submissions by Norfolk sixth formers applying to Cambridge University, on a topic that we specify each year.

Since our last AGM we have run four public lectures: in September 2021 Dr Nikhil Krishnan, a philosopher from Robinson College, Cambridge, who spoke on *The Pursuit of Truth – a Necessity or a Fool's Errand?*; in January 2022 at the height of the Omicron outbreak, Professor Diane Coyle, Fellow of Churchill College and Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, spoke by Zoom on *Levelling Up, what will it take?*; in April 2022, Professor Michael Kenny, Professor of Public Policy, University of Cambridge and Co-Director, Bennett Institute for Public Policy, spoke on *The British Constitution – its Strengths, Weaknesses and Risks*; and in June 2022, Dr Matthew D'Auria, Associate Professor in Modern European History, University of East Anglia spoke on *What is a Nation?* We are very grateful to all our lecturers for agreeing to speak on an expenses only basis and support a lecture series celebrating that most noble of activities, the rigorous pursuit and dissemination of truth. We are also grateful to Norwich School for the tremendous help they give us in organising these lectures, which have attracted audiences of over 2000 people to date.

During the past year we have also continued to run a wide range of other regular events, including our book group led by Kathy Moyse, walks and visits to interesting places organised by Mu Gurbutt and, organised by me, our Viewpoints discussion group meetings, our Incrementum Investment Club (held jointly with Norfolk Club members) and our Epicurean lunches at gastropubs. Incrementum has been well supported and remains vigorous. However, interest by alumni in Viewpoints and Epicurean lunches has been gradually waning. Kathy Moyse and Mu Gurbutt have kindly agreed to run our Epicurean lunches from now on to see if they can attract more interest. We are also now seeking someone to join our committee to take over running our Viewpoints discussion group. (This is not because I am no longer interested in attending these discussions. It is very enjoyable thinking about and discussing important topics with fellow alumni. However I am spending too much time on NCS activities and something needs to give.) Mu Gurbutt is also now seeking to pull back a little, having worked hard on her very successful events programme for the past two years. *We are therefore also seeking someone new to join our committee to assist Mu with running her activities. Please contact me if you are interested. Also if you think there are other types of activities that we should be considering.*

Our committee has worked hard for the benefit of your Society during the year and I wish to thank them all for their sterling contributions. The members are Simon Brickles (Vice-Chair), Andrew Barnes, Rob Edwards (Treasurer and now also Secretary), Dr Annie Grant, Mu Gurbutt, Bryan Guttridge, Kathy Moyse, Peter Smith (retiring Secretary) and George Shippam. A particular thanks to Peter Smith who has been our Secretary for the past two years. Peter will remain on the committee and will be responsible for maintaining a new website we are setting up which will also serve to modernise our ticketing processes. We are sorry to lose him as Secretary but delighted he is staying on the committee. I am very grateful to Rob Edwards who kindly offered to take over the role of Secretary, as well as continue as Treasurer, and who was unanimously supported by the committee in both roles. Bryan Guttridge has kindly agreed to supervise the NCS diary to help avoid clashes, allow communications to be properly spaced out and to ensure that our website is kept up to date with future events.

The NCS lectures continue to be a great success and I believe they make an important contribution to the intellectual life of the county. Our next three speakers are all mouth-watering prospects in this regard. They are:-

- On 30 September 2022, **Dr Bridget Kendall**, Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge and former BBC Diplomatic correspondent, who will talk on "**Understanding Russia today.**" Dr Kendall was the BBC's Moscow correspondent from 1989 to 1994, and developed her background in Russian politics. She was in Moscow to

witness the power struggles in the Soviet Communist Party as Mikhail Gorbachev tried to introduce reform, and reported on the break-up of the Soviet Union and the internal conflicts in Chechnya, Georgia and Tajikistan. She sent reports of the attempted coup in August 1991 and covered Boris Yeltsin's rise to power. Dr Kendall was the BBC's Washington correspondent from 1994 becoming the Corporation's diplomatic correspondent in November 1998. She speaks fluent Russian, and has interviewed world leaders including two interviews with Vladimir Putin live from the Kremlin, as part of internet webcasts in March 2001 and July 2006. She interviewed King Abdullah of Jordan for the BBC later in 2001, and hosted a similar event in Moscow with former Soviet President Gorbachev in 2002. She is the host of the intellectual talk show, The Forum, on BBC World Service radio. On 1 February 2016, Dr Kendall was elected as the first female Master of Peterhouse, Cambridge. Over 200 tickets have already been sold, which more than fills the Blake Studio, so we are moving the talk to the School Refectory which has a capacity of 300.

- On 26 January 2023, **Sir Paul Nurse**, Nobel Prize winner, Chief Executive of the Francis Crick Institute and a former President of the Royal Society, will talk on **What is Life?** Sir Paul was born in Norwich and completed his PhD at the UEA in 1973. He is arguably its most distinguished living son. In 2001 he was awarded the 2001 Nobel Prize along with Leland Hartwell and Tim Hunt for their discoveries of protein molecules that control the division of cells in the cell cycle. In 1989 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. He received the Albert Lasker Award for Basic Medical Research in 1998 and was knighted in 1999. In 2002 he was awarded the French Legion d'Honneur and the Golden Plate Award of the American Academy of Achievement, the Copley Medal in 2005 and was elected a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in April 2006. In 2013, he was awarded the Albert Einstein World Award of Science by the World Cultural Council and, in 2015, was elected a foreign academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. He was appointed Member of the Order of the Companions of Honour in the 2022 New Year Honours for services to science and medicine in the UK and abroad.
- On 20 April 2023. **Professor Ravindra Gupta** MA, MPH, BMBCh, PhD, FRCP, FRCPath, FMedSci, who was named in 2020 by TIME Magazine as one of the 100 most influential people in the world, will talk on "**Defeating Pandemic Viruses - Lessons for the Future**." Professor Gupta has been Professor of Clinical Microbiology at the Cambridge Institute for Therapeutic Immunology and Infectious Diseases since 2019. Whilst Professor at UCL, he led the team demonstrating HIV cure in the 'London Patient' – the world's only living HIV cure, and the second recorded in history (Gupta et al, Nature 2019). He has also deployed his expertise in RNA virus genetics and biology during the COVID-19 pandemic to report the first genotypic-phenotypic evidence for immune escape of SARS-CoV-2 within an individual, defining the process by which new variants likely arise.

It is extraordinary that such distinguished people have agreed so readily to support our lecture programme, free of charge. I hope therefore that very many of you will come to these lectures if you can and invite family, friends and any other contacts you believe might be interested. Indeed the more our members can help with marketing these lectures for us, the better. If we can get over four hundred people buying tickets for the Sir Paul Nurse lecture, for example, Steffan Griffiths, the headmaster of Norwich School, has suggested we hold the lecture in Norwich Cathedral. Wouldn't that be a special event for Norfolk, given the lecturer and the subject matter?

My aims since becoming your Chair, have been to continue to expand the range and depth of the Society's activities for our members, to raise the profile of the Society in Norfolk schools for the benefit of the University of Cambridge and to promote the value of learning across the county. Our events are therefore a mix of alumni-only gatherings and others to which interesting people are invited, so that all can benefit from the range of ideas expressed. Where spaces are limited, alumni take priority. I hope you feel this is a sensible policy.

I have greatly enjoyed serving as your Chair for the past year. I wish you all the very best of health for the future.

Geoffrey Smart