



OLD RIVALRIES ARE REKINDLED EVERY TIME  
THE OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE SOCIETY OF  
HONG KONG MEETS, AS JAKKI PHILLIPS LEARNS

PHOTOGRAPHY TERENCE LAM

# A Meeting



# of Minds

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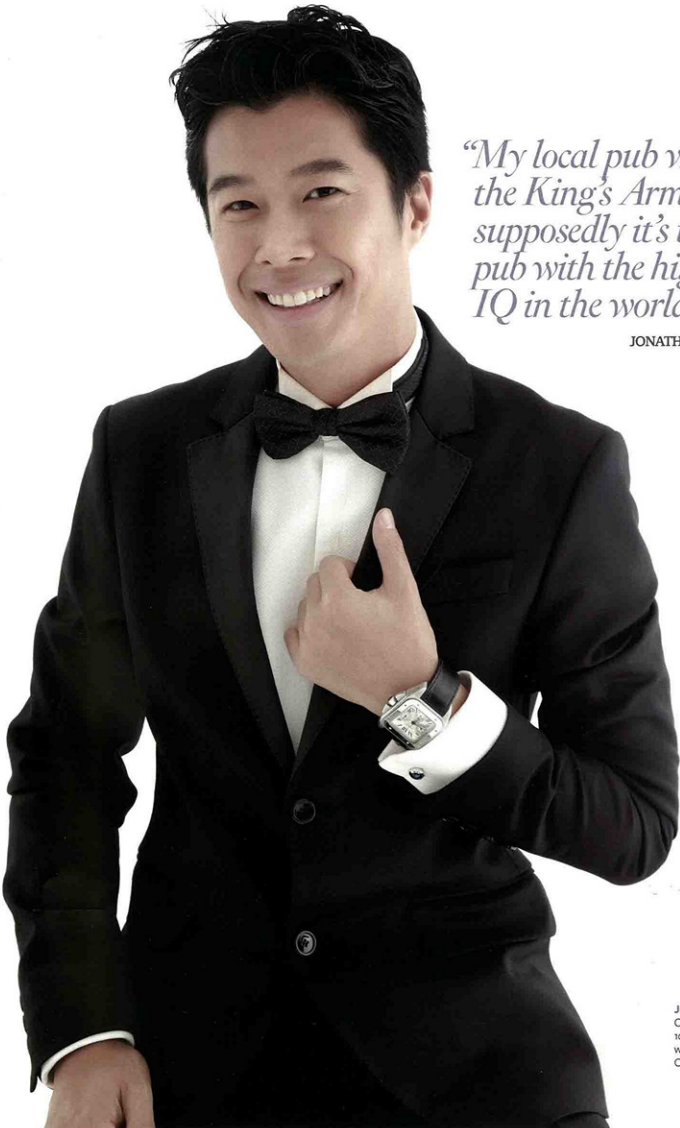
HICH UNIVERSITY DID I GO TO? The best one, of course,” says Oxford graduate Jonathan Young with a cheeky grin. “It’s the oldest English-speaking university in the world and we’ve produced far more prime ministers than Cambridge.” No sooner have the words tripped off his tongue than they are met with a swift defence. “Well, Cambridge has produced more Nobel prize winners,” quips Michael Ng with a look of amusement. It’s plain to see the famous rivalry between Britain’s most venerable universities continues well beyond the historic campus walls.

But this war of wits isn’t raging in a musty old English tavern over tankards of ale – it erupts in hot and humid Wan Chai on a Saturday evening. There are no tweed jackets or leather elbow patches in sight, just flowing silk gowns, glistening jewels and suave dinner suits. “The rivalry between Oxford and Cambridge goes back many centuries so, in a way, our banter is keeping an English tradition alive,” says Young, one of five members of the Oxford and Cambridge Society of Hong Kong (OCSHK) at this genteel get-together. “But it is all totally harmless. We’re great friends – it just so happens that we all have a rather dry and mischievous sense of humour.”

Ng read architecture at Churchill College and is now a partner at Foster and Partners. He is also the president of the OCSHK. “I remember seeing Cambridge University for the first time – the cloisters, the courtyards, the chapel – and feeling the sense of history and tradition emanating from every building. It was quite overwhelming.”

Young had a slightly less romantic start to his university career. “Some people spend months deciding whether to go to Oxford or Cambridge. I went to the Oxford open-day and thought it seemed great. I was supposed to go to the Cambridge open day the following morning, but went to a sale at Harvey Nichols instead. I hate making decisions – life is easier with less choice.” Despite studying engineering, economics and management, Young now runs a men’s shoe store called Tassels in The Landmark. “It takes more than 200 individual steps to make a handcrafted pair of shoes. That involves a fair amount of design knowledge.”

Unlike many of the city’s most exclusive clubs, OCSHK has no membership fee. Simply toss your mortar board at either Oxford or Cambridge University and you’ll be welcomed with open arms (and some good-natured ribbing). The society was set up around 40 years ago and today has more than 500 academic high-fliers under its wing. Thankfully, membership

A black and white photograph of Jonathan Young, a man with dark hair, smiling broadly. He is wearing a black tuxedo jacket over a white dress shirt and a black bow tie. He is pointing his right index finger towards the camera. On his left wrist, he is wearing a Cartier Santos 100 chronograph watch with a steel case and a black leather strap. The background is plain white.

*“My local pub was  
the King’s Arms –  
supposedly it’s the  
pub with the highest  
IQ in the world”*

JONATHAN YOUNG  
(Oxford)

JONATHAN  
Cartier Santos  
100 chronograph  
watch in steel;  
Cartier cufflinks



*"I was out rowing at 5am one morning and I saw Harry Potter being filmed. I was half-asleep but it was still exciting"*

JENNIFER MA  
(Oxford)

*"One of my fondest memories was having afternoon tea with fellow student Prince Edward. He was a very nice chap"*

MICHAEL NG  
(Cambridge)

from both institutions is roughly equal so there's no need for pistols at dawn. Acting as patrons for the society are notable alumni such as David Akers-Jones, the former chief secretary of Hong Kong, and David Li, chairman and chief executive of the Bank of East Asia. Distinguished leaders in the fields of politics, culture and business also support the society by holding private dinner talks. Past speakers include Chris Patten, the former governor of Hong Kong and chancellor of Oxford University, David Tang, Billy Leung, Carrie Lam and Regina Ip. Past and present students are also encouraged to mingle at more frivolous engagements such as crochet and Pimm's-fuelled garden parties, tipsy tram tours, Christmas cocktail and carol concerts, and the boisterous Boat Race dinner. "It's the one event where healthy rivalry is actively encour-

aged," says Samanta Pong, who also studied engineering, economics and management at Oxford University. "Each university is represented by its own speaker and as you can imagine there is a fair amount of friendly fire throughout the dinner. You definitely need to sharpen your wit before this event." Since returning to Hong Kong, Pong has co-founded dining website WOM Guide and its annual print counterpart, and also works for her family's business, Shiu Wing Steel.

But the highlight of the social calendar for most members is the society's bi-annual ball, which this year has a "Red Carpet" theme. "Oxford and Cambridge throw fabulous parties and we wanted to replicate that in Hong Kong," says Pong. "This year we're lucky enough to have Cartier as our gold sponsor for the ball, which means it is more decadent and flamboyant than ever before. It

  
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FROM THE EVENT, VISIT  
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*"If you ask my dad what I studied he says CSI – not quite the same thing as criminology"*

**JOLENE CHOW**  
(Oxford and Cambridge)



*"Being surrounded by some of the most brilliant minds in the world is very inspiring but it can also make you feel a bit stupid"*

**SAMANTA PONG**  
(Oxford)

also means we can cover our costs and donate our proceeds to local charities." Held at the Hong Kong Country Club on October 8, the ball will see champagne-swilling alumni kicking up their heels at a ceilidh, playing croquet on the lawn, and offering up their palms for a spot of fortune telling.

While the ball raises money for local charities, it is the members themselves who donate to the society's mentorship programme. "We're happy to give our time for free because we feel it is important to help existing undergraduates with all aspects of university life from career guidance to studying tips," says Jolene Chow. "We meet face-to-face in Hong Kong during university holidays and then email or talk on the phone during term time." After completing one degree in law and another in economics in London, Chow went on to complete an M.Phil in criminology at Cambridge and an MSc in

criminology and criminal justice at Oxford. Chow is legal counsel and director of the family-owned business, Rice Group of Companies.

Scholarships are also granted to students seeking to help the disadvantaged through research projects. "The grants help deepen the students' learning experience while also making a contribution to society," says Michael Ng.

But when it comes to boiling down the essence of the society, it is Oxford graduate Jennifer Ma who puts it best. "Your university days are the best days of your life," says Ma who read economics and management and is the founder of local learning centre, Arch Academy. "But three years just isn't enough. Through our society we can extend those glorious days while meeting other alumni and helping some good causes along the way" ■

**FROM LEFT**

**JENNIFER**  
Panthère de Cartier necklace and ring in white gold with diamonds, onyx and emerald; Delices de Cartier watch in white gold with diamonds

**MICHAEL**  
Calibre de Cartier watch in pink gold and steel; Cartier cufflinks

**JOLENE**  
Caresse d'orchidées par Cartier earrings; ring in white gold with diamonds

**SAMANTA**  
Cartier LOVE earrings, bracelet; ring in white gold with diamonds