

WHO IS PHINEAS?

How it all began

One morning in March 1900 the news of the relief of Ladysmith in South Africa caused a mass celebration in UCL's quad and the surrounding areas. Daredevil Jasper Blaxland and his followers were exploring in Tottenham Court Road when they spied a large wooden highlander outside Catesby's. With great presence of mind and skill, the students made off with Phineas and paraded him back to Gower Street. This was the first of many occasions when Phineas joined the students. His presence became more frequent as generations of students adopted him as their mascot.

March
1900

First Mascotry Battle

In 1922, King's students were stung into action by some criticism of their rugby prowess. They devised a very simple revenge: they kidnapped Phineas. It was the first time a Mascot had ever been stolen, and was a direct challenge to UCL. King's knew very well what was to come in return. The students prepared to defend their capture by locking Phineas far from sight and building secret defences. But UCL had an extensive network of spies within King's. After some ferocious hand-to-hand battling and police intervention, King's forced the invading UCL group towards the Embankment, breaking the balustrades on the East side of the Quad. After more than an hour of combat, honour was considered to be even, an armistice was arranged and Phineas was returned to UCL, minus an arm that had been broken off in the battle.

1922

1923

King's College designates Reggie, the Lion, as their mascot



The battle between King's and UCL students in the Strand Quad rages. (KCL Archives)

Reggie is stolen!

Two weeks of revelry characterised the 1927 rag. It began when UCL captured Reggie and filled his body with rotten apples before returning him to King's (at that time the mascot was hollow and, over the years, UCL took particular delight in defiling his innards with such donations). The response was swift: a contingent of female King's students drove to UCL at dawn chanting, 'For Reggie!' while their colleagues stole in via the rear entrance and captured a bust of Jeremy Bentham. The following day, King's students goaded their rivals by parading the bust outside University College. Hostilities recommenced a week later centred on the UCL quad: the ammunition a variety of rotten eggs, fruit and vegetables. At least six students were injured and taken to nearby University College Hospital for treatment

1927



(Assault on Gower Street - KCL Archives)

Large numbers went up there with a lorry load of rotten vegetables to recover him. When the Police thought the battle had gone on long enough, they opened the UCL Quad gates and started hauling people out. There were two arrests. By chance, they were both sons of clergymen!' - Ronald Lawton, a former Dentistry student.