

Hello, Pembroke Historians 2014!

First things first – a big congratulations! You may be wondering why you got your place and feeling a little nervous about entering into the Cambridge environment ... but, believe me, everyone else is too. I'm Rachel, a second year historian in Pembroke, and I can tell you that you are going to have an amazing time studying history, meeting new people and getting involved in new things at Cambridge.

I'll be your subject representative this year, and your official point of contact come October – and before! If you have any questions before term starts, please don't hesitate to drop me an email on rs661@cam.ac.uk or add me on facebook (Rachel Stott). This time last year I was in your situation; losing sleep over which 3 papers to choose (now I can appreciate that the fact Cambridge has 24 papers to choose from in your first and second years provides undergraduate historians with an incredibly personalised and unique university experience – last August, I was tearing my hair out!), wondering who's going to be in the room next door and having nightmares in which the 3 dreaded words "Down it fresher!" were shouted at me repeatedly. The best advice I can give to you is to just relax! Enjoy the last few weeks of your summer and see your lovely friends and family. Don't stress about the reading list you've been sent – by all means, dip into any books that pique your interest but the work you do once you get here is far more important. The most important thing is that you arrive at Pembroke in October fresh and ready for your Cambridge journey!

Once you do arrive, you will have lots of history-specific events (including a subject lunch which I will be organising in Freshers' Week) which will provide you with a real understanding of the History course here. However, I'll quickly outline what will be going on in your first year: you will study one paper each term, and for each paper you will have a supervisor with whom you will spend an hour-long supervision per week discussing your weekly essay. Supervisions, normally 1:1 or sometimes 2:1, are so interesting and will be fun once you learn to relax; these personal hours with world experts are what really set Cambridge apart from other universities. As well as reading for, and writing, your weekly essays, you will attend lectures at the History faculty. You'll probably be expected to attend 8-10 hours of lectures each week, but don't worry if you can't attend them all – go to the ones you can and in case of clashes prioritise the ones you find most useful and interesting! In the background, you will have fortnightly Historical Argument and Practice (HAP) sessions and lectures but these are not as important as your termly papers, and you will learn a lot more about the HAP module once you get here. If you are worried about the workload, I'd like to reassure you that if you are *at all* interested in History (which hopefully is the case!) then you will be excited and stimulated by your studies, and that the workload is totally manageable.

So manageable – in fact – that you will definitely have the time to throw yourself into all the other activities Cambridge has to offer. Whether you love music, sports, drama or debating, you are about to enter a world of opportunity! You're also about to make a lot of new friends! When you arrive and face the Freshers' Week chaos just remember: everyone is in the same boat. Everyone is new, everyone is looking to make friends and everyone is feeling ever-so-slightly nervous. I can't wait to meet you all, and for you all to meet each other; your fellow historians will be your close friends, colleagues and fantastic resources for your studies. As I've said, please do get in touch if you have any queries, concerns or just to say hi! Otherwise I look forward to meeting you all in October...

Rachel x