Clare Hall Graduate Student Body
presents

Humans of Clare Hall
We created the Humans of Clare Hall photo series in March 2020 to introduce the wonderful Humans of our college. Before long, the COVID-19 pandemic led to an additional focus for the series: to keep us connected with our college under lockdown.

The photo series appeared across various social media channels, with weekly posts throughout Lent, Easter, and Summer 2020, and concluded in September 2020. This document compiles those social media posts, along with some additional quotes from our Humans.

Thank you to all of the Humans who took part in the series and shared parts of your lives with us.

- The 2019-2020 GSB Committee
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Life before Clare Hall
“I spent the last three of four years since my undergrad living in West and Central Africa, two years in Cameroon and a year in Senegal. In Cameroon I was a Peace Corps Volunteer doing community health work: malaria, HIV, sexual reproductive health. Then, during my time in Senegal, I was hustling and juggling some ad-hoc jobs (read: global health consultant, substitute teacher, English tutor, soccer coach) while also starting my own social business, Routed, with a few Senegalese & American friends. Before that I travelled quite a bit. Born in the UK but grew up in Ghana, I was then raised in Washington D.C. through high school. I would eventually ditch America to do my undergrad at McGill in Canada. So, I don’t really know where I’m from. Kind of British. Kind of American. Wannabe Canadian? Some people think I’m more American than British, just because of how loud I am.”

D’Arcy

MPhil in Public Policy
from the USA and UK
“I started off singing in choirs and then began teaching music when I got a bit older. I was performing here and there, mainly classical music, but then when I was sixteen or seventeen I wasn’t going to school anymore. I was just making money off of music – teaching, performing, and singing. I had about fifteen students, kids, and would go to their homes on my bike every week and teach them. That’s how I made money which I saved up to go travelling. For me music is connected to culture and people. It has a very social aspect. I love performing, for instance, for setting a mood and seeing people enjoy themselves.”

Simone
Vocalist of the student band Simone’s Limones
“I’m from a small town from the southwest corner of the state of Virginia. Virginia culturally might as well be three different states. I’m from a small mountain town outside of Blacksburg where everyone knows each other. It’s very quiet, very slow, and very simple. The closer to D.C. you get the more it becomes city-like. The east coast of Virginia is by the ocean and has a huge military community. The east coast has more fishing, whereas back home it’s more hunting and hiking. I was a child of a single mother that worked 12 hour shifts as a nurse, so I grew up very independently very fast. I can see how this impacted me as being a researcher in a Cambridge-type setting that requires you to be really independent. The ability to wake up and be my own biggest critic was instilled in me from a young age.”

Patrick

PhD in Psychology
from the USA
“I was a student representative at my college in New Delhi, and there were a lot of tough decisions which came up my way. I did a lot of protests. I fasted for 14 days as a protest.”

Srijit

MPhil in Chemistry
from India
“Terri and I both very proudly wear our Yorkshire heritage on our sleeves. I think that – whilst I’m not saying that only Yorkshire people are open books – it is a trait, and we are what you see. I like to think that we’re both fair and honest. And maybe people might not know the idiosyncrasies of our family life and that we live round the corner together and that Terri’s daughter has babysat my children before we worked together – little things like that – but I think those are just little extras.”

Emma
Accommodation Officer
from the UK
“I started playing classical guitar when I was six years old, and the instrument was still bigger than myself. At one of my first performances I sang so loud that it drowned out the guitar – luckily for me as I did not play very well back then. That changed because of my fantastic childhood teacher who managed to keep me interested, enthusiastic, and devoted to the instrument and music in general. I am so grateful that I never stopped playing, and I can now pick up a random guitar in a public place, play ‘Capricho Árabe,’ and see how people’s faces lighten up.”

Timo

PhD in Economics
from Germany
“Last year I had no idea I’d be here at this time, so I feel like next year I have no idea where I’ll be the year after.”

Meg

MPhil in Public Policy
from Canada
“I started playing music fairly young, taking piano lessons when I was five, but I was a bit rebellious in the fact that I hated sight reading. I never wanted to do it so managed to get through the grades but would play the pieces with random notes in the exams instead of sight reading. I played the drums after that when I was about ten. In terms of influences I like the classics – Beatles, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, Elliot Smith, Nick Drake, Radiohead, Sufjan Stevens – mainly rock/alternative singer-songwriters.”

Elliot

Percussionist and keyboardist of the student band Simone’s Limones
First impressions of Clare Hall
“At first, I had some doubts about whether the college was too small, but I quickly realised that the size of Clare Hall is one of its many advantages. I immediately made many great friends here, participated in so many exciting events, and I really feel at home.”

Simone

MPhil in Sociology
from Germany
“I think my upbringing also impacted me in the way I initially responded to Cambridge, and Clare Hall particularly. When I first arrived, Cambridge seemed like a huge city because the town I’m from is so small, so to be able to live in Clare Hall was a perfect middle ground for me. Living in the city centre at a more prominent college that gets all the tourist traffic would have been overbearing for me. Being in Clare Hall feels like living in a home rather than student accommodation. You’re able to communicate with everyone within the college. You go to dinners and know everybody, whether you’re in the same discipline or not, whereas larger colleges often neglect graduate students. Being at a graduate-only college like Clare Hall was a really good welcoming reception, and it really felt like home from the beginning.”

Patrick
PhD in Psychology from the USA
“When I entered Clare Hall, I was trying to find a place where I could get my bags through. The Porters’ Lodge has a stairway which goes up and down. A girl who was walking by from Clare Hall, she came and helped me up, and just as I got my bag to the top, some lady – I don’t remember who it was now – walked by and said, ‘Welcome to the best college in Cambridge.’ And I still remember that.”

Srijit

MPhil in Chemistry
from India
Studies and research
“The PhD was a bit of a digression from my natural career path. I finished my medical degree, and it seemed obvious to just go into medical residency because that’s what everyone does, but I didn’t feel like just because everyone does it that it was a good enough reason to do it. The PhD kind of just happened. I wasn’t considering doing any postgraduate research. Doctors don’t usually take that into consideration. There’s so much going on as it is that there really isn’t a lot of time to think of anything else.”

Debbie

PhD in Psychiatry
from Brazil
“I grew up in a country where just and fair law was a foreign concept, and I think that sparked my initial interest in studying law; it was very empowering for me, and I thoroughly enjoyed the studying aspect of it. I then gravitated towards the relationship between law and information based on my own personal experiences. I witnessed a lot of misuse of information in Libya, particularly during the Arab Spring, which arguably was due to a lack of sufficient regulation on the area, so I was really interested in studying that from an academic perspective. When you base your academic interests on personal ones, I really believe it fuels your motivation to continue studying it.”

Yomna

Master of Law from Libya
“Sociology really encourages us to critically assess the things we take for granted in daily life. Why is something considered normal? How could it be different? And what are the consequences for various groups of people? I think it makes us reflect on our actions and the society we live in – which can be quite challenging at times, but it is also very much necessary.”

Simone

MPhil in Sociology
from Germany
“Studying at Cambridge is a great opportunity for me to learn more about research. The goal is to create a stronger bridge between the clinical and research worlds. I want my research knowledge to improve me as a clinician. My PhD looks at what exactly a concussion is. We’re hoping that technology has improved enough that we can create processing pipelines which will allow us to finally see what a concussion is. When we know what it is, we can develop the correct protocols to target it.”

Debbie
PhD in Psychiatry
from Brazil
“I’m currently completing a book manuscript tentatively titled, ‘The Language of Liberties: The Dalit Public Sphere in North India.’ I am looking at strategies adopted by Untouchable groups to create an ethical and political commitment with liberal ideas and politics. For example, the innovative tactic of organising counterdemonstrations to mobilise untouchable people and challenge nationalist agendas. Equally interesting was appropriating Hindi terms to discuss ideas relating to liberty, equality, human freedom, and representation. I hope to trace the genealogies of Hindi terms to demonstrate the critical role of language in building an enduring relationship with democratic politics.”
“I research infidelity in romantic and sexual relationships – how people engage in infidelity, how they attribute meaning to infidelity, and how it relates to new media and digital technologies. I have always been interested in societal structures and human actions. I started to research sexuality, gender, and the body in my undergraduate degree. Thereby, I noticed that infidelity in romantic and sexual relationships is often prevalent in media, but there is little sociological research about it. I think infidelity is fascinating to research because nearly everyone can relate to it – and yet, we don’t have much academic knowledge on the topic.”

Simone

MPhil in Sociology
from Germany
“I was doing my best to avoid studying my community because it’s so personal and it’s so complicated. It’s a small community; everyone knows each other, so it’s something you don’t want to do, go into the middle of all these family discussions. It feels like going into the middle of a soap opera and trying to understand it while being in a soap opera. In the end, I did realise that the best people to understand diasporas are people who are a part of a diaspora and who have gone through that experience. I think that’s an opportunity I couldn’t let go. I definitely needed to explore this from the perspective of who I am and who my community is. I think we can offer something to other people who are in a migration situation, will move, and then they will have kids, and then they will also deal with this. What do you do with your past when you move somewhere else? I think that’s what led me to study what I do.”

Mariana
PhD in Heritage (Archaeology Dept.)
from Macau and self-isolating in Portugal
“There was a problem with the patients when I was working at a trauma hospital. I realised people receiving treatment for head trauma were either sent to wards for severe brain trauma, skull fractures, or haemorrhages, or they were discharged, even if they weren’t feeling 100% okay. Even if they weren’t feeling themselves, if their scans were okay, they would be sent home. They would then be seen as outpatients by psychiatrists, and psychiatrists don’t really have as much connection to the whole brain trauma thing. They ended up diagnosing them with psychiatric conditions, but it didn’t seem reasonable that all these people would suddenly present psychiatric symptoms after suffering a massive brain trauma, diagnosed as being unrelated to that trauma. I’m trying to see what a concussion is. No one knows what a concussion is anatomically, pathophysiologically. We’re hoping that now technology has improved we can create enough pipelines of processing to finally see what a concussion is.”

Debbie

PhD in Psychiatry
from Brazil
“Writing history is at one level similar to writing fiction. You have to give life to characters and events, so it is fruitful to read lots of good novels. Good stories inspire you to write better histories, and it is my objective to write compelling stories.”

Ram

Visiting Fellow
from India and the US
College life
“I also co-founded the (unofficial) Clare Hall Pub Appreciation Society. It’s been going really well so far. We’ve had two outings that have brought in a lot of people. Having been here four years, I know a decent amount of pubs. I realised that a lot of people come here for one year and have immense amounts of studying to do, so rarely get to go out and experience some of the better pubs in Cambridge. So Tim and I designed the society for people who want to see more of the pub culture in Cambridge. Hopefully it’s something that can continue after I’ve left.”

Patrick
PhD in Psychology
from the USA
“At Clare Hall, everybody’s comfortable sitting next to a professor. And the professors find it quite easy to talk to students because you can easily start a conversation by asking, ‘So what is your research about?’ So instead of saying, ‘Oh, the weather is quite nice today,’ there’s another way to start a conversation. I think that’s quite nice. In Macau, when we want to start a conversation, we usually greet people by asking, ‘Have you had rice?’ So that’s the way to greet someone or to start a conversation. But here you ask, ‘So what’s your research about?’”

Peggy

Visiting Fellow
from Macau
“I get involved with the Biggest Loser. This type of extracurricular I really really do enjoy. This is the fourth year, I think, now. People pay me two pounds a week to be weighed. I weigh them in my office, and then put it into a spreadsheet, and then there’s a winner each week. It’s done by percentages of body weight, as opposed to the number, as a percentage of what they’ve lost, and then at the end of the twelve weeks we have a winner. And all the money goes to charity. I do the MacMillan Coffee Mornings as well. I enjoy doing that and the Chariots of Fire run. We’ve raised thousands across all these things. Everyone’s been so generous with their time and their money. We’ve done really well.”

Andy

Maintenance Manager
from the UK
“With PhDs it’s hard because you don’t want to get attached to people who leave after a one-year MPhil, but you can’t help it! Every year I say I won’t make new MPhil friends because it’s so traumatic when they leave. But here I am now with my closest friends being MPhils. I think the fact that we’re all away from home puts us in family mode with each other, and just like a family, you love them all.”

Debbie
PhD in Psychiatry
from Brazil
“I look at this as fun, as a source of happiness. All the concerts are a bonus. If we play here in the music room, I’m just as happy as I would be playing up in the ALB. I found this guy who plays acoustic guitar, Tommy Emmanuel, a one-man band who manages to play the melody and the rhythm at the same time. I was listening to him, and I wanted to be able to do that. Whatever makes you happy is the best influence.”

Lukas

Guitarist and bassist of the student band Simone’s Limones
“It is even the simple greetings that make a difference to your day. Taking the time out to be friendly can improve anyone’s day, and I think constantly my day is improved just by the fact that people are willing to be so pleasant all the time.”

Monique
Catering team
from South Africa
“Even the staff call the president by the name. That is unique for Clare Hall. Very different from other colleges. People who have come to Cambridge have experienced Cambridge formally when they’re having formals, but this is a special experience which you wouldn’t have if you’re not at Clare Hall. You already know what a formal Cambridge is when you go to formal in other colleges, but people there wouldn’t have the experience of calling their president by name. That’s nice. It took me time to do that. I still call my supervisor sir and ma’am because that’s a very common thing in India – maybe he feels happy that he’s knighted or something.”

Srijit
MPhil in Chemistry from India
“It’s jumping when Harry says jump and jumping when Terri says jump. We all work together. It’s busy, which I love. The day goes really quick, which is good. I like working with the people here.”

Andy
Maintenance Manager
from the UK
“I think it’s great that the college has the music room. Without the music room this would have never happened. It would be great if the college hosted more creative nights, showcasing their own passions. That would be great.”

Elliot

Percussionist and keyboardist of the student band Simone’s Limones
“I’m so astonished by the events at the college. We had this string orchestra magic this evening for £5! I think the events at this college are incredible, and there’s a lot to appreciate at the college.”

Lukas

Guitarist and bassist of the student band Simone’s Limones
Hobbies
“I think music is one of the few things that can instantly change your mood. It has a crazy way of changing the human mind because it’s so complex. It’s experimental. It’s not necessarily theoretical. You feel it. It’s a good meditative thing to do to play an instrument because you can get into your own world, whether it’s an instrument or singing, it’s like reading a book but you escape to the emotion of that particular song.”

Elliot

Percussionist and keyboardist of the student band Simone’s Limones
“One great thing about playing polo is you have to have a lot of horses. Each horse you connect with on a different level. For me, the best thing about a horse is as you swing your leg onto it and you get to know it, you can feel their personality. It’s getting to know that horse and feeling its personality and its character. I love that. That’s my favourite thing about riding, that connection with the horse.”

Monique

Catering team from South Africa
“After a 100% engineering background I got sucked in pretty quickly into politics. I think Cambridge being Cambridge you meet a lot of people very quickly, and they’re very good at talking you into things. I got quite lucky and was elected to Cambridge City Council in August last year in a by-election when my predecessor (temporarily) went off to the EU as an MEP. The election this year has been postponed, so that’s given me another year on top of what I was originally expecting before having to run again - so it’s also given me more time to figure out what I’m really good at, and figure out exactly where I’m best-placed to be useful in the long term!”

Josh

Life Member (MPhil 2017-2018) from the UK
“Every time we rehearse I feel uplifted, and it actually gives me energy. I leave this place full of adrenaline and can’t sleep for two hours after I leave. I’m just hyped up. I love music and performing. It’s a good reminder that it has to always be part of my life.”

Simone
Vocalist of the student band Simone’s Limones
“I really like chess. It engages. It’s always new. Every single game is different. And even though the rules are very simple to learn, it’s an endless source of enjoyment. I think that being good at chess or being interested in a game like chess probably led me into other things like liking math or liking computer science, that kind of stuff. Doing chess, like doing the analytical part of chess, is very similar to programming in computer science, I think.”

Marno

PhD in Computer Science  
from the Netherlands
“I was invited to ride this horse for someone who had found the horse too difficult for her. She never really settled into it. She just said one day, ‘Okay, that’s it. It’s just not going to settle into this horse. I’ll have to sell him.’ I said, ‘Well that’s fantastic because I’d like to buy him.’”

Monique
Catering team from South Africa
The Boat Club
“The women’s team has an abundance of energy and positivity, and we genuinely care for one another; I love that we’re friends on and off the water. It’s been amazing just seeing our progress as a fully novice team, and I’ve loved being co-captain alongside Chantalle! We’re a dynamic duo, and I really value and trust her input. My favourite memory is definitely getting our first bump during Lent Bumps within the first few minutes of our race, then rowing back home with my girls with the greenery in our hair. It was an exciting moment.”

Yomna
Master of Law
from Libya
“I started rowing because it was a good chance to experience the outdoors on a regular basis, rather than being in my room doing school related things. Although the UK has many great walking routes, I was used to the hiking and abundance of outdoor sport options in Virginia. I joined the Boat Club because I missed doing those kind of activities. I joined the Boat Club in the year of my MPhil in 2016. The following year when I began my PhD I became captain. That we had many of our team return, which provided the team with more experienced members. That really helped our performance that year, and we ended up getting super blades in bumps. Since then I’ve stopped rowing competitively but help out in the novice team or do some side-line coaching, but my main priority is to be the Fundraising Officer where I acquire funds for the Boat Club. We’re hoping to replace the boat and make more money for the club. Rowing is a very expensive sport, and we rely on a lot of external funding. This year is also the Boat Club’s 25th anniversary.”

Patrick
PhD in Psychology
from the USA
“There was a little box for the Boat Club at the archive, and there were lots of pictures in there. One of the pictures was Gillian Beer, which was one of the old presidents, and she was presenting the new boat for the Boat Club. That was really cool. I didn’t even know there was a boat called Gillian Beer because it was gone before I came here, but it was really nice to see that picture.”

Marno
PhD in Computer Science from the Netherlands
“The team’s really fun. The girls’ team is especially spirited and fun. It’s definitely hard getting up some mornings, especially when it’s cold and rainy, but they make it worth it for sure.”

Meg
MPhil in Public Policy
from Canada
“When we won blades the first time was incredible because we came in with a relatively new team. They got spoons the year before. We were kind of the underdogs, and that made it a real boat of friends. Our team spirit was so impressive, and we had so much fun. Everyone was there for each other – inside the boat, outside the boat – and some real friends for life formed there. That’s a highlight not only of the Boat Club, but probably of my whole experience at Cambridge.”

Timo

PhD in Economics
from Germany
Favourites
“When I moved into Elmside was probably my favourite moment because now I feel so connected to everyone’s lives. I know when dinner’s served; I know when people are in the library or the bar. I can see it all from my room.”

Debbie

PhD in Psychiatry
from Brazil
"My favourite thing about Cambridge, in general, is it’s a lot greener, a lot fresher; it feels like there’s a lot more youthful energy flowing around. It’s a motivating and cheerful environment."

Srijit

MPhil in Chemistry
from India
“Some of my favourite moments are always coming back to Cambridge and Clare Hall after travelling. When I flew back to England after the Christmas break, I landed in Stansted, took the train, and immediately I felt like I was back home. Spending time abroad always makes me realise how much I appreciate the opportunity to live and study at such an inspiring and welcoming university and college.”

Simone

MPhil in Sociology
from Germany
"My favourite person at Clare Hall is definitely Pat. That just has to go on the record. She is the most real person in this place and keeps everything running with her crazy work ethic and uplifting humour. The only reason why she remembers my name is because her grandson has a teddy bear that’s called D’Arcy, and so she will never forget my name, which is really lovely because she’s met a lot of people over her 40 years at Clare Hall. I feel quite privileged that I share a name with her grandson’s teddy bear."

D’Arcy
MPhil in Public Policy from the USA and UK
Travel
“I have a small stone, which was lying on the banks of a canal. I thought it was a river because fishes were flowing on it in Japan. It was so clean. We were walking with two friends, and they looked at those stones and said it’s going to erode and turn into sand. So I picked up one, and I said, ‘No, this will travel with me.’ And that stone has gone back to India since then, has gone to Germany, has come to the UK. It’s still lying in the bag, passed all airport security checks as well! Sometimes people laugh at me, ‘Why are you carrying a stone? It will make your bag heavy.’ I don’t know. It’s just lying there. I never felt like picking it up and throwing it out. I still have that stone with me in the bag.”

Srijit

MPhil in Chemistry from India
“I have worked at Clare Hall part time for nine years and also work as and when as a wildlife photographer with a well-known camera manufacturer. I go everywhere from the Arctic to the Antarctic. I go to Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, also going down to Antarctica. I spend time in Argentine and Chile. I’ve met some of the ex-students and fellows in Beijing, Finland, Canada, Chile, and Buenos Aires and had a drink with them. I even met someone from Clare Hall in the Arctic. I get sponsored to test cameras. As digital cameras now are calibrated for the countries because different countries like different settings for the colours in their photographs, we test the cameras and set them up to get the pictures we want, and they use our settings to set the cameras for each specific country. I got into wildlife photography through the BBC Wildlife Department. There was a programme called the Big Cat Diary that found cats in Kenya that went on for thirteen years. I became friends with the presenter, who lived in Cambridge. He helped me get into wildlife photography, and then I just got involved with things from there.”

Brent
Porter
from the UK
A few years back – I guess starting back in 2015 after I finished my undergraduate – I was able to start travelling more, but still on a student budget. When travelling you always want to be able to have some type of souvenir to remember the travels, but I have never been much of a t-shirt or magnet kind of guy. So I stumbled on patches. Patches are tiny (so easy to collect when travelling), cheaper (an essential), and often very colourful and captivating. I have sewn all the patches from my travels onto my day bag that I will take on hikes or just a day out in Cambridge to get stuff done. I have had a number of people come up to me and compliment the bag or ask where I got it, or ask about a particular place I’ve been to and how it was, like Budapest; Park City, Utah; The Appalachian Trail; plenty of other places. Each patch not only represents a trip, but also all the memories alongside them.

Patrick

PhD in Psychology
from the USA
“I run battlefield tours of World War I and II in France. I took 83 school children in October half term, producing two videos and a book. I also spent some time in France with one of the visiting fellows from Clare Hall and introduced him to Second World War veterans, which helped him with his research. It’s great to travel so much.”

Brent
Porter
from the UK
Life under lockdown
“I think we as a family made a decision to stay because we felt Clare Hall, and Cambridge, is the best place to be in a pandemic like this. Both are probably the safest place, with conditions of isolation. We are very happy with the decision to stay put because the built environment of Clare Hall creates a sense of community, which is also important at a moment like this. We felt particularly fortunate to have access to green areas around Cambridge. We have enjoyed discovering fields with walking spaces around Clare Hall and all the way to Grantchester. We feel very healthy and happy in Clare Hall.”

Ram
Visiting Fellow from India and the US
“I miss being able to go to St. John’s fields – that was right next to Wolfson Court – and just look at the stars. I miss the quietness, even though I live in a super quiet neighbourhood here. It’s a different space. I miss going to the common room and getting coffee in the middle of the night. I have a feeling that I’m missing out on the experience of being confined in Clare Hall, which is awkward, but I feel like I’m missing out.”

Mariana
PhD in Heritage (Archaeology Dept.) from Macau and self-isolating in Portugal
"I just so look forward to coming to work. Like last night, I was thinking, 'I can’t wait to get to work tomorrow.' It’s very strange times at the minute. I’ve been on my own ticking over now for however many weeks it is now – 10 weeks? 12 weeks? – and I 100% miss the banter in the staff room. From about twenty to eight to just before eight o’clock, the staff room is full basically. When we get up at five to eight, or whenever it is, to start work, often I’ll hear them say, ‘What a fantastic start to the day.’”

Andy

Maintenance Manager
from the UK
“I think in amongst the chaos that’s going on right now, the biggest winner of my working from home is definitely the desk plant, who now gets love and attention every day and has grown from one struggling lead to sprouting five!”

Josh

Life Member (MPhil 2017-2018)
from the UK
“Clare Hall are small rituals that make Clare Hall what it is. It’s the small steps of us going to the pigeonholes, of going to the common room, of going to the dining hall, of coming back. These are very small gestures that we do, even parking the bike downstairs, but all of them together create the idea that we have of what is Clare Hall. When you start taking them out, then suddenly you’re just grabbing hold onto an idea of what Clare Hall is, but you’re missing those steps that really make it. I miss all these small details that you don’t give a lot of attention to because they’re there. They’re a part of the college, but when you’re away it’s what you feel like seeing again.”

Mariana

PhD in Heritage (Archaeology Dept.)
from Macau and self-isolating in Portugal
“I haven’t read a book that wasn’t a law book in so long! So, during the lockdown, I picked up a book called *I Used to Know That* by Caroline Taggart. It’s brilliant! It’s a whole book on things we probably learnt at school but forgot over time, so it’s been lovely refreshing my memory. It ranges from English language and literature, math, science, history… do you remember Robert Frost’s ‘The Road Not Taken’? It’s a poem that has been interpreted differently by many, but generally, Frost is reflecting on a time he had to make a choice about the direction his life should take, which I think is something we can all relate to.”

Yomna

Master of Law
from Libya
“During the lockdown, everything’s so quiet and sombre, but when you guys come out here and talk and have a laugh, it really makes the atmosphere a bit lighter for us. I’m speaking for myself. I don’t know what the others think. But I would hear somebody talking or laughing outside, so I would come out to the balcony. Oh, students are out. That’s nice. I think you guys make this place more lively.”

Peggy
Visiting Fellow
from Macau
“Zooming and Skyping and WhatsApping. As efficient as it is, I’ve been amazed how robust it’s all been. I’ve never ever in my life video WhatsApped, Zoomed, Skyped, never done it, ever. And I’m doing it two, three times a week now. That’s an eye opener for me. I didn’t think it would be as efficient and as robust. I thought it’d be going down all the time. I’ve been so impressed with it all. And that’s happening all over the world, isn’t it? Every day, millions of people are doing it. Incredible.”

Andy

Maintenance Manager
from the UK
“When this situation began, what I study the most, which is public events and festivals, they were all cancelled. So suddenly there’s no public events to study, and all of them have been cancelled in the near future. There are no gatherings, and so when there are no gatherings what am I supposed to study?”

Mariana

PhD in Heritage (Archaeology Dept.) from Macau and self-isolating in Portugal
“Very little changed for us. Lockdown was quite a normal experience because we just carried on coming into work. I love that nature got a chance to breathe, so I found that quite beautiful. I really enjoyed that. I loved it when the ducks turned up and made their home here.”

Monique
Catering team
from South Africa
“We hopefully have a lot of the year rowing in front of us, and I think it’s our duty and mission – as long as it is safe – to provide our new students as well as our old students with this experience. It has impacted so many people in terms of mental health, physical health, so much that it would be unfair to just throw away that and just give up and say that there’s no possibility of making it happen.”

Timo
PhD in Economics
from Germany
“I’m a crafter. I do some sewing machine, knitting, crocheting, and all this sort of thing. But I’m terrible for starting things. I’ve actually made a conscious effort to finish projects whilst we’ve been in lockdown. I don’t know if it’s just my nature, but you see something and think, ‘Oh, I’m going to love that.’ And then I get taken away by the next thing. I have finished far more things than I have anticipated.”

“I love a jigsaw. I come from a jigsawing family. My mum always used to have one on the go, and when my whole family come to us for our family Christmas we always have a jigsaw on the go. But normal life or normal time, I never have time to do a jigsaw, yet lockdown I am part of – and I can’t believe we sound so sad – but a little jigsaw group. Some of the people in it are my friends that I never thought would be into jigsaws. We got quite addicted. We had a WhatsApp group. When we finished it, people would take a photograph, and everyone else would go, “Ooh, can I have that one next?”

Terri
Accommodation and Facilities Manager
from the UK

Emma
Accommodation Officer
from the UK
“I study movement and migration, and now everyone is immobile. So what happens to those who study movement when movement is no longer possible? It becomes a very surreal situation. It also means we need to reflect a lot more about what does it mean to move? And to have the freedom and the choice of moving? I think this is a crucial moment that we need to think about these things, and we have the opportunity of doing that.”

Mariana

PhD in Heritage (Archaeology Dept.)
from Macau and self-isolating in Portugal
“I think what I’d like to say is how all the students that have remained with us, how good they’ve been. How supportive they’ve been. Because obviously a good percentage of what comes in on the website is from students, and not always are those requests ‘request-worthy’, if you like. But people have taken on board that, particularly me, I’ve been on my own here, so they haven’t been putting on these jobs that maybe they would have done when we had a full team. I want that to be relayed, let people know. And also the help I had up until last week with testing the fire alarms as well. Because you do need two to do that, and the house reps stepped up and offered to help out. So I’d like to take this opportunity to say ‘Thank you’ to all the students that have been so understanding in these weird times.”

Andy

Maintenance Manager
from the UK
“Emma and I live about 500 yards away from each other. There was five Clare Hall staff that live in this village, whereas now we’re down to four. And we do have it on good authority that by pure coincidence, the domestic bursar did look at this village. The really fun thing is – a lot like the community spirit of the college – the village here has really pulled together. There’s been lots of volunteers keeping an eye on the shielding people. There’s been foodbanks set up. There’s been veg boxes being delivered left, right, and centre. There’s been people posting on social media, ‘Twenty books at the end of the path – Come and help yourself.’ And it got quite competitive over the jigsaws, which of the group would get to the free jigsaw. Quite often I’ll get messages off Emma going, ‘You beat me to it, Terri.’ But it’s coming to our little group anyway, so calm down.”

Terri
Accommodation and Facilities Manager
from the UK
What we love about Clare Hall
“I do find the dining hall quite amazing. It’s not just the food which we enjoy. It’s the atmosphere. Students feel so comfortable sitting with academics. That’s kind of unusual.”

Peggy
Visiting Fellow
from Macau
“What’s there not to like? I cannot cook that well, I cannot cook that much, and I cannot cook that healthy, for that cheap. It’s pretty unbelievable. I really enjoy bringing friends here to eat because I think it blows people away how good the food is and how lovely and unpretentious everyone is.”

D’Arcy

MPhil in Public Policy
from the USA and UK
“Clare Hall is unique in how strong the community is, how tight-knit the community is. And not just the community of students, but the community of staff and students. How well you know the porters, each of them, how well you know all the other staff, how supportive everyone is to each other. I think that’s a really special wonderful thing.”

Meg

MPhil in Public Policy
from Canada
“I love Clare Hall because of how intimate it is at every level. It feels like a co-op rather than student accommodation. You live in actual houses with other researchers. Because we’re all more mature, we tend to be able to have conversations and strike up friendships quite easily, and the college is so great at organising events to meet people regularly. It’s intimate at every level, from the GSB to the staff to the close-knit community of students, fellows, and staff. Because we do things on a smaller level, we’re able to do it better. Everything is done to a high-quality. Whether it’s food or entertainment, everything comes out to a little bit of a better quality than other colleges because it’s intimate. People know each other and actually care. You know everyone and have a relationship with them. The GSB care more because they know everyone. People take more time to do things well because they care. Because it’s a bit more intimate, people care more on a day to day basis.”

Patrick
PhD in Psychology
from the USA
“What I love about Clare Hall is that we’re so small and intimate, and that gives us the luxury of being able to get to know everyone a bit better; to see the same faces a lot more frequently and to learn everyone’s story – I love that. It really makes Clare Hall feel like a home away from home. Chef Luigi calls me ‘smiley girl’ and asks about my day whenever I come in for a delicious meal, the porters are so thoughtful, and members of staff are always ready to help you in any way they can. I remember when I lost a piece of jewellery that was so dear to me, the whole college helped me look for it. That’s my Clare Hall!”

Yomna

Master of Law
from Libya
“Here you know everybody, and you have a commonplace to talk and sit. The architecture of the buildings, the houses especially, they’re not student dormitories or student flats where people are locked in and locked out. It’s a much better community here inside.”

Srijit
MPhil in Chemistry
from India
“I think we’re all quite empowered. Obviously I can’t make a comparison to another college, but I do think the GSB are consulted, included, empowered. I think as staff, we often joke to various groups of peers, well you’ve asked for that opinion, so we’re going to share it. I do think the college has got a really good measure of its various groups of stakeholders. I’d hate to be the person up here trying to bring everybody’s voice together, but I think that the fact that they do give us a voice is a great thing.”

“To cut a long story short, I was a stay-at-home mum for nine years before I came to work at Clare Hall, and I’d always worked for large, big, grand companies before that. When I first started working at Clare Hall, it just felt really homely. It felt comfortable. I was really happy to feel that I wasn’t out of my depth. Even though I was at a Cambridge University college, it doesn’t feel stuffy. It doesn’t feel like you would expect a Cambridge University college to feel. And that is down to the staff and the students and the residents and the life members and the visiting fellows and the culture that the Senior Management Team develop.”

Terri
Accommodation and Facilities Manager from the UK

Emma
Accommodation Officer from the UK
“My favourite thing about Clare Hall is the people that are here, the close-knit community that we have here. I’m part of the rowing team, and I think that the community that we have translates into a mini form in the Boat Club. I think we’re a very team-oriented boat club. We go around the river as one big family, which is kind of cool.”

Marno

PhD in Computer Science
from the Netherlands
“Academic activities have been quite interesting because Clare Hall is full of people from different areas and different cultures. Whenever there’s a talk then you go into that meeting room, and you see different people, and then you hear a topic that is not something that you normally listen to.”

Peggy
Visiting Fellow
from Macau
“The best thing about working here is meeting the visiting fellows and students and learning about their subjects. Sometimes in the winter some of them get quite lonely and they’re quite happy to have a chat, so I spend time here having a chat and finding about their subjects, where they’ve been, where they come from. I travel quite a lot, so we often connect by talking about the places we’ve both been to.”

Brent
Porter
from the UK
“I think my favourite thing about my entire experience at Clare Hall has been the people. The people that are here already, and the people it seems to attract or the side of the person that this college brings out, which makes it really an incredible place to be – surrounded in that. I always remember a saying from when I was a child: If you want to be successful, surround yourself with successful people. I think there is a lot of success here with the people that are here, and it’s nice to be a part of that.”

Monique
Catering team
from South Africa
“Clare Hall is a lovely place to be. There’s a sense of community because of the way the buildings are built, the visiting fellows’ houses, the student houses, all connected in kind of a quad. Children can be outside, and it’s safe and peaceful and quiet.”

Ram

Visiting Fellow
from India and the US
“I’ve met so many amazing, intelligent, funny, and thoughtful people at Clare Hall. We have a great community that feels like a family, with a supportive and welcoming atmosphere. I really appreciate our amazing boat club, the fantastic food, and that I get to interact with a lot of fellows and staff members. Clare Hall really feels like home to me.”

Simone

MPhil in Sociology
from Germany
“Having seen everyone else’s responses, I was thinking – pretty much everyone so far has said family, and I think that sums it up and pretty much says all you need to know about Clare Hall. For me it’s a perfect blend for a postgrad, of informal, relaxed, social, but combined with some of the smartest and well-rounded people that I know.”

Josh
Life Member (MPhil 2017-2018) from the UK
“Clare Hall has this homey atmosphere. I feel very happy when I’m here. When I come back from travelling, I get that sense of coming home, which I didn’t think I was going to find anywhere apart from my actual home. I really enjoy this atmosphere and think it’s very welcoming. I like that it’s very international and you get to be around all kinds of people, see their culture, and hear about their experiences.”

Debbie
PhD in Psychiatry
from Brazil
“Clare Hall has a completely different character than any undergraduate college, and it really embraces that well. The fact that we are not many people and we know each other and are there for each other is brilliant.”

Timo

PhD in Economics
from Germany
“I know people talk about the close-knit community. What I like is the familiarity that we have, which is not the same as a close-knit community. You can have a group of friends, but you might not know everyone. And I think having been a part of the GSB for so long, and of the college, means that I actually miss personal interactions. That familiarity that we have with everyone. When we go to college we know everyone. It feels like home.”

Mariana
PhD in Heritage (Archaeology Dept.)
from Macau and self-isolating in Portugal
“Quite often I’ll stop and chat with the kids and the parents, and it’s lovely. It’s really nice. That’s a real positive about this place.”

Andy

Maintenance Manager
from the UK
“The staff at Clare Hall are incredible. They are so supportive and care so much about the students and our wellbeing. I love Clare Hall!!”

Meg
MPhil in Public Policy from Canada
Humans of Clare Hall
was created by…

Megan
MPhil in Anthropology
from the UK

Emily
PhD in Education
from the UK and USA

F. X. Quah
PhD in Mathematical Genomics
from Malaysia