

Students suffer as Vanbrugh roof leaks

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Heavy rains caused pieces of the Vanbrugh dining hall ceiling to fall down amongst lunching students, due to a leak in the College roof. Students passing through Vanbrugh dining hall a few weeks ago may have witnessed pieces of the interior ceiling falling down. One student described the incident as “a big chunk of roof fell just in front of me. Everyone looked shocked but none of the catering staff seemed to know what to do”.

The pressure of the recent heavy rains had caused a build up of water in the flat roof, resulting in a leak that loosened pieces of the interior ceiling. Repairs have since been made and the faulty pieces replaced, in accordance with Health and Safety precautions, despite some initial problems with the contractors.

Despite the commotion, the Vanbrugh JCR chair, Sarah Jones, and the Catering and Bars Manager, Philip Kember denied any knowledge of the incident. Philip Kember, although admitting that a piece came down during the repair of the ceiling, described the operation as part of the renovations made to the roof on a cyclical basis. In light of the persistent heavy rains the Catering and Bars Manager did however express a concern for the future condition of the roof.

Although Vanbrugh dining hall was refurbished last year as part of the on going university programme converting the college facilities to an ‘Enterprise Zone’, no structural changes were made to the roof which is no longer suitable under the University roofing policies due to its inefficient design. This design fault is absent from the newer colleges – James and Alcuin – neither of which have flat rooves. Vanbrugh students have since been accustomed to recurring problems with damp in the ceilings, using buckets in the corridors during heavy rains.

John Craine, an English and Philosophy student, was worried that “University neglect might lead to students getting hurt”. Though unaware of the particular incident the Vanbrugh welfare officers stated the importance of Vanbrugh students being kept “safe within the confines of the College” and from the distress of any “structural inadequacies”.

(Charlotta Salmi)



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