



The Record

MICHAELMAS 2020 · No.99



The motif on the back cover is taken from the Pelican banner made by Sebastian Robins and Susannah Gibson.

The Record

(formerly *The Letter*)

MICHAELMAS 2020

No. 99

CORPUS CHRISTI COLLEGE
CAMBRIDGE

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NEWS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Members of the College are asked to send to the Editors any news of themselves, or of each other, to be included in *The Record*, and to send prompt notification of any change in their permanent address.

The College in lockdown
Cover: New Court from the gatehall
p. 5: Old Court from the screens passage

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GUIDO G. BEDUSCHI is completing his doctoral dissertation on the relationship between the dissemination of news and the writing of modern history in early eighteenth-century Europe, focusing in particular on the Italian peninsula.

Doctoral struggles in a pandemic

GUIDO G. BEDUSCHI

The Covid pandemic found me at the final stage of my PhD in History. On the eve of Britain's first lockdown, I was just about to leave for France in order to conduct research at the Centre of Diplomatic Archives in Nantes. I had planned to stop in Paris for a couple of nights, before heading to Western France by train. And all of this while Italy, and more precisely my native region, Lombardy, was the world's epicentre of the ongoing pandemic.

Of course, I had indirect experience of what was happening via family and friends. However, England in early March was not too affected by the news from Italy: life in Cambridge was carrying on as usual, although many of us shared a sense of impending doom. Three days before my planned departure, the situation became critical in France too, and it was certain that Britain would be no exception. At that critical point, when I realised that I could not travel to France nor to Italy, some friends offered me to move to their place in London. They say: "friends are the family we chose for ourselves". Well, in this case, I can say I am friend with a whole family (parents and four children), whom I have been very lucky to meet when I moved to Cambridge some four years ago, as the eldest son was with me at Corpus. After some hesitation, I finally accepted the generous offer to spend the upcoming lockdown with them – convinced, as I was, that the temporary situation would last a mere month...

18 weeks later, I was completely integrated into the family. And although I cannot possibly complain about my lockdown, PhD-ing during this time was very arduous. The books I had borrowed from the University Library before moving to London were enough for the first few weeks, but soon, as I started a new chapter of my work, I was forced to rely exclusively on online resources. This is often not an issue when publications are either very recent or very old (much of what has been published from the early days of printing to the nineteenth century is available on Google Books). The problem was finding anything else that was published in between, as very little has been digitalised, or is anyway available without copyright infringements. PhD research and writing got considerably slower.

When the end of the lockdown finally approached, I realised that I urgently needed a well-stocked library and an academic environment where I could catch up with work. Unfortunately, returning to Cambridge was not an option: at the time, the university was closed, and it would take several weeks for the libraries to reopen. Thanks to the generosity of the University of Vienna, the University of Cambridge, and especially of Dr Thomas Wallnig, I obtained a position as Visiting PhD Student at the University of Vienna. I moved to the Austrian capital in early July, and I am planning to stay here until the end of December.



Frank pandemically attired