

CAMBRIDGE CENTRAL MOSQUE

NEWSLETTER

FOR THE TEACHINGS OF QUR'AN AND SUNNA

cambridgecentralmosque.org



A GROUNDBREAKING MOSQUE

Assalamu alaykum wa-rahmatullahi wa-barakatuh!

WELCOME TO THIS latest issue of the Cambridge Central Mosque Newsletter! It's hard to believe that ten years have gone by since construction began on our Mill Road site. In the inset picture above, you can see the blessed moment in October 2016 when ground was broken by the Turkish Ambassador, HE Abdurrahman Bilgiç, together with Finbarr McMeel, the Technical Director of our contractors, Gilbert Ash Ltd of Belfast. A prayer was said and Zamzam water was sprinkled on the site.

Ten years later the mosque has become a true showcase for the present and the future of our British Muslim community. Not only is the congregation thriving, but it is very diverse: some calculations estimate that over fifty ethnicities may be encountered at our Friday Prayers! We represent the vibrant inclusiveness which has made Cambridge a world-leading global hub for talent and innovation, all brought together for us under the single and sheltering

roof of Islam.

The mosque demonstrates the aspiration of British Muslims to excel in their contribution to wider society. They are conspicuous as physicians and technicians at our city's Biomedical Campus, at local research firms, in local government, as professors at Cambridge University, and as Masters of historic colleges. The recent visit by King Charles III to our mosque offered him the opportunity to learn first-hand about the vital role played by Muslims in the Cambridge economy and social mix.

Celebrating diversity and integration in our shared British and Cambridge home is flagged up by the architecture of the mosque itself. We are 'Europe's first Eco-mosque', showcasing a range of cutting-edge green technologies which reduce the carbon footprint of our busy building. Our natural ventilation system which makes air-conditioning unnecessary was put to the test during this summer's record heatwave, when the prayer hall and other spaces remained comfortable even at very crowded and busy times.

The architecture of the mosque

displays the historic connection between English and Islamic building: stained glass and Gothic arches came to medieval Europe from the Middle East. Today our mosque is a marriage of East and West, showing how English design and references to our local context enhance and interact creatively and harmoniously with themes from the diverse and exquisite artistic and architectural traditions of the Muslim world.

With full congregations, dynamic children's activities, a strong welcome for women, regular interfaith meetings, and hundreds of wedding and conversion ceremonies every year, our team of staff and volunteers is kept very busy! We are seeking to build a Waqf endowment to generate a regular income for the mosque to guarantee its further flourishing in the decades and – in-shaAllah! – centuries to come. Please do consider supporting our endowment programme – remember us in your will, join our Life Members, or tell us how you would like your donation for Allah's House to be structured and for what particular purposes.

And all success is from Allah! ❖



Islamic Environmentalism in Bangladesh

BANGLADESH IS CONSIDERED one of the twenty countries globally which suffer the most from climate change. Thousands of Bangladeshis are killed by floods

every year, and riverbank erosion forces around ten thousand people each month to abandon their homes. The projected rise in sea level is expected to cost the country up to twenty percent of its land area. Already the result is that the capital Dhaka grows by over half a million people each year, many of them destitute refugees from a changing environment. Although the country produces only a tiny proportion of global emissions it is suffering disproportionately. A crisis is deepening.

Recognising this threat, the Dhaka government has lobbied internationally to ensure that climate change becomes a global priority, thus pushing back against the failure of some rich countries to honour their COP and other international commitments. But the key feature of climate change activism in Bangladesh is that it is youth-driven and grassroots. Groups such as the Youth Environment and Social Development Organisation and many local hubs work to enhance awareness in mosques and wider society of the need to campaign for climate justice, and to switch to renewable energy sources and water conservation where possible. Organizations like Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid run resilience and adaptation projects across Bangladesh. These programs empower women through agricultural training, interest-free loans for climate-smart gardens, and disaster preparedness education.

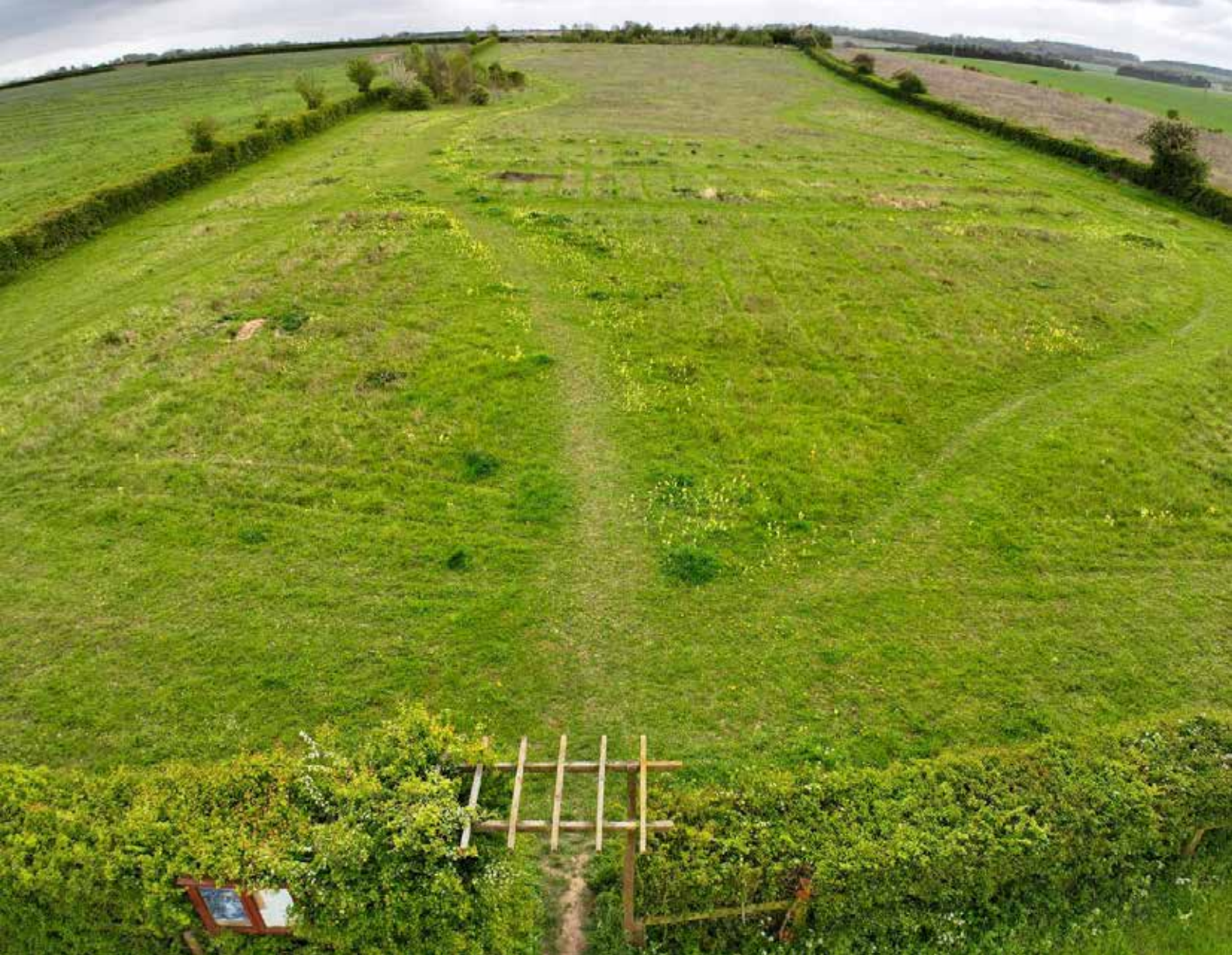
Scholars and economists are advocating for the institutional coordination of Zakat and Sadaqah (voluntary charity). Rather than one-off donations, pooling this money helps finance multi-year adaptation projects—such as climate-resilient agriculture and saline-tolerant farming in highly vulnerable regions like Satkhira.

Young scholars, aware of Islam's high regard for the natural world and the responsibility of believers to be stewards (khalifa), are working hard to remind older Ulema and Muftis of this essential duty to protect the land and its people. Every Muslim has the responsibility to ensure that Islamic teachings of creation care are understood in each mosque, and that scholars are fully familiar with the duty of warning against greed, consumerism and thoughtless mass consumption. ❖



Remembering a Forerunner

SHAYKH ABDUL WADOD SHALABI (1925-2008) was born in Egypt where he memorized the Holy Qur'an as a child, after which he took his BA in the Usul al-Din Faculty of al-Azhar in 1952. His Cambridge doctoral studies were on 19th century Sudanese history and religious thought. Later in life he became Director of the Islamic Centre of Australia, deputy President of the Islamic Research Academy, and Secretary-General of the Higher Committee for Islamic Call at al-Azhar. He wrote over twenty books, including his *Islam Religion of Life*, which was the first book in English to be published by Al-Azhar. During his time in Cambridge he was active in Muslim student affairs, often leading the Friday prayers, and held lively debates with the Islamic Studies experts at the Faculty of Oriental Studies.



Gardens of Rest

THE CEMETERY IS now open and burials are taking place. The first burial was of David Iles, a longstanding Muslim convert from Bury St Edmunds.

As part of Brinkley Woodland Cemetery, Gardens of Rest follows a natural burial ethos, ensuring that burials are conducted with minimal impact on the environment. Our vision is to create a landscape of meadows and woodland, where the graves blend seamlessly into the natural beauty of the land.

- All graves face Qiblah, following the Sunnah.
- Shroud-only burials (Kafan) wherever possible, ensuring a pure return to the earth.
- Immediate burials facilitated, in line with Islamic customs.
- No embalming or non-Islamic burial practices.
- No plastic flowers or other inorganic matter to be left on graves. Flowers must be native species from an approved list.

By planning ahead, families can preserve the tradition of remaining close in both life and death, while also easing the burden on loved ones during difficult times.

Options available include:

- Family plots, allowing loved ones to be buried side by side.
- Pre-purchased graves, ensuring peace of mind and securing a resting place in advance.

In keeping with the principles of Islamic humility, the cemetery does not feature traditional large headstones or raised mounds. Instead graves are marked with a simple tablet, ensuring an uncluttered, natural setting. This approach mirrors historic Islamic burial grounds, where the focus remains on dua, remembrance, and reflection rather than material displays.

To apply or for further information please visit gardensofrest.com or telephone 01638 600693. Email admin@countrysideburials.com

We are grateful to the anonymous local resident who has generously gifted this property to the mosque as a Waqf.



The King visits the Mosque

JULY 20 BECAME a red-letter day in the history of the Cambridge Mosque when King Charles III arrived for his first visit to our building. He met with our imams, administrators, volunteers, community elders, boys and girls from the Madrasa, and many others. Reflecting the mosque's commitment to good relations with other British faiths he was also introduced to the new Bishop of Ely, the Rt Revd Sarah Clark, Mike Frankl from the Beth Shalom Synagogue, and other faith leaders.

The design team of the award-winning building was represented by Julia Barfield (architect), Amanda Critchlow (sacred geometry), Mark Maidment (chief mechanical and electrical engineer), and Jephtha Weiss (project lead for timber design and construction).

The King commended the mosque's active commitment to the struggle against climate change, and to the service of social cohesion in the UK. He was happy to meet Zia Salik (Director of Islamic Relief), Yaseen Stoffberg (Registrar of the Cambridge Muslim College), and Fatimah Ashrif (Mosaic Leadership Programme). He also conversed with six of the

mosque's Trustees, two of whom had travelled from Turkey to attend the occasion. Turkish Ambassador Osman Ertaş was also present.

As part of the programme the King met senior civic leaders, including Peter McDonald (chair of the County Council), Chief Constable Simon Megicks, Cllr Maria Cleminson (the Mayor of Cambridge), and Francis Burkitt (High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire). This segment of the royal visit celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the granting of official city status to Cambridge, confirmed by King George VI in a Royal Charter which was on display in the mosque together with other documents representing royal relations with Cambridge over many centuries.

Local and national media coverage was very favourable, focusing on the mosque's commitment to sustainable technologies and to interfaith dialogue, two causes which have long been close to the King's heart. As he departed he was cheered by an impromptu and very varied crowd of local Mill Road people. The symbolically resonant event left a hugely positive impression in the hearts of all who attended. Few will forget the events of this happy day. ❖

CAMBRIDGE CRESCENT

COME, COME, WHOEVER YOU ARE

In 2025 we welcomed 135 men and women into the religion of Islam in our mosque. The Cambridge Crescent is a local support group designed to support them. Welcoming newcomers from every walk of life and age group is a constant challenge for our dedicated team of unpaid volunteers! To enhance the Crescent's activities we are inviting donations from all who care about the strength and spiritual growth of these new brothers and sisters.

At cambridgecrescent.org you can donate specifically for the Crescent's major activities:

- Gift Shahada Packs
- Facilitating Islamic Retreats
- New Muslim Classes
- Reconcile a Heart
- Help make Eid special
- Help train support buddies
- Ramadan Coffee-less Mornings
- Monday New Muslim Iftar Gatherings.

These services are Zakat-eligible. As Allah guides us to whom to give, as illustrated in the verse below, we remember that the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, was also famous for giving and reconciling hearts.

'The charitable offerings are only for the poor, and the destitute and those who collect (the zakat) and those whose hearts are (to be) reconciled and for (liberating) slaves and debtors and in God's path, and the wayfarer, as an obligation from God and God is Knowing, Wise.'

(Holy Qur'an 9:60)

We are also reminding all Muslim families in Cambridge to keep a look-out for new Muslims in the mosque. Welcome them into your homes, and show them the proverbial hospitality of the religion of brotherhood!

Talks

Our mosque is always busy with visiting speakers! Recent highlights have included:

- Dr Sohail Hanif, 'What is Sharia Law?'
- Dr Haroon Sidat, 'The Architecture of Worship'
- Dr Davide Pettinato, 'Nature Connection: A Muslim Perspective'
- Mohammed bin Khalid Ahmed, 'A Step by Step Guide to Hajj'
- Shaykh Alee Abdul Kadir, 'Reflection as Worship'
- Salman Siddiqui, 'Parenting and Relationship Challenges in the Modern World'
- Etsko Schuitema, 'Living Beyond Transaction'
- Shaykh Abdur Rahman Mangera, 'Raising Children who Love Allah'
- Shaykh Walead Mosaad, 'Sanctity and Stewardship'
- Dr Amir Ahmed, 'The Wound of Inaction'

Other highlighted events included a series of Country Walks (destinations include Wandlebury, Grantchester, and Milton Country Park); our Madrasa Sports Day; our annual recital of the Mi'rajyya; and our regular Community Litter Pick (very popular with our friendly neighbours!).



The health of our community was highlighted during a recent Mindsavers Workshop presented by the British Islamic Medical Association.

New also was a SiSU Health Station in the Atrium, which provided automatic free analysis of blood pressure, weight and BMI, body composition, heart age, and diabetes risk.

Our Women's Holistic Health Seminar (in Turkish) has also been a great success.

Iqbal and the German Philosopher

Our supporter Dr Francesca Bocca-Aldagre has just published a new book, *Nietzsche in Paradise*! All proceeds from the sale of the book go to the Mosque! The volume explores Islam's connection to major European writers. Here we present a section from her discussion of Iqbal and the German philosopher Nietzsche.

WHEN Muhammad Iqbal publishes *The Secrets of the Self*, a ferment erupts among the young Muslims of India.

In 1915, amid the independence movements, there was certainly no shortage of enthusiasm. Political slogans, civil disobedience, revolutions: such was the daily life of these Indian youths. However, the *Secrets of the Self* is a collection of poems in the Persian language.

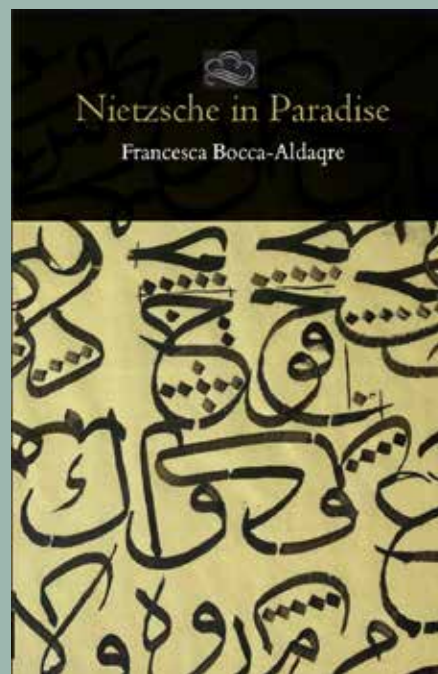
Reynold Nicholson, Professor of Arabic and Persian at Cambridge, immediately obtains a copy and endeavours to translate it. However, among the verses, he finds nothing but abstract beauty, the poignant indeterminacy of Persian poetry. There is nothing of the political fervour or the enthusiasm that inflames the Muslims.

Tho' I am but a mote, the radiant sun is mine:
Within my bosom are a hundred dawns.

The self of which Iqbal unveils the secrets is power, strength, and will. Unlike the preceding Persian poetry, it is not love that intoxicates him, not mystical ecstasy that removes him from reality; instead, it seizes everything, claims ownership of everything. The result surprises both the East and the West.

Because the lute of my genius hath a strange melody,
Even to comrades my song is strange.

And strange is the parable that Iqbal chooses in order to warn against the danger threatening the self. He tells of a flock of sheep terrorized by ferocious tigers and a constant massacre. To safeguard themselves, they resort to a stratagem.



He became as a prophet inspired
and began to preach to the bloodthirsty tigers,
He cried out: "O ye insolent liars,
Who wot not of a day of ill luck that shall continue for ever!"

The sheep-prophet brings new commandments to the tigers, urging them to repent of their actions and to choose a path of renunciation and weakness.

Whoso is violent and strong is miserable:
Life's solidity depends on self-denial.
The spirit of the righteous is fed by fodder,
the vegetarian is pleasing unto God!
The wakeful tiger was lulled to slumber by the
sheep's charm:
He called his decline Moral Culture.

Nicholson translates all the poems, and yet he has not understood the secret. He writes to Iqbal, asking him to clarify, to explain what this self is, and why ardour arises from it.

Iqbal responds, with the delicacy of one who knows that a Western spirit cannot understand. The short letter contains a note, still reported in English editions as a prologue. The Persian poet once again assumes the role of the German philosopher, looking through Nietzsche's eyes and describing an Islam "sunk in Platonic contemplation," opposed to the "fresh and vigorous monotheism which inspired Muhammad." ❖

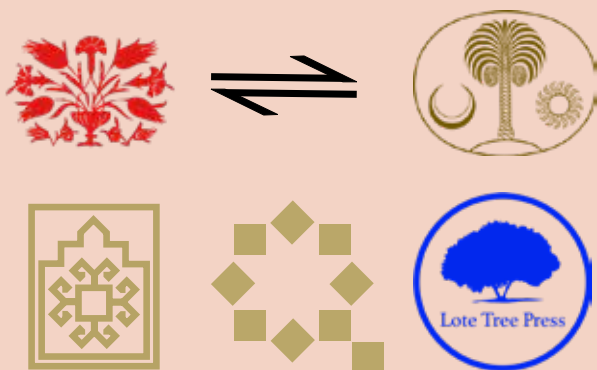
What are Mosque Memberships?

Cambridge Central Mosque is more than a building. It is a place of prayer, learning, and community, open every day for thousands of people. While many of our services and programmes are designed to sustain themselves, there are essential baseline costs required to keep your Mosque running.

Each year, our Membership Programme aims to raise £500,000 to support:

- Facilities and utilities that keep the Mosque open
- Systems, finance and administration behind the scenes
- Outreach, education and community events
- Professional and communication services that help us serve the community

Through membership, you help ensure that the house of Allah continues to remain open, welcoming, and serving the community for generations to come.



Baraka Books!

Our mosque does not have a bookshop, but visitors can collect free copies of *Muslim Book News*, which showcases leading publications by Cambridge-based Islamic publishers, which can then be ordered online. Cambridge is a major hub for Muslim publishing, being the home of the Islamic Texts Society, CMC Press, the Quilliam Press, the Muslim Academic Trust, Lote Tree Press, and Equilibra Press.

جواهر

Islamic Literature and Gifts from Cambridge

Discover the Beauty of Islamic Literature and Gifts

As a new family in Cambridge, we've been warmly welcomed into the community of Cambridge along Mill Road and have Alhamdulillah brought to fruition a dream to provide quality goods and literature to the local community.

- ✓ Qurans
- ✓ Islamic literature
- ✓ Children's books
- ✓ Abayas
- ✓ Hijabs
- ✓ Thobes
- ✓ Prayer mats
- ✓ Breathable nail polish
- ✓ Beard products
- ✓ Perfume free soap
- ✓ Handmade tasbeehs
- ✓ Perfumes
- ✓ Black seed oil
- ✓ Yemen sidr honey
- ✓ Supplements
- ✓ Health products

In addition, every Friday after Juma at 2pm, we will be offering arts and craft activities, which you are welcome to attend and participate in.

www.jawharah.co.uk





The Five Prayers

1. And so give thanks, friends gathered here,
and take this gift from Heaven's Lord,
in grace and glory gifted us
from Him to us a binding cord.
2. From purest place and highest King
and greatest man that ever soared
beyond this world of trial and tears,
we reap this rite as his reward.
3. The Year of Sorrow ended when
the Man of Praise his King adored.
No purer joy adorns the heart
when love's red wine is freely poured.
4. And we poor mortals caught in grief
in this base world of sham and fraud
are offered now this Zamzam cup
to clean the souls that demons clawed.
5. At dawn we cry for holiness,
for freedom from our egos flawed.
At noon we turn away from bread
and bend our hearts to Heaven's hoard.
6. Midafternoon, at dusk and dark,
we follow him and turn toward
the Primal House, where prophets prayed
and holy souls arose and soared.
7. Released from hour and place we face
the Face the purest ones adored.
In unity we sing His song:
the heart lies not, the soul's restored.
8. The Prophets and the holy men
shall hold our hands, with one accord
in grace they upward guide our gaze
until in God we are restored.

This poem is from the *Mi'rajiyya*, a book sold for the benefit of the Cambridge Central Mosque.
Published in 2025 by the Muslim Academic Trust, ISBN 978 1 902350 15 8.

DONATION INFORMATION

Bank Transfer

HSBC

Address:

63-64 St Andrews Street,
Cambridge CB2 3BZ,
United Kingdom

Account Name: The Cambridge Mosque Trust

Account No.: 54298209

Sort code: 40-16-08

IBAN: GB68HBUK40160854298209

Branch Identifier: HBUKGB4103J

CREDIT AND DEBIT CARDS:

<https://www.justgiving.com/muslimacademic>

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"THE CAMBRIDGE MOSQUE TRUST"

309-313 Mill Road,
Cambridge CB1 3DF

Or automate a regular donation by downloading,
completing and posting a standing order form to your bank.
Information on our website.

www.cambridgecentralmosque.org

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