

A rumour exists among Cambridge students – that they may be discretely and mysteriously tapped on the shoulder during their time there, meaning they have been invited to become a spy. It's difficult to determine if this is still true; presumably the new spies would be too secretive to let it slip. But many students live in hope for the day they will become the next James Bond.

Cambridge has a long-running association with secret intelligence, which has helped, and hindered, Britain through times of war and peace. Reach Cambridge students [live and learn](#) in the same university that has been home to many infamous spies – not bad for a residential summer school! We'll take a look at some of the most famous spies associated with the city.

Christopher Marlowe

Marlowe is more widely known as a famous playwright, with some suggesting that he is the true author of Shakespeare's plays. He studied at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and it is alleged that it was during this time that he was recruited to be a spy. Elizabeth I presided over the first British Secret Services, used during her reign to gather intelligence against Catholics. Some evidence that Marlowe was involved in these activities is that he left Cambridge for long stretches of time that the university would usually not allow, and when he was in college, he bought much more food and drink than he would have been able to afford on his scholarship money alone. It was apparently the extra money he earned from being a government spy throughout his life which supplemented his income, allowing him to continue writing.

Much intrigue surrounds Marlowe's murder at the young age of 29. There are various theories about why he was killed, and by whom, with many connecting his involvement with secret intelligence, and other spies, to his death.

The Cambridge Five

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An infamous group, The Cambridge Five was made up of Cambridge students who actually spied on Britain and fed intelligence to the Soviet Union throughout the Second World War! Though this has obviously been viewed by many as a huge betrayal, their initial motivation seems noble. All students at Trinity College in the 1930s, they were worried by the rise of Fascism around the world. Concerned that Britain and other democracies would be unable to fight it off, they agreed to pass intelligence to the Soviet Union, believing it was the only power strong enough to beat Fascism.

By WWII, the members of the ring, Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess, Harold 'Kim' Philby, Anthony Blunt and an unknown fifth member (widely suspected to be John Cairncross) had all risen to prominent positions, perfect for gathering important secret intelligence. Working in embassy's, the Foreign Office, even MI6 itself, all of them managed to spy for the Soviet Union until at least the 1950s. Amazingly, though they were exposed, they were never caught.

Many believe that there were more than just five spies, referring to a possible eighth, ninth, or even tenth unknown man. The story of the Cambridge Five has influenced many works of fiction, including most recently, the 2011 film adaptation of John le Carré's novel *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, starring Colin Firth and Benedict Cumberbatch.

Sir Richard Dearlove

Queens' College, where Sir Richard Dearlove was an undergraduate



You don't just have to look in the history books for Cambridge spies. Sir Richard Dearlove did his undergraduate degree at Queens' College, Cambridge, joining the British Secret Intelligence Service, other wise known as M16, immediately after graduating. He worked his way up the ranks until he was appointed head of the MI6 in 1999. In 2004, he left this job to become Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge, where he has remained ever since.

Of course, the mark of a good spy is anonymity, so who



The Cambridge Five met as undergraduates at Trinity College

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knows the countless number of spies Cambridge may have seen... If you want to visit a city of mystery and intrigue, then our Cambridge summer courses are definitely the [right place to be.](#)

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