

NOUSE



Russell Brand In Muse

'I was arrested maybe eleven times. I was under a drug-umbrella. It was ever-such a laugh for a while'



Student convicted of rape

- Clive Manyou, 36, raped fellow student
- Judge sentences him to six years in jail
- Victim speaks out about the conviction

By **Jamie Merrill**
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

UNIVERSITY of York student Clive Richard Manyou was convicted of raping and sexually assaulting another student as she slept, and sentenced to six years in prison at a trial in York Crown Court last week.

Manyou, 36, of Heslington, raped and sexually assaulted a 19 year-old female student after "manipulating" his way into her room in the early hours of 8 June 2006. Manyou was studying English and Related Literature at York, and was well known as lead singer of the successful campus band Mitus.

Recorder Gary Burrell QC said when delivering the sentence, "You have been convicted of the serious offences of rape and sexual assault. By its verdict the jury has seen through your rather unconvincing performance in the witness box." Burrell QC went on to sentence Manyou to six years in prison as well as

placing him on the sex offenders register for life. However, Manyou will only serve three years before being released on licence.

During the course of the four-day trial, the jury heard how Manyou had "manipulated" his way into the female student's room after a night out at York nightclub Ziggy's, waiting until she was asleep before sexually assaulting and then raping her.

In the witness box, the female student said: "He made it seem as if it was the strangest thing in the world for me to want to sleep alone." She told how she had awoken to find Manyou touching her sexually, saying "I pushed him off me and fell asleep, which is something I obviously later regretted". She woke again later to find him raping her. At this point she cried out "What the f**k are you doing?" The court also heard medical evidence that the victim was still suffering from considerable pain and tenderness eight hours after the attack.

Manyou, who is mar-

ried with a child, pleaded not guilty to all charges, claiming in the witness box "I am standing trial for something I did not do." The jury rejected Manyou's claims that the victim had sexually assaulted him when he passed out drunk in her room and that she and her friend were part of a conspiracy against him.

Judge Burrell QC said: "You blatantly tried to lie your way out of the situation, making up the wholly unfounded allegations against the 19 year-old student."

"Your assault was so serious and brutal to cause pain some hours later. As a result, a young girl's university career has been ruined and she felt unable to return to her studies".

Following Manyou's conviction the victim, who had told *Nouse* during the trial that she did not feel she could "live so close to Clive Manyou", said she was carefully considering returning to York next year to resume her studies.

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York ex-students are target of the far-right

Several University staff and ex-students have been targeted by a far-right website. Redwatch, whose slogan is "Remember places, traitors' faces, they'll all pay for their crimes," has published photographs of staff and ex-students.

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Porters' Lodges close amid welfare worries

The porters' lodges in several colleges on campus have closed as a result of dire staff shortages. The decision has led to angry responses from students and staff, though management insists it is a "temporary measure".

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Fighting on the battlefields of Iraq

A York student who served with the armed forces in Iraq speaks about his reflections on the experience.

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York Council keen to join 2012 Olympics

The City of York Council have put forward their case for several sports facilities in the York region to be considered for use in the London 2012 Olympic Games. Reports currently suggest that facilities at the University of York are likely to play a part.

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Pair convicted of manslaughter over death of Prof. Sally Baldwin

By Stephanie Dyson
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

TWO DIRECTORS of Maintenance from the Rome-based firm OCS have been convicted of manslaughter over the death of University of York Professor Sally Baldwin.

Professor Baldwin died in an accident in October 2003, when she fell through a gap in a walkway at Rome's Tiburtina station and was pulled into the cogwheels of the traveller.

OCS's Chief Director Domenico Leti, 71, and Managing Director Leonardo Casali, 32, were convicted on Wednesday 20 December 2006 and received sentences of 22 months and 18 months respectively. Luana Lepore, 28, another managing director of the company, was cleared of all charges.

In a previous trial relating to Sally Baldwin's death, two Italian maintenance workers, Sergio Marfut and Massimo Migotto were convicted of manslaughter and causing grievous bodily harm after they had failed correctly to replace construction panels in the station walkway. Marfut received a sentence of 15 months while Migotto was given 22 months. However, under Italian law, sentences under two years are immediately suspended for first time offenders.

Following the pair's recent conviction, a University of York spokesman said: "Although today's hearing



Professor Sally Baldwin was killed in an accident on an escalator in Rome

marked the end of the legal process, the loss of Sally Baldwin will continue to be felt by her many friends and colleagues".

Professor Baldwin was director of the Social Policy research unit at the

University of York from 1987 until 2002, and was in Rome to celebrate her forthcoming 63rd birthday as well as semi-retirement from the University of York.

During her life, she

played an active part in the community, not only in her position as a board member of the York NHS Trust, and her research into social care, but also through her work with disabled children.

Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, head of Social Policy and Social Work at the University, paid tribute to his late colleague, describing her as "feisty and forthright, enthusiastic, affectionate, talkative and wickedly funny. Sally treated everyone with care and connected with so many people."

He added, "She will be missed, not only at the University but among the many who worked with and for the disabled and their carers."

Professor Baldwin was among the first academics in the United Kingdom to articulate the links between social policy and community care.

During her career at the University of York, which spanned more than 30 years, her work helped contribute to the introduction of the enhanced rates for disabled children in our current benefits and tax credits. The defining concern of her research was an emphasis on the needs, views and preferences of beneficiaries and recipients of service provision.

Within the University she was a keen supporter of the Centre for Women's Studies, and was a strong advocate of women's rights generally, and she taught the first course on women and money.

Professor Baldwin left behind husband Joe Callan, daughters Emma and Julia, and grandchildren Theo and Louis.

In 2004, a group of buildings at the University campus were officially renamed in her honour.

NGS launches at York

THE NEW GENERATION Society was launched on Friday 19 January. The society, which seeks to promote "fresh political thinking", signed up over 60 members at the launch. Chairman James Townsend said it is "a really encouraging reaction and it means we're really onto something." The society looks to launch an e-journal and a podcast and will hold various public events including a talk by the Dean of York on the subject of religion. The work of the party-neutral group has already been endorsed by Menzies Campbell MP, leader of the Liberal Democrats.

Biodiesel researched

SCIENTISTS AT THE UNIVERSITY of York have forged a unique new partnership with Sichuan University in China for the development of a new crop which could make cheap, renewable fuel a reality. According to the National Biodiesel Board, biodiesel is "a clean burning alternative fuel, produced from domestic, renewable resources," and it "can be used in compression-ignition (diesel) engines with little or no modifications." The York contingent of this scientific double-act is CNAP, the Centre for Novel Agricultural Products. Based in the University of York science park, they were awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Higher and Further Education in 2006 and its senior professor received an honorary degree from York.

New strip club in York

ONLY MONTHS AFTER Ziggy's announced the opening of its lap dancing facilities, a new strip club named Bohemia has opened on Micklegate. The club's opening has seen a mixed reception, with some welcoming it while others express concerns that the club will be out of place in York and may generate crime. Unlike Ziggy's, Bohemia is exclusively a "gentlemen's club". With £10 admission and £10 per dance, owner Hong Poc predicts his half million-pound venture will be a success, and "revive" the Micklegate economy. Councillor Andrew Waller expressed concerns that the presence of Bohemia, which stands by the ancient entrance to the city, may deter tourists as it is "not the sort of York they've come to see."

Reporting by Raf Sanchez,
Nicky Wolfe and Chris Colyer

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Our new extended Muse includes adventures in Havana (pictured above), an in-depth look at the place of LGBT Christians in both communities, men having the female beauty process unleashed upon them and an interview with heel-clad scamp Russell Brand

Who's NOUSE

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Neo-fascist website targets York ex-students and staff

By Jamie Merrill
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

A UNIVERSITY of York Professor and several ex-York students have been targeted by a far right fascist website with links to the British National Party (BNP) and violent neo-Nazi groups.

The website, Redwatch, whose slogan is "Remember places, traitors' faces, they'll all pay for their crimes" posts personal information such as addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses on alleged socialists, anti-fascists and peace campaigners.

A photograph taken of Senior Politics Lecturer Dr Simon Parker at a demonstration in York against the war in Lebanon this summer, has been placed on the Redwatch website.

Of this, Dr Parker said "They tend to use fear-and-scare tactics to intimidate their opponents so I am loathe to give them more publicity by giving you a personal reaction to these photographs."

Redwatch, which urges its supporters to "hit back against the unwashed scum of the Marxist left and their allies," also names Chris Jones, YUSU President 2003-2004, and Ceredig Jamieson-Ball, former student and now Liberal Democrat Councillor for Heslington Ward, as targets. Both were founding members of the York city group Unite Against Fascism.



Clockwise from left: an anti-BNP protest; an anti-fascist protest in York; the logo of the Redwatch website.

Jones said, "Redwatch is absolutely disgusting and given that the BNP, who are synonymous with Redwatch, crow about freedom of speech, their attempts to silence their critics are hypocritical."

Redwatch has recently been the national headlines and was debated in Parliament when in May 2006 Alan McFadden, a Liverpool Trade Union

Congress (TUC) leader, was seriously wounded in a knife attack by a Redwatch supporter. McFadden was almost blinded in front of his two young daughters.

The BNP denies having any links with Redwatch, though the internet website is registered in the name of Simon Sheppard who in 1999 was a BNP organiser in Hull and was jailed for producing anti-Semitic literature. As

well as this, investigations by the TUC have shown substantial links between BNP organisers and Redwatch.

Speaking on behalf of Vernon Coaker MP, Home Office Minister for Internet Crime, a spokesman condemned Redwatch, saying "The Government understands that the presence of Redwatch and other extremist websites on the

internet is a cause of concern and frustration for many people. We are committed to taking action against any website which commits or incites criminal offences, and we are clear that it is unacceptable for any extremist group to use the internet as a means to harass, intimidate or threaten individuals in an illegal manner." He added, "Although there have been

calls for Redwatch to be simply closed down and removed from the internet, we do not believe this is the best way to tackle the criminality of the website."

However, Ben Drake, the current chair of York Unite Against Fascism, who was YUSU President 1992-1993 said "sites like Redwatch simply exist to intimidate people, they are a strong incentive to violence and they should be shut down as they clearly go beyond the boundaries of public order."

BNP activity in York has increased in the last few weeks as the party prepares to contest several seats in the May local elections, with a leaflet campaign which does not exclude student areas. A York expert on far right groups said "The BNP are a very nasty organisation and I am aware that they have been targeting York for a number of years now."

Connor Cooling, a third year Economics student responded to receiving a BNP leaflet saying "it's disgusting that a fascist party are targeting York, their leaflet was just plain racist." At a recent talk, MP Ann Cryer, who defeated the BNP leader Nick Griffin in her constituency of Keighley and Ilkely in the 2005 general election told attending students that "they should fight the BNP all the way, because they are a racist party who preach poison and you have to prove that."

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Campus bars remain in threat of closure

By Toby Green
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

THE HEAD of Commercial Services, Jon Greenwood, has made a plea to students to return to campus bars after a recent downturn has left them running on a deficit.

Despite the implementation of the Model 29+ plan in October, under which the seven campus bars are closed for a total of 20 nights over a week, they are still not meeting running costs as a group.

Greenwood said "The



Bars remain in threat of closure despite YUSU's efforts

plan solved the problem with last year's turnover. However we have now seen a further decrease in custom

this year, and we are in a different financial position.

"It is the same bars as before that are losing money, such as Langwith, and we have a system where the better performing bars are sponsoring those that are struggling in order to maintain the collegiate system."

A monthly focus group, called Bars Forward, has been set up in order to review the performances of the bars, come up with possible solutions, and approve extra opening times. This includes members of Commercial Services, the Students' Union, JCRCs and

Deputy Vice Chancellor Felicity Riddy. Greenwood refused to rule out the possibility of total closure for any of the lesser performing bars, but stressed that this would be a last resort.

"If we were operating on the high street it would be all about making money, and it would make financial sense to close one of the bars. However, we know we're in a different situation and we're always mindful of maintaining collegiate spirit. Some people in the University think that we're here just to make money, but we do see the whole pic-

ture. We're here to make bars a success, but to make bars a success we need students."

In March last year, YUSU coordinated a "Save the Bars" campaign after it was first revealed that they were under threat from closures as the University tried to counter a financial deficit of over £3 million. Despite the protest, which included a week-long boycott of bars, the proposed closures were pushed through.

Greenwood is keen to urge students to use their bars as much as possible in order to aid their survival.

Rape trial ends in conviction

Rapist

Continued from front page >>

Speaking after the verdict, she said, "I am so relieved this is all finally over - it's been a very long and hard struggle, and at times I felt that I myself was on trial but ultimately I know I did the right thing."

The jury heard that Manyou has two previous convictions for indecently assaulting a woman aged 16 or over in 1983 and for handling stolen goods in 1984.

However, these convictions were spent and so were not taken into account by the jury or the judge. Nor did Manyou have to disclose these convictions to the University on his UCAS application form.

Manyou was in his first year at the University when he was arrested, cautioned and bailed on 9 June before being formally charged on 28 July.

In the intervening time, Manyou played with his band Mitus at a Planet V event on 9 June and at Woodstock on 27 June. He was not suspended from the University until the 7 August, ten days after being formally charged by the police, and 28 days after first being arrested and cautioned.

A University spokesman said, "It is a matter of great regret that a member of the University should have been convicted of a criminal offence. Clive Manyou will now be dealt with according to the University's disciplinary procedures." When asked why Clive Manyou had been allowed to perform with his band at student events following his arrest on suspicion of rape, Rich

Manyou leaving the court after hearing his sentence. Photos by Nouse staff photographers



court officer to "take him down", Manyou was led down the stairs to the cells as his wife left the court, only pausing on the steps to tell *Nouse* that "no words could describe" the events of the recent days.

During the court proceedings, the victim's mother had claimed that the process was "more like a trial of my daughter than him [Manyou]." One of the victim's friends had added that, by taking the case to court, she was "standing up and doing the right thing."

The female student was supported throughout the four-day trial by her parents, her sister and half a dozen of her former housemates. Whilst her

father spent much of the final day on this mobile telephone keeping the rest of the extended family informed on the progress of the trial, her mother, sister and friends tried to distract themselves from the case by discussing *Big Brother* and reading magazines in the lobby of the court.

In a bizarre incident on the final day, a security search of Manyou's person revealed that he had been keeping a tape recorder in his bag, despite the fact that they are strictly forbidden in court. Manyou's barrister, David Lennon, recovered a tape from the defendant's car but said it did not contain any details of the trial.

Manyou, who was a free man on bail for the duration of the trial, arrived early every morning to avoid being caught by the waiting press photographers, dashing into the building with a hat pulled down and a scarf over his face to conceal his identity.

Manyou's six-year sentence leaves his victim with the option of returning to York to complete her studies, safe in the knowledge of his absence. Speaking after the verdict, she urged all victims of rape or sexual assault to stand up and be counted, adding that the pursuit of convictions is the only way that rape can be effectively prevented.

Courtroom Sketch

By Jamie Merrill
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

AS THE jury filled back into the courtroom to deliver their verdict, the defendant, Clive Manyou, was stony faced, betraying no trace of emotion as he stared straight ahead at Recorder Gary Burrell QC, the man who was shortly to sentence him to six years in prison.

The atmosphere in court two of York Crown Court was tense as the forewoman of the jury rose to read out the verdict: guilty on two counts of sexual assault and rape. Amid gasps from the public gallery, the victim and her family who had sat through the whole trial, broke down in tears, whilst Manyou remained motionless. Manyou's wife and friends left the courtroom quickly, his wife remaining composed to all outward appearances.

It had taken the jury of eight men and four women three hours and fifty minutes to reach a majority verdict, ten votes guilty and two votes innocent. The victim, her family and friends had spent that time nervously pacing the lobby of the Crown Court. Their emotions had been heightened earlier in the day when the jury had returned for the forewoman to confirm they had reached a verdict only to be contradicted by the rest of the jury. Having been directed to reach a majority decision by the judge, the jury then retired for a further two hours.

When the verdict had finally been given, Judge Burrell QC sentenced Manyou to six years in prison, of which he will only serve three years. When the judge ordered the

Students live in York squat

A LOCAL BUILDING of historical interest was taken over last month by demonstrators, some of whom are currently students at University of York. The riverside Bonding Warehouse, located just off Skeldergate, was taken over in week ten of the autumn term by a group calling themselves the Bonding Warehouse Collective. The group included students and members of the University's FreeSoc society.

Whilst there, the group claimed squatters' rights, which prevented police from

attempting to evict them without a special court order, an option they had not pursued by the time the squatters left and disbanded on Saturday 16 December 2006.

The collective maintained that their action was designed to demonstrate its potential as "a community space" rather than being "sold off to private profiteers." They said that they had received an "overwhelmingly positive response" from those who attended some of the organised events.

Hes. East debate runs on

By Rachel Guest
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

LABOUR representatives on campus and in the local council have attacked Liberal Democrat claims that a "formal agreement" exists between the University and the Council over a new swimming pool at Heslington East.

In a press release before Christmas, the Liberal Democrats celebrated a partnership with the University to develop sport facilities in York, believing it would encourage all "citizens to swim." However, the Assistant Director of Leisure

and Lifelong Learning at the Council made clear to the Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor Dave Merrett that the "University only asks for a committee to be set up to examine the proposal, and there is not any kind of formal agreement or intention to build a pool at this point in time." The Labour group have labelled the original press release as "nothing more than a Liberal Democrat lie which serves to mislead the public."

Steven Galloway, Leader of the Council and Liberal Democrat Group maintains however that a "statement of intent" does exist with the University and

plans have been developed for a competition standard pool to be built on a preferred location of Heslington East. The University issued a statement agreeing that a "statement of intent" was in place and that "both parties had indicated they would contribute funds" and they are "confident that a successful plan will result and eventually be implemented."

However, it is notable that it is no longer referred to as a "formal agreement". Further criticism has been directed at the Liberal Democrat-controlled council because supporting the plans for a swimming pool

on the Heslington East campus would mean supporting the University's expansion programme which its own councillors, such as Ceredig Jamieson-Ball have spoken out against.

Grace Fletcher-Hall, Labour's student representative on Campus said, "It doesn't inspire great confidence to learn that the current Council's sports strategy depends on something which their own councillors claim to oppose." However, Steven Galloway maintains that Labour's criticism of his council is due to their preferred plan of a swimming pool on Kent Street, which would soak up funding.

of student gets six years

Student shock as York lead singer is convicted

By Jamie Merrill
 NEWS CORRESPONDENT

STUDENTS HAVE expressed their shock at the news that Clive Manyou, the well known front man of campus band Mitus, has been convicted of raping another student and sentenced to six years in prison.

Manyou a 36-year-old mature student with a wife and one year old child, lived near Halifax in Heslington. He band, Mitus, was a finalist in the 2006 Battle of the Bands and performed at last year's Woodstock.

The jury was told how Manyou had two previous convictions from his early teens in Peckham for sexual assault and handling stolen goods. During the trial Manyou described his school as "hard and full of rough people". Of his previous conviction of sexually assaulting a young girl he said "I was a stupid little boy, I regret it."

A pupil at Kentwood School for boys, the judge said Manyou had "24 years of good character" until the recent sexual assault and rape. He left school at 16 to attend the National Youth Theatre and trained in classical music as an opera tenor. Manyou worked as a musician and actor before gaining four A levels and then coming to York in 2005 to study English and Related Literatures.

Manyou played regularly at campus events and in town with Mitus. Just before the incident he played at the Roman Baths in York and days after played at Vanburgh College at Planet V. In the spring term 2005 Mitus reached the final of Battle of the Bands.

Manyou's defence relied heavily on character references and his barrister called his wife, several York students, his secondary school teacher, Heslington Church's music director and his karate instructor to the stand.



Manyou performs with Mitus at Woodstock . Photo: Georgi Mabee

In court, Manyou's wife said: "We are happily married, we we're soul mates, I'm not concerned about his loyalty." Jack Burnell, his karate instructor, described him as "one of the brightest students I've ever had."

A student who attended seminars with Manyou last year said: "I was totally shocked when I heard - he seemed like a nice enough guy, super-enthusiastic and a bit of a character really. A bunch of us from the seminar group even went to support Mitus at

Battle of the Bands. It's just shocking and a little frightening really."

In his concluding remarks Recorder Gary Burrell QC acknowledged that "there is no evidence you pose a further risk to society and this attack was out of character and fuelled by alcohol consumption."

The judge also noted the evidence of Manyou's history of good character, but said this would not stop him imposing a long custodial sentence.



Manyou prayed while he was led away by a court official

Croker, YUSU President, said "YUSU were unaware of the situation at the time. It is not our duty to find out when a member of the Union is arrested - neither do they have a duty to inform us."

He added, "It is not University practice to inform us when a student has been suspended and/or excluded as a precautionary measure. They of course are still not convicted of any crime." Croker refused to comment on whether Manyou should be expelled from the University stating it was not his role to do so.

The English and Related

Literature department where Manyou studied refused to comment on his conviction, however a student who attended seminars with him said "I'm genuinely really shocked. It's really complicated because I would have counted him as a friend and now he's done this horrible thing." The victim, who is now considering returning to University to resume her studies, spoke out on the steps of the courthouse. After thanking the police the victim said, "I'm so relieved. It has all been worthwhile and I've finally got some closure. Just look, the sun has finally come out."

Ftr are cause of controversy once more

By Milda Sabunaite
 DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

THE BUS COMPANY 'First' has been paid another £250,000 by the City of York Council and bus ticket prices are to be raised again.

The unpopular Ftr bus project was originally billed at £450,000 but has already cost the city more than 1.5 million pounds. According to Labour councillor Tracey Simpson-Laing who is the vice-chair of the Council's City Strategy and Advisory Panel, the money has been spent on various changes and alterations across the route that were necessary to adapt the streets of York for



The Ftr buses have proved to be controversial in York

the non-standard sized buses but were not included in the primary project plans. "They just kept finding things that needed doing and did not plan first." said

Simpson-Laing. The councillor said she was still not confident that the Ftr bus project will not require more financing from the Council. "I have asked if any more

[money] will be allocated, they have said no - they have said this to me at each time they have reported the spending of more money."

The councillor also expressed dissatisfaction with the ticket machine system in the Ftr buses which causes inconvenience to many passengers. "I strongly believe that buses should be turn up & travel and that no one should be financially disadvantaged - such as higher cash cost tickets and inability to obtain change if you did not have the correct money", said Simpson-Laing. "It would have been easier to buy tickets at the Park & Ride sites, then there would not have been the

farce with the ticket machines."

The money that has been paid to 'First' bus company came from the Government's Local Transport Fund and not Council Tax; however, York residents are still to experience a change in their budget as the Ftr bus ticket prices were raised on Sunday 21 January. A First York representative said, all one-day-ticket prices have gone up by 10 - 30 pence and the student ten-journey-ticket now costs £13 instead of £10.

Despite the disappointment about this increase, many students feel they do not have an alternative to paying the higher price. "No

one wants to walk that far in gale force winds and very few freshers have cars," said Helen Jones of Eden's Court. "It's not fair, because 'First' is able to raise the prices as much as they want to - disproportionately to fuel price rises - and a lot of students will still be reliant on them." However, Simpson-Laing said 'First' should expect a decrease in customers. "If 'First' and CYC want people to use buses for the environment's sake then continued price rises will only deter residents. It will be more attractive to take the car to town and park than stand at a drafty bus stop with no idea of when the next bus will actually turn up."

Porter shortage sparks crisis



Protests against the University: closure of several porters' lodges this week has led to angry reactions from many students, staff and academics. Photo: Adam Sloan

By Raf Sanchez
NEWS EDITOR

DERWENT, VANBRUGH, and Wentworth porters' lodges are to close in the wake of "protracted issues" between porters and management and amid concerns over student welfare. A "staff shortfall of 39%" has led to Keith Lilley, Director of Facilities Management, and Ken Batten, Head of Security, shutting down three of the seven college porters' lodges until April.

When asked if the University felt there was a link between the new con-

tracts for porters, which were delayed for a number of months due to resistance by staff, and the recent staff shortfall, University Press Officer David Garner admitted "I think it would be difficult to argue otherwise." However, he maintains "I don't think the University has made any mistakes."

The University maintains that the current situation, in which they are short by 14 porters and have another five on long-term sick leave, was "unforeseeable" This runs contrary to the claims of porters, one of whom told *Nouse* "they

knew about this since August."

According to porters, a number of their colleagues "clearly stated" they would refuse to work under the new contracts. When asked to comment on the assertion that the situation was "impossible to anticipate" a porter replied, "Batten is an out-and-out liar."

There have been further concerns over management's description of the closures as a "temporary measure." Speaking to Derwent JCRC on Monday, Batten assured students that he was seeking to recruit a "good set of new

staff in a reasonable period." Despite this, Wednesday's York Press carried advertisements for a 'Car Park Attendant' but not for a 'porter.' At the time of writing, the vacancies section of the University website also does not contain any advertisements for porter positions.

Rich Croker, YUSU President, has described the lack of website advertising as being "of real concern." David Garner said he didn't see any discrepancy between the University's claims that it is seeking to recruit and the lack of advertising.

A number of porters have described the lodge closures as "a cost-cutting exercise" with one claiming "I think of the three lodges that have closed at least one will not re-open. That's the general consensus among porters." They point out that this is not the first time that management has sought to cut down on porters' hours. In 2002 a plan to do away with 24 hour portering was abandoned after a student occupation of Heslington Hall. A Derwent porter expressed concerns with what he described as the "dismantling" of his porters'

lodge as permanent fixture wall racks and staff lockers were removed. The University have said they are "absolutely confident" the new system is "robust." When it was put to him by a Derwent JCR member that student welfare was at risk, Batten disagreed, saying the changes are a "difference of emphasis." Porters, however, have stressed that student welfare is in jeopardy adding "you can't physically have one porter covering all those locations." When asked if he thought students were at risk he replied 'definitely.'

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Students "no match" for York Dalek

By Helen Citron
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

YORK RESIDENT Andrew Simpson has come up with a surprising new method to curb the disturbance created by rowdy, drunken students. Simpson, 22, has spent £1,000 and eight months on the construction of life-sized model of a Dalek, complete with a voice box issuing the message "I don't like students. You will be exterminated!" Simpson claims that students are "no match" for the Doctor Who creature and that the streets are now noticeably quieter. Future plans will allow it to squirt

water and smoke.

The existence of the Dalek has been confirmed by a University of York student who sighted the replica on the Hull Road, outside the playing fields of York St John, during a driving lesson. The student's driving teacher, Pat Winterton, said "I presumed they were filming or something. It made me laugh but I doubt it'll be effective - I dread to think what drunk students would do if they did come across it!" Dave Stockton, President of York St John's Students' Union, responded angrily to the news that the metal monster had been sighted in

the vicinity of his university saying that Simpson's actions were "no better than those of Abu Hamza" in that he was using abusive language against students, who he describes as a minority group. Stockton acknowledged that students often caused disturbance but pointed to their social and economic contribution to the local community.

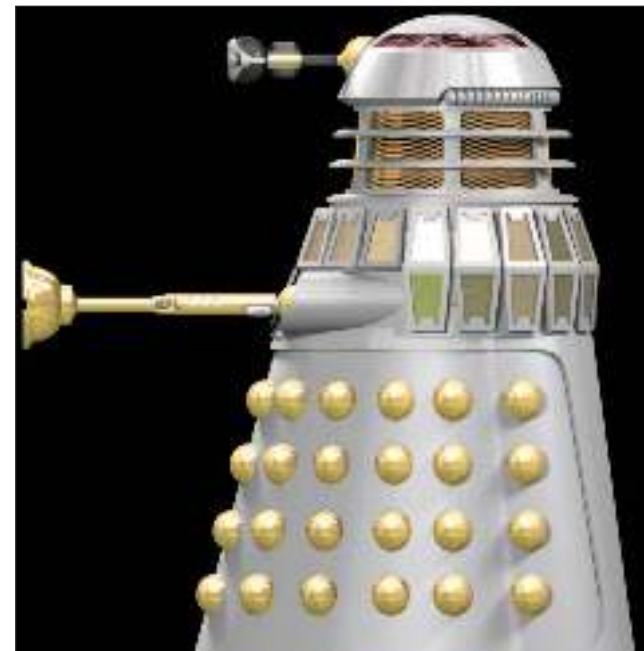
Stockton urged local residents to make efforts to liaise with York's relatively small student population instead of continuing to produce such "vitriol".

However another York St John student said "I think

its really funny, this guy probably just wants to get revenge for students waking him up after Toffs on a Wednesday night."

A more orthodox protest against students was recently seen in the Badger Hill area, when residents launched an action group and circulated a petition against letting out family homes as student accommodation in an estate situated near by campus. Paul Hobman said the influx of students "is changing the whole make-up of the area" claiming that up to one is five houses are student homes.

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The dalek is built to deter rowdy student behaviour

Entwistle's family proclaim his innocence as he is refused bail

By Daniel Whitehead
 DEPUTY EDITOR

THE PARENTS OF ex-University of York student Neil Entwistle have spoken for the first time about their son's impending trial for the murder of his wife and child, just as Entwistle has been returned to jail after a psychiatric evaluation determined he was not suicidal.

Clifford and Yvonne Entwistle, who have previously declined to comment on the incident, recently claimed in an interview with the *Workshop Guardian* that their son "is innocent, totally 100 percent innocent", adding "every second of every minute of every hour of every day we think of Neil. If it wasn't for family and friends, especially friends who are remarkable people we would not be able to face each day".

Entwistle 28, who is charged with the shooting of his wife Rachel and nine-month old daughter Lillian Rose in the US town of Hopkington, Massachusetts, was recently returned to jail following a brief period in a psychiatric unit, after a psychiatric evaluation certified that he was not suicidal. He was originally transferred to Bridgewater State Hospital after a suicidal letter was discovered by officials. The letter said that he had nothing



Entwistle has recently been returned to jail after a brief period in a psychiatric unit, having been refused bail

to live for and he wished for his ashes to be scattered over the graves of his wife and child.

Since the bodies were discovered just over a year ago on January 22 2006, the case has seen mass media coverage in the UK and across the Atlantic. As *Nouse*

originally reported in February 2006, Entwistle fled from his home in the United States after the murders, and stayed at his parents' house in Worksop, Nottinghamshire. He was later extradited to face charges of murder after investigators claimed he had

become the only suspect in the case.

Prosecutors believe that he committed the crimes after amassing debts of tens of thousands of dollars and attempting to hide a secret life of business scams in the field of internet pornography. A spokesman represent-

ing Rachel's parents, Joseph and Priscilla Matterazzo, made a statement on behalf of the family, describing their disbelief that "somebody we loved trusted and opened our home to could do this to our daughter and granddaughter".

The accusations have

been rebuked by Entwistle, who claims that he returned home from an errand on the morning of 20 January 2006 to find his wife and daughter dead in one of the family bedrooms. He claims that he then drove to the house of his wife's parents only to find it empty, after which he drove to Boston airport and boarded a flight to Britain.

Further developments in recent days have seen the admission by officials that a second person's DNA has been found on the weapon originally used as justification by the prosecution for Entwistle's guilt.

Defence lawyers have attempted to persuade the courts that a bail release would be justifiable on the conditions that he remains confined to his parents' house, wears a GPS tracking tag and contacts UK and US authorities on a daily basis.

This appeal was turned down after Assistant Director Attorney Michael Fabbri said that allowing the previously unemployed IT worker return to Britain would allow him too much freedom to escape: "opening the door to 20 or 30 countries in Europe".

The trial which was due to begin in April of this year has now been put back to October. Of this, Entwistle has said he has no concern about it being held at a later date.

Budget cuts across campus

By Josh Chambers
 NEWS CORRESPONDENT

AS THE UNIVERSITY prepares to enter a new phase of expansion, it is faced with the prospect of slashed budgets following a schedule of departmental reviews, with the result that departments are being encouraged to make savings wherever possible, including on staffing levels, to help bring the University out of deficit.

Library Committee minutes obtained by *Nouse* show that the library is faced with a "severe budget cut" of £450,000. In order to meet the target, the Library has made "all possible" savings on staff and operating costs, but has also had to cut the journals and books budgets. The Library has also had to plan to meet future targets.

The December minutes

of the History Department Teaching Committee advised that "students should put pressure on the Students' Union" to help save money. YUSU Academic and Welfare Officer Amy Foxton has responded by stating "we realise that the University must spend its money responsibly but are opposed to the University cutting its spending on students."

It is also feared that the cuts will affect York's league table position. *The Times Good University Guide* scores universities on their library, computing and facilities spending. Last year, York dropped in this league table from 7th to 15th place. Amy Foxton said "It is likely that these cuts will affect York's league table position."

In addition, cuts are likely to worsen the issue of value for money raised by



Some claim York's '60s buildings are draining money

last year's National Student Satisfaction Survey, a concern which has been exacerbated now that tuition fees have increased to £3,000 per year for UK students and up to £12,000 for overseas students.

The cause of the deficit has not yet been revealed,

though some suggest that the Heslington East expansion is to blame, while Amy Foxton claims that the 1960s architecture is draining money in upkeep and repairs. When asked whether YUSU were taking any action on the issue, Foxton replied that she did not know.

Campus rents to increase by 7%

By Hannah O'Shea and
 Lewis Phillips

THE UNIVERSITY of York plans to increase campus accommodation fees once again in October 2007. Rents on en-suite rooms and standard rooms will increase by 6% and 7% respectively, bringing the average weekly price for campus accommodation to £71.54.

In a recent meeting between YUSU and University officials, the price rises were attributed to the "generally increasing costs" of maintenance. Goodricke, Langwith, Derwent and Vanbrugh Colleges have all been prioritised for renovation.

Further rent increases in subsequent years have not been ruled out by the

University. Plans have also been put in place to incorporate internet access costs into the yearly sum for accommodation.

Rich Croker, YUSU President, and other YUSU committee members debated with University officials over the changes during the meeting, and a vote against the proposal tabled by YUSU was carried.

This notwithstanding, the decision was referred to a higher committee which overrode the previous vote. The YUSU Welfare representative Amy Foxton opposed the changes and said "while rents are increasing year on year, the student loan isn't increasing", resulting in a greater number of students finding themselves increasingly in debt.

Student 'permanently disfigured by bedbugs' in rented 2Let house

By Alex Stevens
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

A YORK UNIVERSITY PhD student has been scarred for life after she was attacked by bedbugs which had infested her room. It was her first night in accommodation rented from the 2Let agency.

Having arrived from Frankfurt this autumn to study under a Marie Curie Fellowship at University's Centre for Women's Studies, Christine Vogt-William's first night was followed by a visit to York Accident and Emergency and over a week in emergency accommodation which was provided by the University. Doctors have informed her that marks on her neck, arms and legs will not fade over time and that she is in fact permanently scarred.

Vogt-William and her housemates, Sarah Churchill and Dave Caswell, say that Tony McNichol, a partner in 2Let who has acted as their letting agent, "believes students are there to screw". Despite his repeated assurances that the house would be thoroughly cleaned before they moved in, they allege that many areas of the house were covered with dust, cobwebs and mould. They have also kept a bag of toenail clippings which they found on the main stairs.

It is said that they enquired about a residue on the wall of the infested room and were told that it would be cleaned. At the time they thought it was mould, but were informed by environmental health officers after the event that "that's bedbugs, that is".

Had the house been properly cleaned, said Churchill, a 3rd year English and History student, "it would have become obvious that the residue was not normal mould and the problem could have been dealt with before Christine had moved in at all."

McNichol, however, considers the bedbug infestation "totally unforeseeable", and said that he "had never had to deal with a case like this before. I suppose they do say 'don't let the bedbugs bite', don't they?"

The house on Burniston Grove, Tang Hall does not meet the standards of the University's Code of Best Practice for Student Accommodation. McNichol admits, "it never has been registered with the University because it never could. We would not let that house through the university." 2Let, however, remains on a recommended agency list supplied by the University's Accommodation Office.

McNichol has informal-



The student tenants of the infested house in Tang Hall compiled a dossier of problems. Photo: Adam Sloan

ly alleged slander and harassment charges against the tenants, who have compiled a dossier of evidence of problems they have had with the house, such as damaged walls and fittings and a leak from the shower which drops onto the kitchen sink below.

McNichol noted that

despite complaints and an enquiry, the UK Association of Letting Agents has not revoked his membership. He also noted that 2Let responded upon hearing about the infestation arranging appropriate measures within two hours of McNichol's hearing about

the incident.

In his response to the complaint, dated 27 November 2006, he states that "[t]he only conclusion I can draw as to the reasons for these fabricated complaints are due to no compensation being received from the other tenants. I do

not believe that any of these tenants are entitled to compensation for any matters-discussed." Christine Vogt-William has, however, accepted payment for her emergency accommodation and a month's rent as a "goodwill gesture without prejudice".

University labelled sexist

By Stephanie Dyson
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

THE UNIVERSITY and campus of York has recently been criticised for alleged institutional sexism. The comments came from an online magazine *The First Post* (www.thefirstpost.com), which enjoys a readership in the hundreds of thousands. Pole Exercise and Goodricke Playboy Mansion events were among those singled out for criticism.

Loughborough University was also criticised in the article, which appeared on the website on the 8 January. The Loughborough student union invited the FHM High Street Honeys and Nuts' magazines Brat Pack Tour to the university, complete with opportunities to meet "the



A Goodricke Ents poster girls".

Kat Stark, the National Women's Officer for the NUS, went so far as to say that "it's terrible that after women fought so hard for their sexual freedom all those years ago, it is now being stolen from them again."

Ben Wardle, the newly

inaugurated Goodricke Chair, has defended his college's Playboy Mansion events claiming that rather than being sexist, the name implies "that it is a place where people can have a good party and get dressed up" and that when used to describe the "school canteen" of Goodricke Hall it becomes ironic.

He also emphasised that Goodricke is sure never to use "posters of half-naked women" or imply any sexist activity in its advertising, nor has the Goodricke JCR ever received complaints about the event.

Wardle did confirm that the Goodricke Ents team is planning on rebranding the Playboy Mansion events, but this was not connected to the recent criticism.

Matt Hood, President of

University of York Pole Exercise (YUPE), was equally defiant towards the charges of sexism levelled in *The First Post*.

Speaking to Nouse, he drew attention to the mixed sex membership and the club's focus on fitness and exercise.

"Pole Exercise isn't sexist," he said, adding that it is not "the point of our club to act as some kind of wondrous liberating experience for oppressed women, it's just an exercise class. We keep people in good health, that's the point, that's the only point."

Pole Exercise was named AU Club of the Year in 2006. The decision was made partially in view of the charitable work which the club undertakes.

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SU accused of 'homophobia'

By Daniel Whitehead
DEPUTY EDITOR

AN EX-SABBATICAL officer of the Student's Union has accused the current YUSU team of inappropriate behaviour after offensive material was placed on the internet via the Facebook website.

The incident occurred last term when an unknown individual created an event on the website Facebook called Rich Croker's 'Big Gay Orgy'. Over 400 students were invited to the event.

The ex-sabbatical officer called the culprit "too immature and irresponsible" to hold a YUSU position, "with a general lack of respect and regard for other people." "This can't be whitewashed

by as 'without intent' - the invitation was sent to over 400 people."

Croker at first believed Services Officer Amy Woods to be responsible, but she denied this, as Croker later confirmed.

Commenting on the incident he said, "I can only tell you that I found that my Facebook account had been hacked into and changed. I immediately changed it back and closed the event sending out a message stating that my account had been hacked into."

He added, "The prank wasn't amusing - it could have caused offence. Any group which contravenes our Equal Opportunities policy would be deemed as inappropriate.

Secular and religious groups clash over issue of free speech

Nicky Woolf and **Raf Sanchez** talk to the York Jewish and Islamic Societies and the Christian Union about the role of religion and the rise of 'secular fundamentalism'

IT APPEARS that Britain, with its soft-centre national church and traditional easy acceptance of other faiths, can no longer dodge the religious debate. Around the world, the volume, and the tempers, on both sides of the secular/religious debate are rising.

The evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins dismisses the idea of religion as "the great cop-out, the great excuse to evade the need to think and evaluate evidence." The Church of England has found a new heresy in the form of "secular fundamentalism"; a force described by *Guardian* columnist Tobias Wilson as seeking "the eradication of religion, and all believers, from the face of the earth." The central question seems to be this: what is the role of religion in a post-9/11 world of Facebook and iPods? Is it a threat to freedom of speech or its last real defender? A steady source of values and comfort in a spiritually bankrupt society, or one more lens through which to perceive divisions between yourself and others?

The University of York arguably serves as a microcosm of British society, with its own system of governance, its own radio and TV stations, its own housing, bars, theatres, and newspapers - and its own religious organisations. If the University is going to function as a microcosmic society, then those questions which are asked in wider society must be asked here, too. Recently, the secular instincts of students' unions have led to their clamp-



ing down on any flexing of religious muscle. The Zionism debate at the University of Leeds hit headlines when Leeds Students' Union legislation refused to uphold Jewish Society complaints. The Christian Union at Exeter is embroiled in a High Court battle against their own SU after being suspended for expecting their members to sign a "doctrine of faith". A spokesman for Exeter's Christian Union justified the decision to take legal action by saying "We really feel

that our fundamental freedoms of belief, association and expression are being threatened."

Is Wilson right? Is there a movement seeking, under the guise of tolerance, to sweep religion out of public life? Rabbi Michael Treblow, Jewish Students' Chaplain for Yorkshire and Humberside, describes this trend as "more a boy calling wolf" than a widespread conspiracy to purge Britain of religion. He points to the French ban on public displays of religion as a basis for comparison.

York Christian Union's Evangelist Secretary, Dan Gladwell, also points to the situation in France, saying it "is a much more secular country than this. The forces there are much stronger to make the state and the secular dominant." Ogtay Huseyni, Chair of the Islamic Society, however, gives the fear of religious purgation more credence. "Depending on who you talk to the trend nowadays may be towards a more secular society." He goes on to identify a perceived "contradiction-in-terms" among 'secular fundamentalists' saying, "because a lot of these people

are liberals, they uphold liberal values such as freedom of speech, but by limiting religion they are therein limiting freedom of speech, and the rights of human beings."

If religious societies are to maintain such freedoms, there is little consensus among them as to what use to put them to. The Christian Union was the only one of the three societies to put active evangelism at the

'The central question seems to be this: what is the role of religion in a post-9/11 world of Facebook and iPods?'

forefront of their activities, looking to "communicate to people the huge price that Jesus paid, and the opportunity that's there for everyone to come back to him". Islamic Society conversely state that their role is "not going out and converting people, but to inform." It is a role that has become increasingly important since 9/11. "Because Muslims are so much

in the eye of the media, it is up to Islamic Soc to put forward Islam in a positive way." According to Rabbi Treblow, the role of Jewish Soc is to "do Jew." Treblow clarifies, explaining that Judaism is not only a religion but also a culture and an ethnicity and therefore that the primary responsibility of Jewish Society is to act as a social support network.

So are religious figures, who perceive their beliefs as absolute truths, justified in taking political stances? Are the potential benefits of a political system informed by religious morals outweighed by the risk that such beliefs could be abused for political gain? All three religious groups agree that there is a political aspect to religion, but while J-Soc and Islamic Soc take political stances as student organisations, the Christian Union says that "it's safe to say that political activism is not one of our aims." For both the Islamic and Jewish Societies, it is much more clear cut - there are political battles which members of the faith are obligated to fight.

Amongst both Jews and Muslims, the Israel-Palestine conflict goes to the root of their faith. For Huseyni it is a reminder of the need to maintain solidarity with Muslims all over the world. He speaks of the human tragedy unfolding on the West Bank and in Gaza, pointing out that "it is human beings that are dying every day and they're no different from our families." For Treblow, the survival of the state of Israel is "part and parcel of Jewish identity."

It would seem that the loud and angry war between secularists and those of faith has only one logical outcome: mutually assured destruction. Religious groups and secularists will lose out in equal measure if they attempt to curb the free speech of others. Religion will never be talked out of existence, regardless of Richard Dawkins's eloquence. Nor is there much danger of religious hysteria sweeping through Britain on any real scale. The true danger to both is a breakdown in the principle of the value of free speech. The moment that dam cracks, secular and religious groups will have a very real cause for alarm.

Events that are shaping the debate:

- >> February 2004: French Parliament bans Muslim headscarves in schools
- >> April 2005: Association of University Teachers boycotts Israeli Universities
- >> September 2005: Danish Cartoons spark worldwide anger among Muslims
- >> January 2006: Government's Religious Hatred Bill defeated in the Commons



NOUSE
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Comment & Analysis

Righteous but wrong

Recent campus news and discussion has been preoccupied with the issue of tolerance; between religious groups, social classes and genders. The liberal left has, as it is wont to do from time to time, thrown up its arms over perceived prejudice against oppressed groups, squaring its righteous shoulders against light-hearted campus events such as Derwent College's recent Chav D, as well as the weekly meetings of the Pole Exercise Society.

In the case of Chav D, there may be some mileage to these objections. It is not difficult to see how an event that invites students to crassly impersonate people considerably less privileged than they are might be seen as distasteful. Pole Exercise though, surely, is another matter entirely: a society in which both men and women are actively involved can hardly be dubbed sexist.

In fact, neither those who elect to impersonate 'chavs' for the purposes of ridicule nor those who work themselves into a sanctimonious frenzy over the matter deserve to call themselves 'liberal' or tolerant'. Surely there are bigger issues for the genuinely liberal-minded to grapple with than a high-spirited campus event, or a bunch of lithe contortionists wrapping themselves around poles in a bid to escape the gym?

Losing the plot

The portering crisis which is currently sweeping campus provides further evidence that the University is losing sight of both its students and its staff in pursuit of commercial gain. The closures are the result of the loss of fifteen porters, most of whom resigned following a protracted dispute with University management over what are widely seen as cost-cutting measures.

The crisis might appear at first sight like an occasion for limited hubris, as the University is forced to accept that it cannot go on bullying its staff indefinitely. However, the reality is that students' welfare is being affected, as Ken Batten and Keith Lilley continue to fortify themselves against any kind of accountability for the ruthless closure of half the University's porters lodges. At a time when students' safety on campus is under close scrutiny, it seems self-evident that security needs to be vigilantly maintained, not withdrawn.

To add insult to injury, Nightline, the student-ran campus telephone counselling service, has been unable to operate since the sudden closure of Goodricke porters lodge a week ago, its volunteers having been unable to gain access to their office. This has left unknown numbers of students without the listening ear through the night that they may have come to rely on. And, to top it off, all this comes on top of proposals for sweeping budget cuts, which it is predicted will result in a further drop for York in the University league tables, many of which factor facilities spending into their ratings.

So, if the University has lost sight of its staff, its students' welfare, and their education to boot, what has it left to live for? Commerce is the only remaining answer, which perhaps explains why a staggering thirty percent of proposed development on Heslington East is earmarked for commercial, not academic, purposes.

Dangerously amateur

If the rise of far-right extremism in the UK is cause for concern, far more disturbing is the recent targetting of ex-York students and current academic staff by the neo-nazi website Redwatch. Though the tactics used by its creators are blunt-edged to the point of being risible, there is evidence that their weasel words have provoked brutal fists. It is vital that such intimidatory tactics do not deter right-minded people from standing up and being counted for their beliefs.

At a time when the BNP, who are circumstantially linked to Redwatch, are leafletting student areas in preparation for the May Council Elections, it is essential that students hold firm in their convictions, and do not allow themselves to fall prey to the guileful overtures or bullying tactics of a motley crew of politically violent yobs.

For all that they may be awkwardly suited, booted and bespangled with the artful get-up and rhetoric of Nick Griffin's pernicious spin machine, they retain the same rotten core that has always lurked just beneath the surface of British political life. That we continue to fight their very existence is an absolute imperative, and *Nouse* will continue to do so.

Bigger bunnies to fry

Feminism starts at home, not the Mansion



Amy Battye
Contributing Writer

Universities are famously male-dominated places, so is it really surprising that *The First Post* online magazine has labelled York as institutionally sexist? Wait, though: it's not what you might expect. They didn't highlight the intrinsically patriarchal nature of academia, the male domination of key university roles, or the stereotypical roles taken by female students within campus politics. Nope, we were singled out because of a successful exercise club and a popular campus event.

While I can understand why Pole Exercise club and Goodricke's Playboy Mansion nights have attracted attention, it seems unfair when they try to avoid overt sexuality in their advertising. Pole exercise is now popular means of keeping fit for both men and women. Wouldn't it be better to see them as embracing their sexuality, rather than taking part in a degrading, anti-feminist spectacle?

In the case of Playboy Mansion, it's easier to understand the objection. I've never been: not because I've reeled back in horror and disgust at their advertising, or the idea of people dressing up as wrinkly old men and kinky bunny rabbits - it just isn't my kind of thing. In fact, the advertising that I've seen has been quite tasteful which, considering the theme, is something of an achievement. It would make sense to assume those who still find it distasteful don't attend.

The article in *The First Post* implies that women today aren't interested in their rights as women: that they embrace wanton sexuality and deride feminism, undoing the work of the 1960s bra-burners. However, this has to be put into context: for most young women today, feminism was the fashionable cause of their mothers' and grandmothers' formative years. Now feminism is a footnote in theory textbooks, with Germaine Greer waving a lonely, slightly loopy banner. Understanding the link between then and now is a process, a part of growing up and understanding. Until then, why not let young women embrace being women? There are much bigger issues for feminists to confront, both in the worlds of academia and everyday life: we ought to deal with them before poles and Playboys even come on the radar.



"Ken Batten gave me this watch as a golden handshake."

Cartoon by Sam Waddington

Watching the Redwatchers

When members of our University are targeted by fascists, all of us are threatened



Francis Boorman
Contributing Writer

Redwatch, the far-right website dedicated to exposing communists and anti-Nazis, seems at first glance something easily ignored. They reserve a great deal of their vitriol for organisations such as the Anti-Nazi League, and attempt to undermine them with their razor-sharp wit. Presumably with this intention, the acronym ANL becomes ANaL: so it is that violent neo-Nazis and far-right nationalists seem so distant from the everyday reality of life at the University of York.

When the face of *Yorkshire Evening Post* journalist Pete Lazenby adorns the front page of Redwatch, though, the organisation suddenly feels that bit more real, more unpleasant and more dangerous. What ought to seem more insidious to us at the University is that the site features pictures of a former YUSU president and a current University lecturer, both discovered in an investigation by

Nouse. Associated with violent neo-nazi groups such as Combat-18 and Aryan Unity, it seems legitimate to ask why Redwatch hasn't been shut down. The site has also been linked to members of the British National Party. While the BNP denounces it, the connection certainly speaks volumes about attempts by this political party to don the garb of respectability.

Bizarrely, Redwatch claim the high-ground, proclaiming themselves a bastion of free speech. The aim is presumably to show the reds that they can't get away with compiling information on White Nationalists. This is nothing more than a tit-for-tat response, an act of self-defence to prevent the persecution and silencing of neo-Nazi groups. The site states that it exists only to "identify potential attackers from violent Marxist groups". Such an argument sits rather uncomfortably with the pictures Redwatch displays, including pregnant women, children and old people carrying a peace flag, next to some bloke playing the bongos. These seem unlikely suspects for those seeking the vanguard of a Marxist army.

While the site denies being a hit-list, investigations by the *Guardian* have exposed a secure e-mail network which has been used to pass around individuals'

addresses at home and work, and discuss launching campaigns of violence. This is the far more sinister side of an organisation which might otherwise appear farcical. Soon after having their details posted on Redwatch, several people have received death threats, and the *Guardian* reports the stabbing of a union activist at his home after being identified on the site. It is deeply worrying that a site like this should mention anyone associated with our University.

If Redwatch is associated with violent individuals, how is it allowed to continue? Several MPs who are featured on the site have petitioned the government for its closure. There are, however, several reasons why it would be difficult to shut Redwatch down, mostly inherent in the cross-border nature of the web. For one thing, it is very difficult to take any direct action as the site is hosted in the United States. While there have been discussions about closing the site down, any attempt would almost certainly fall foul of the First Amendment. Also, the site has attempted to protect itself with an impressive array of disclaimers. Even if it were stopped in the U.S., the site claims it has the capability to instantly re-launch from Slovakia, a point which was made by the Home Office spokesperson who talked with *Nouse*. No matter

whether you think the site ought to be banned or not, the practical obstacles to doing so are probably insurmountable.

It is this that makes exposés like those in the *Guardian* and *Nouse* so very important. At a time when journalism is often maligned as sensationalist and irresponsible, such investigations show what defending free speech really looks like. On balance, I don't believe that Redwatch should be banned, although this feels close to defending the indefensible. Posting pictures of people on the internet must be allowed in any free society, however malign the intention. But intimidation must be opposed, and violence prevented. Proving the links between its activists and activities that are unambiguously illegal is a much more effective way of fighting back, and maintaining real freedom of speech.

Whether you think Redwatch should be banned or not, and a great many think it should, it is impossible to dismiss the violence that Redwatch espouses and the connections its activities have to attacks and intimidation. However, perhaps the most notable thing about the website is the feeble way in which it attempts to justify itself. The ultimate irony rests that Redwatch cites freedom of speech as a defence, when in truth it has nothing to say.

Vive la post-industrial revolution

Students can and should take a lead on environmental issues



Edward Russell-Johnson
Contributing Writer

According to *BBC News*, the European Commission has recently put forward plans for a "post-industrial revolution", in the hope of seeing levels of greenhouse gases fall by 20% over the next 13 years. This certainly sounds commendable, but how will it be done, and how can we as students do our bit?

Perhaps the solution is to see this move by the EC as a call to arms for the public, as well as for scientists and researchers. Whilst technological innovation may help in the cutting of emissions, some hard graft is needed from the public as well, in terms of increased awareness of environmental issues.

Recently, increasing prominence has been given to the Green Gown Awards. These are presented to academic institutions that attain outstanding results in reducing their environmental impact, and are a significant encourage-

Porterhouse Blues

Campus chiefs are selling your safety short



Raf Sanchez
Contributing Writer

For the University to claim that the current porters' crisis (and in terms of student welfare, it is a crisis) was 'unforeseeable' is at worst a lie, at best a sign of gross incompetence. That there is widespread opposition to the new contracts being imposed on porters by management is common knowledge. Anyone who takes two minutes to chat with their college porter could tell you that a contract requiring people who have structured their lives around a nine-to-five job to work twelve-hour shifts is unacceptable, and will lead to staff leaving.

But such an information gathering exercise clearly proved too much for Ken Batten, Head of Security, and Keith Lilley, Director of Facilities Management, who have remained holed up in Heslington Hall throughout. They forced the contracts through despite significant opposition, and then had the audacity to tell a YUSU Senate meeting that the resultant staff shortages were 'impossible to anticipate.'

ment for staff and students alike.

YUSU appears on the current shortlist for a Green Gown in the Student Initiatives category, demonstrating that there is a desire for environmental action amongst students. The principal reason cited by the organisers for YUSU's nomination is the auctioning of second hand bicycles that takes place on campus. This is certainly an excellent starting point, but there is still insufficient motivation amongst the vast majority of students. If we are to reverse the effects of the first industrial revolution, there must be greater participation all round, from students, YUSU, and University management.

There is much that the student population can do to help. The University of York has some 11,000 students, and if we all switch off lights and appliances, we could make a significant cut in the amount of electricity that the university uses. Far more importantly though, such action would demonstrate to the management that students are serious about climate change - and that the University should be too.

We could go further. Remember the anti-top-up fees demonstration in London? If the NUS put their heads together, something similar could be done for climate change. Students from

If a private company forced a contract on its employees that led to a 39% shortfall in staff and the closure of three out of seven departments, that company would go into liquidation. Fortunately for Messieurs Batten and Lilley, the padded world of the University means that they get to play at being businessmen without the inconvenient obligations of either having to be honest with shareholders (in this case the students, as it is our rents that pay the porters' wages) or being any good at their jobs.

We need to be very, very careful where we go from here. Batten told Derwent JCRC on Monday that the lodge closures are 'a temporary measure' and that they are hoping to have the situation restored to normal by April 28th. Perhaps. But why, then, were there no ads for porters posted in the jobs section of the York Press on Wednesday, nor on the University website? To dismiss the idea that management intend these closures to become permanent would be naïve. This is not the first time that portering has come under attack. In 2002 it took a massive student occupation of Heslington Hall to save 24-hour portering. Rich Croker is right to draw a line in the sand, and refuse to accept anything short of full restoration. We all need to keep a close eye on management's actions, and be prepared to toe the same line if necessary.

all over the country could converge on London in order to draw attention to the wastefulness of universities and other institutions, and to encourage environmental reforms at the top.

Our own People and Planet Society is mounting an ongoing campaign against global warming, along with some other pressing ethical issues, and this again demonstrates the desire for action amongst some students. With enough involved, we could prompt the University to make some moves in the right direction.

But this is only the start. This idea of a "post-industrial revolution" could be a rallying point for people across Europe. Britain was the cradle of the first Industrial Revolution, fuelled by the coal-rich mines of Yorkshire. By exploiting another resource, the 11,000 students of this University, we can bring change from the bottom up, and encourage others to do the same. Many universities have students prepared to be active and mount campaigns, as shown by the success of the top-up fees demo, and in this way we could encourage a rethink at the top by initiating action from the bottom. Someone has to take the lead in showing what is possible, however, and there is no reason why it should not be the students of the University of York.

>> THE BOY MAKEOVER **M12-13**
Four men try dressing as girls

>> RUSSELL BRAND **M14-15**
Big Brother's funny guy talks

SPRING WEEK THREE
January 23 2007

MUSE



**Prejudice on both sides:
how gay Christians cope
with their dual identity M9-10**

Muse 23.01.07



To Iraq and back: a student's journey >> M4

We talk to a York student about his experiences in the Gulf

Havana: city of salsa and socialism >> M8

Bob Higson travels to Cuba's capital and gets a taste of local life in a post-revolution society

Having faith in equal rights >> M10

Toby Green looks at the issues and attitudes faced by LGBT Christians

The great man makeover >> M12

We introduce four men to the beauty rituals of female life

Backstage with Russell Brand >> M14

Natalie Carroll chats to the 'S&M Willy Wonka'

Music: Campus bands, Mika and Jamie T >> M20

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Ben TattersallSmith

Websites to make you 'lol' for real

I hardly ever actually lol anymore. I may claim to when I'm instant messaging you, but these days, more often than not, I've not even raised a smile. Indeed, so devalued has lol (laugh out loud) become in IM conversations, that if you do actually succeed in getting a chuckle out of me then something else is usually required to express my amusement, perhaps a lmao (laugh my ass off) or maybe "haha, I actually lol'd".

The internet is full of humour, and with a potential 6 billion contributors, some of it's got to be funny. Much of it, of course, simply isn't; some of it is just way too geeky and other things are built upon so many layers of in-jokes and references that integration into a whole new community is required before

you can even begin to appreciate why the jokes are funny.

The internet has something of a consciousness of its own and new trends can evolve out of nowhere, twisting and manipulating mainstream culture in what can be novel and exciting ways (witness the hype created around *Snakes on a Plane* last year). A current big fad is **HornyManatee.com**, which originated from a throwaway joke on a US TV show about manatee porn. It has become something of a net phenomenon with videos, fan art and even tribute songs available on the site. Who'd have thought so many things rhymed with 'manatee'? Another word of mouth hit has been R. Kelly's *Trapped in the Closet* video series,

NanFlory



Why I want to be a Swedish peasant

G. K. Chesterton said "The object of a new year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul." Ah the prospect of self renewal! None are more susceptible to it than angst-ridden finalists trying to decide what, how, where to spend the rest of their lives. Entering 2007, two of my friends have gone teetotal, one seems to have stopped leaving the house, all of them have given up smoking (bar one who has vowed to smoke more - she likes to succeed), and most people have promised to do more work, recycle more, write letters to political prisoners etc. Looking over my list, it includes 'stop lying', 'stop stealing people's food', and 'talk about yourself less'. What they add up to is 'become a different person'. If I stopped lying and talking about myself, I'd have to shut up completely. The stopping part is all very well, but if you have nothing to fill the void you might as well promise to stop existing.

Hell, forget resolutions. In your early twenties the brand new soul quest, for the majority, extends beyond new year's day. At least once a term during my time at York I've had an existential crisis of some kind, and I use the term existential loosely here. It's a brilliant word for romanticising the very average trials and tribulations of an overly dramatic literature student, especially when combined with a penchant

for fairy lights, candles and Erik Satie. Looking back on my melancholy indulgences, they were quite fun really, and always ended with a smug feeling of invigorated self-knowledge.

An episode in the Nan saga kicked off last term when I rejected my original post-graduation plan. Said plan was to move to the city to be a hedonist/typist before falling into a lovely career/lottery success, all in time to buy lots of rich clothes and move on from shabby chic before 30. I won't go into details but my crisis culminated in a trip to Sweden in the second week of the new year. The purpose was to check out a folk high school I'm considering going to, but turned into a dissection of my reasons for wanting to flee, not just York, but the country, in favour of a very small Swedish village so small that its main mode of representation to the outside world is a ryvita-type flatbread produced there.

This latest installment has had surprising results. You know love-hate relationships? Well I've sort of had one of those with York, except without the love. And no, that's not a convoluted way of saying I hate the place. Let's just say, if there were a prize for whinging about York, I would bag it, hands down, with perhaps an extra mention for being particularly proficient: 'there's nothing to do, Toffs is shit, Ziggy's makes me cry, York's too small, York's in England'.

The main factor in all this, I'm beginning to realise, is that it allows the hypothesis, "everything is York's fault, I will be better in a more exciting place." Moving will perfect my soul, currently inhibited because within a 10 mile radius, a list of 'what can you see' reads, from most to least: 1. Hen parties; 2. Public school boy hair; 5 zillion. Winter-proof outdoor clothing.

The surprising truths that my trip forced me to admit are: a) moving will not make me the best person ever, and b) there are lots of good things about my life in York. When I got back to Stockholm, from aforementioned tiny village, I made a different sort of list, two actually. One of good things and one of bad things. The bad things list was heavily influenced by the reality show on in the background called *The Virgin Diaries*, involving a number of really gross teenagers broadcasting their desperate attempts to get horizontal. The diarist in question was Craig from Essex. His favourite things were "boys, girls, snogging, clubbing and shopping" and so all five items head my bad list, whilst "I didn't grow up in Essex" made first place on the plus side.

More constructive things are also found, however; on the good list, things like my bicycle, which I love but probably couldn't take to Sweden. Also, my organic vegetable box, my record player, my big mirror, liv-

stemming from the jaw dropping awfulness of Kelly's, ahem, masterpiece. It really is so bad it's good. For the studious among you, a dedicated fan has even made a comprehensive spoof study aid to guide you through the series, available online at www.somethingawful.com.

For the politically minded, I recommend checking out clips from hit American TV show *The Colbert Report*. Those of you with digiboxes (does anyone not have a digibox yet?) may well be familiar with its sister show, *The Daily Show* with Jon Stewart which airs on More4. Colbert is still only available online, but his satirical right wing punditry is incredibly sharp and well worth checking out if you are of a left of centre bent and have at least a passing familiarity with politics across the pond.

Another interesting American site is www.OverheardInNewYork.com, a site with the simple premise of asking people to post

amusing snippets of conversation overheard in the Big Apple. Predictably, being New York, one of the most vibrant and diverse cities in the world, there are some absolute gems and you can easily kill a few minutes skimming the site. Here's one I saw the other day:

Older woman: "Excuse me, miss?"

Younger woman: "Yeah?"

Older woman: "Your veil, your burqa is very beautiful. I didn't know your people were allowed to wear it in bright colors."

Younger woman: "It's not a burqa, it's a poncho. I'm Jewish. It's for the rain. I got it at TK Maxx."

Coming back to familiar soil, I recently started watching Channel 4's first foray into online video, their video blog, or "vlog", called 'This is a Knife'. It's a very watchable 10 minute show and I'm sure presenter Donal is destined for bigger things. With so much variety you're sure to be 'lol'ing in no time.



ing room and kitchen. All things I would have to leave behind. Then a long list of people, the English language, my family and my independence. On the bad list, Swedish porno and the possibility that going to craft college might give my life the unpleasant flavour of Demi Moore in Ghost.

My lists have shown that the things I enjoy are, for the most part, where I am. Choices, ultimately, have to be based on the prospect of an enjoyable lifestyle, rather than the naïve hope that remote countryside-induced introspection might make you into some sort of divine being. So I may have to resign myself to the soul I've got, but at least I'm not a 16 year old from Essex trying (and failing) to get laid before my birthday. And nor, I can safely say, will I ever be - be thankful for small things.

The spirit of Christmas?

Never mind my soul, it worries me that Christmas has become a time for me and my siblings to destroy those of my parents. Not in a malicious way, but is it just my mum and dad who seem a little bit madder every time I go home? And is it just me who reacts to unconditional love by ripping the piss out of those who gave me life because they won't hold it against me?

A case in point. My mamma, bless her, is a bit foreign. Her English is close to perfect but she makes the occasional slip up. My favourites include an email she sent to my brother and I, the subject line of which read "Hello you gays!!!" This Christmas we were making macaroons until mum realised that she had forgotten to buy the designated coconut. Very sweet really, but how did my sister and I react? We laughed in her face. We

cried, "Mamma you're so silly, it's desiccated, not designated! Hahaha."

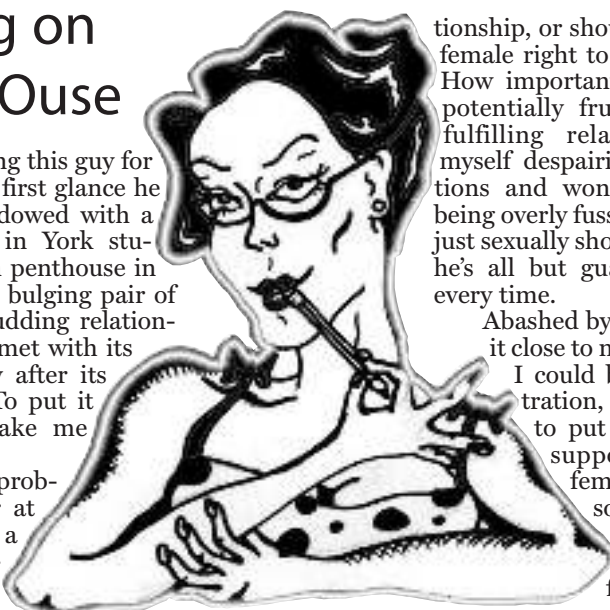
Then, we reported the mistake to the rest of the family so they could do the same. Six is a lot of people laughing at a second language speaker. If it had been someone I'm not related to, I'd have been far more subtle about correcting them and hardly have laughed at all. My dad was similarly victimised, and we were most disparaging about the effort he'd put in to make Christmas enjoyable. We laughed at his quality survey of mince pies, at his stock phrase "it's nearly all organic" and the weeks he'd spent feeding the Christmas cake brandy.

Resolving to stop lying? I need to get my priorities in order and start being nice to two people who took it upon themselves to change my nappies. Never mind your parents fucking you up, what about your children?

No oozing on the River Ouse

So, I've been seeing this guy for a few weeks. At first glance he seems ideal: endowed with a prominent position in York student politics, a plush penthouse in Alcuin Towers and a bulging pair of boxer-shorts. Our budding relationship sadly, however, met with its first obstacle shortly after its second instalment. To put it simply, he can't make me come.

This became a problem I agonised over at length: is this simply a reasonable compromise of a loving rela-



tionship, or should I be asserting my female right to sexual gratification? How important is an orgasm in a potentially fruitful and otherwise fulfilling relationship? I found myself despairing over these questions and wondering whether I'm being overly fussy and demanding, or just sexually short-changed. After all, he's all but guaranteed an orgasm every time.

Abashed by this situation, I kept it close to my chest for as long as I could bear the sexual frustration, but eventually I had to put the dilemma to my supportive squadron of female friends. On doing so, I discovered this to be not such a rare problem as I had at first imagined.

One woman had been with her boyfriend for two years and was yet to have an orgasm through his agency. Until I mentioned my situation to her, she'd been convinced it was merely a problem on her part, but together we came to the realisation that perhaps it was they, not we, who were at fault.

Of course, bad sex is far from unusual. In the process of my consultations, I came across (sadly, not literally) one woman who'd had such bad sex on a first date that she had been driven to draft a text to a friend bemoaning her partner's inadequacy immediately after. Unfortunately, being in a haze of post-coital frustration, she made the fatal mistake of sending the text to the man she was lying next to. There ended that brief and unsatisfying relationship.

Obviously there are sexual incompatibilities to smooth out at the beginning of any relationship, but after a certain point a woman is justified in expecting a degree of compromise. If a man's not willing to meet her sexual needs, this must surely reflect on his extra-sexual attributes.

This theory was borne out when, after I had decided to starve said man of sex until he decided to make the requisite effort for a female orgasm, I awoke to find his frenzy of sexual pleasure brought to liquid fruition (unfortunately for all involved, directly into his own face). It was at this moment that I realised that, in fact, nice guys don't finish last. They finish first. And aren't much bothered about where you finish at all.



The world's gone mad

Stories you might have missed

How is it possible to observe a traffic light controlled by an albino badger? That's the question that the motorists of Llandrindod Wells are asking themselves after said animal caused a three-mile traffic jam on the A483. Out of hibernation, and considerably disorientated, the woodland creature climbed into a temporary traffic light and chewed through several wires, shorting the circuit, switching the signals off and bleaching its own fur white as a result of the shock. It took Powys police hours to get the cars moving again. "They're a bit confused when they're mating," said a representative of a local wildlife trust (badgers - not the police). "Climate change is to blame!" blared the local newspaper, helpfully.

Cardiff 'teen idol' group Back to Back have notched up another flopped single release. Since 2001, the trio, whose releases include *You're Nice (Like Muller Rice)* and *My Love Jumped Off The Severn Bridge (And She Still Owes Me The £1.50 Toll)*, have issued over seventy singles, all of which have failed to chart. Their manager, Dave 'The Bread' Baker, has lost an estimated £10,000 through the disastrous career of his young charges. Against overwhelming odds, he maintains that they will eventually succeed. "Their music is much better than it sounds," he said.

A clinic in Rawalpindi is treating a gentleman named Vinod Sidhu for pantophobia - fear of everything. An astrophysicist by training, Mr Sidhu has developed a long list of irrational fears: his wife and children must not eat from plates because, he says, they are the same size as black hole vortexes and may block the space-time continuum. He will not talk to strangers in case they turn out to be himself visiting from the future. He even suspects that sugar is stellar dust gathered from the Van Allen belts by NASA. Asked by a caring nurse if he might take up a less worrying habit, such as jogging, Mr Sidhu replied: "Go jogging? What, and get hit by a meteorite?"

The Sacramento Association of Dudging (SAD) held its annual conference last week. This is a curious American organisation, whose members' sole purpose is to infuriate other people by not finishing sentences - such is the art of 'dudging'. The SAD members hold regional competitions for the best dudge, being the most infuriating unfinished sentence. The association hopes that dodging will soon make its way into our own fair country, where the equivalent skill is known as

Who says computer games don't encourage physical exercise? Software junkie Juan Esteves of Auckland had to be pinned down by security staff at a computer fair, after a lengthy brawl with a personal computer. After causing some NZ\$5,000 worth of damage, Mr Esteves raged: "This bastard computer beat me at chess, but I show he who is better with kick boxing."

Revisiting Iraq: my story of life on the front line

For one York student and former U.S. military officer, the scenes of conflict on our TV screens were once a reality. He talks to **Joanna Shelley** about his experiences

In York, Marco* keeps the story of his life a closed book. While other gap year graduates enthuse about the experiences that have taken them out of their hometown and into the 'real world', very few people are privileged with information from his travel journal - one that records the events of not one but three years in which he went from Harvard academia to wartime Iraq. These basic plot details are, you sense, where he'd like the story to end and ironically, with the click of the Dictaphone, even they take an effort to confirm. His eyes narrow and I notice that his arms have folded across his chest. He's cut across me before I can get my first question out. Quick, but curt: "There are some things that I won't talk about with anyone."

Officially, Marco only closed this last chapter of his life by agreeing that some of the particulars would be 'forgotten' on paper. Before beginning his studies at York he was a naval officer in the U.S. Armed Forces, a career that, at 18, he had been keen to sign up for but one that, after it had taken him onto the battlefield, he was desperate to escape from. In managing to get himself released early from duty, he - like all retiring officers - had to sign a contract of non-disclosure, consenting to protect details about his experience that are, for now at least, considered 'classified'. He says it's a small price to pay for the distance that's now between him and the conflict still occupying our TV screens. "As soon as I got out there I was like, 'I need to get out of here, right now.' And when I got out, I was like, 'I am never going back.'"

Perhaps Marco's desire to leave Iraq, and his reluctance to revisit the country now, in conversation, both have something to do with his denial that he is a "real veteran" of the conflict. For him, having been in the war zone and worn the uniform of the invading force isn't enough to elevate his experience to that of the men and women he served with. "They have a real sense of duty, which I never really had," he admits. "It takes courage and faith too, and I guess I didn't have that either."

In retrospect, Marco admits that it was arrogance that made him decide to drop out of one of America's top Ivy League universities in order to enlist in the Navy. "Harvard was very challenging academically, but that wasn't the way I wanted to be challenged," he explains. Instead, he had set his mind on joining the Explosive Ordnance

Disposal unit, a faction of the Forces responsible for disposing bombs in war-torn areas. "That just seemed like the ultimate challenge, a way I could prove myself. In the EOD, you've got to be able to think quickly, solve problems, be creative, make decisions... I thought it would be an altruistic thing to do, too. It seemed more realistic to me than academia did, more practical rather than theoretical."

Marco's preparation to enter the EOD began at boot camp, where training all officers started their training, whether headed for the special or conventional forces. The two months were more of a mental test than he had anticipated. "From day one in the military, they start brainwashing you," he says. "They take away any sense of individuality that you have. All of a sudden, you follow any order, no matter how stupid. It's mind games basically - you have to just shut up and obey. Any sort of curiosity about what you're doing is frowned upon. I had to really push myself through it."

On 20th March 2003, however, the day when the United States declared war on Iraq, the coming months suddenly seemed a lot tougher. "We were in our bunk beds when they told us. A lot of people were excited, but a lot of people were kind of scared." Marco, however, believed he had a way out. "I couldn't sleep that night, I was anxious. But I had a lot of training ahead of me at the time, and I thought that hopefully, when I'd finished it, the war would be over. I knew there was the possibility I'd go to Iraq but I thought that, if it happened, I was going to be so well trained with EOD that I would survive - I'd have been in danger, but I'd just be so well trained that the odds would be in my favour."

Marco continued onto 'A' School to begin training as a parachute rigger, which was to be his field of speciality until he reached the EOD. It was another two months of preparation, but this time in an environment "where they beat you all physically to try and weed people out."

He talks enthusiastically of the four a.m. wake-up calls, the mornings when they'd be ordered to put on swimming gear, wade out into the freezing sea water and lock arms and stay afloat on their backs until given the instruction to come back. "The cold really gets to you; you always felt it was too long. But to a certain extent you do enjoy it - not because you like the pain, but because it's about pride and confidence. I'm still proud right now that I

went through as much as I did and I didn't quit. It was tempting at times to say 'this is enough.'"

As the physical endurance of the recruits improved, however, their increasing confidence was having an effect on the collective's attitudes and outlook. The Marco slouched in his chair now seems somehow different from the 18-year-old who, he recalls, was prepared to square up to a group of men on a night out after training, knowing that his new "buddies" of just

Below: an Iraqi couple walk through the streets of Baghdad



'Boot camp is just about brain-washing. They make you all into a group of fanatics, and then they give you a bunch of weapons and tell you to do, go, accomplish.'

two weeks were standing, ready to back him up, behind him. "I was a different person," he admits. "I was kind of stupid and narrow-minded. They made us into this group of really arrogant and overconfident, but really motivated people. In retrospect, they really do make you fanatics, and then they give you a bunch of... well, we called them toys, but weapons basically, and tell you do, go, accomplish."

Marco, however, didn't finish his training. His first physical screening at boot camp had revealed stress fractures in his bones and while he was allowed to continue with his training - "I told them I felt good, even though I didn't" - they got worse. By the time he was in dive school, EOD was definitely off, and the route that he had seen himself taking in the Forces became "completely different". While on medical hold in Virginia Beach, he was deployed on a naval ship. It was headed

for the Persian Gulf.

"I didn't want to do this anymore. I was like, 'what is going on?' I had to call my family and tell them I was leaving really soon - in just a few days we were shipping out."

Military training had been marked out clearly for Marco. Recounting his first assignment aboard a naval ship, however, he begins to struggle to put a time scheme on things. He was to be deployed for seven months, using his skills as a parachute rigger to do maintenance on the troops' essential survival gear. "We were out there maybe a month or two. The days really start to blur into each another because you're working shifts and there's no weekends, no Friday, no Monday, every day's exactly the same. Seven days a week, at least 12 hours each day."

Life on the ship he describes as "very cramped and surreal. You lose all sense of things, especially when you're on night watch. You're always in fluorescent light, you don't see the sun, it's always dark; you'd go to sleep before the sun came out and you'd wake up after the sun was gone. They said the freaks came out at night, because we'd be all pale. We hadn't seen the sun for a long while."

It's during his time here, on this narrow stretch of inland sea, that the specifics anchoring Marco's narrative become obscured. For an unknown reason, he was pulled from the ship and sent to work on land with the marines in Iraq. It was a harsh daylight to wake up to. Despite all his training, he had not been prepared for the situation out on the ground. He was occasionally required to stand watch at the American checkpoints. "I had thought that I would be okay. I hadn't thought that I'd just be standing on the street like that, just waiting to get shot."

"I can't tell you enough how vulnerable you feel when you're standing watch. It doesn't sound scary: you have to go up to each driver, ask for ID and then wave them through. But he could have a shotgun across his lap, he could be a suicide bomber. It'd be really easy to take you out."

Luckily, because Marco wasn't a marine, his main job was, as he puts it, to be "the bitch". "I was like an extra hand out there. When we were on base, I was in charge of the people cleaning toilets and I would do a lot of maintenance on the gear."

In terms of combat, most of the time Marco was there, he only faced what he calls "skirmishes and ambushes." Looking back, he paints himself as

the timid naval officer caught in amongst "the brave guys" of the marine convoy. "They just shoot at convoys as you're driving by, down the main highway. I was the one who was always trying to get them to drive through it, because I knew that even if there was one guy it was too dangerous for me."

He wasn't part of the major assaults that we associate with the war effort but on the ground, he says, there were still incidents that raised his awareness of the possibility of the danger. "One time we were in a hummer and we started getting shot at. We didn't know where it was coming from, so the guys sprung into action and I just basically covered my section. It was kind of scary, not knowing where the shots were coming from, just knowing that you could be in the crossfire right at that moment. You know you have to stay still and you're trying to calm yourself down, but you really want to just get in the hummer and run. It got kind of crazy there for a second, but..." He breaks off mid-sentence and shakes his head, giving an attempt at an apologetic smile. "I don't really want to talk about it any more, actually."

The blank is there now, however, wanting to be filling in. How did he deal with these kinds of situations? "The way I explain it to my younger brother, back home, when he asks is that combat, for me, was almost like playing American football. I hate to make the comparison, because here, if you miss your tackle, so to speak - well, you get shot. But it's the same in that it is all really fast and kind of violent, but you are just completely focused on your job. You're trying to stay as calm as you can so that you can see where the fire's coming from and where the cover is. You're not thinking about politics, or trying to get home, you're just trying to do your job as fast as you can and hopefully you'll survive."

His frustration at the situation is palpable. "There were just so many people dying, and once you're on the ground, I don't see how you're going to avoid some of the situations." You don't think as much when you're actually scared of dying. You don't even know who's firing at you a lot of times. You just see figures - the muscle flash in the night, or the dust moving in the day. They're not people when you're shooting at them like that, unless it's hand-to-hand, and that rarely happens. So you just shoot the..." He breaks off. "You shoot the enemy."

"So that, that, that," he stresses, "really does get to you." He struggles to explain the effect it had on him. "I was kind of cynical before that, but I think something died in me when I went out there, when death was thrust in front of me like that." His words sound bitter. His eyes flinch toward the Dictaphone. "Can you turn that thing off for a second?"

After four weeks in Iraq with the marines, Marco was welcomed back into the baking heat of the Gulf. For another three months, he was back on the shift system, either on watch at night or working the oxygen shop and fixing equipment in the day. His real release, however, was a trip to Italy with two other servicemen when he was on leave. "It was like going back to the world. Just the juxtaposition! God it was weird. We rode a bus down from Naples, down the Amalfi coast, and it was just the most beautiful place I've ever seen. There were a few times I got pissed off because I was getting lured back into my previous life - it was almost like Iraq never happened. I



Above: Iraqi soldiers in Basra. Right: an American serviceman in Baghdad

tried talking to the guys I was with about it, but I guess they just didn't want to think about it. They wanted to pretend it never happened. I did too, I guess - it was like, 'I like this better! I don't want to do that again!' I remember just feeling so happy, those three

'You're trying to stay as calm as you can. You're not thinking about politics, or trying to get home - you're just trying to do your job as fast as you can and hopefully you'll survive.'

days, just because of the distance. I was really sure I wanted to continue with that, and not go back."

His deployment ended when his naval ship docked in Norfolk, a major naval base in the state of Virginia. He stayed there for around six months, but by that time he was determined to get out. "Back in the US, I started making good impressions on people, gaining their trust and their loyalty. I eventually found a friend in the legal department who took me through all the regulations and helped me put in a special request for discharge. It was based on them sending me from medical hold into the conventional forces, when I had a special forces contract. Of course, in the end they're pretty much allowed to do whatever they want with you once you go into boot camp. But I did get some sympathy, because they usually don't do that." With a year and two months left on his contract, he was let out on an early discharge for education. A few months later he arrived in



York. "I wanted to get out of the US, because I wasn't feeling like an American, I guess. I felt kind of ashamed of being an American. That's kind of simplistic, because not all Americans agree with the war. But I wanted to be more international."

Marco has listened to the media analysis of the failures in intelligence gathering that led up to the declaration of war and, having spent the last of his teenage years witnessing the human cost of the coalition governments' mistakes, expresses his anger with the politicians he sees "sitting in their offices, dealing death, basically."

"I don't know why they went to war. I really hope they thought there were weapons over there and they were just too stupid to confirm it. If not, then they're guilty of something far worse than stupidity."

Of President Bush, however, he

says: "It's hard to label him stupid at the same time, because he seems to manipulate the American people well enough. He did win two elections. He seems indoctrinated, I think that's the problem, in this culture, this ex-military culture, that's so proud to be an American that they're willing to isolate themselves from the rest of the world."

Despite his disillusionment with the conflict, however, Marco has respect for the servicemen that he fought with and that remain in Iraq. "I have respect for them because they have something I don't, I guess. I admire that they can still believe, that they're still optimistic. In the end, to be there, to risk your life like that, they all have to have faith, on some level, that it's worth it."

* Name has been changed



UncleMatthew

He would care, but he just doesn't want to...

Dear Uncle Matthew,

I am a first year girl, and I am having some trouble with my housemates. Whenever I walk into a room, I always get the feeling they have been talking about me behind my back. They have all arranged to live together next year, and have excluded me from their plans. On one occasion they locked me in a cupboard for two and a half hours, claiming it was a "friendly joke". I am beginning to get the impression they don't like me, but I can't see what I am doing wrong. I think I am perfectly nice, and my personal hygiene is nothing short of acceptable, I can assure you. What do you suggest?

Confused, Alcuin

Dear *Confused*,

Try to remember that there are two sides to every story. Have you stopped and tried to see things from your friends' point of view? Maybe they hate you for a reason - after all the only two good things you seem to be able to say about yourself are that you have "acceptable" hygiene and think yourself to be "nice". What if you are wrong? Might it not be best if you spoke to them face-to-face and sorted out a compromise? I propose that you offer to stay in the cupboard for longer periods of time so they don't have to look at you. In return, perhaps you will overhear their conversations: then you will definitely know whether or not they are talking about you.

Hugs and kisses,

Uncle Matthew

Dear Uncle Matthew,

I wonder if you can help me. I am finding it very difficult to stay faithful to my girlfriend from home. She's a lovely girl, and we made it through my first year without incident, largely because no-one else showed any interest in me. Now I am in my second year my acne has cleared up, and I have developed a respectable beard growth, with the result that women seem to find me considerably less physically off-putting. I feel like I've been given the keys to the sweetie shop, and I just can't stop munching on Parma violets. What should I do?

Randy, Derwent

Dear *Randy*,

I'm afraid I have some bad news for you. If this girl from home found you attractive despite your acne and lamentable lack of a beard, it suggests that she is what we professionals like to call "psychologically disturbed" and clearly not suited to a long-term relationship. Don't forget, every rejection (and I'm sure you've had many) makes you stronger, so you will probably be doing her a favour by ejecting her from your life with all speed. Fortunately, in this era of mass-communication distance is no barrier, so you can give her the happy news without even being in the same county as her. Good luck dipping into the Parma violets, but make sure you lick your fingers between each one.

Snuggles,

Uncle Matthew

Dear Uncle Matthew,

I am having some problems with my course and I need your advice. Everyone else in my seminars seems to understand the reading we're given and have a lot to say about it, while I just sit there in silence struggling to understand. I wasn't expecting university to be so intellectually demanding, and I'm not sure I can keep up with the work. I only came to university for the piss-ups, but I didn't expect to feel so humiliated in seminars. What should I do?

Embarrassed, James

Dear *Embarrassed*,

The country always needs street-sweepers.

Love and cuddles,

Uncle Matthew



If you have a dilemma to put to Uncle Matthew, please email it to socs12@york.ac.uk

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Seeing through the hypno-babble: the sceptic's guide to hypnotherapy

Hypnotism is often associated with TV stunts and embarrassing antics. However, as **Nicky Woolf** discovers, it is increasingly becoming a legitimate form of therapy

“**T**hat was extremely...”, I say, and then stop, because I can't work out whether anything just happened or not, let alone what it might have been. It wasn't snap-and-you're-out, as parodied on TV programmes, and it certainly did not involve a swinging stopwatch. But neither did it feel like nothing. There is a long, pregnant pause, and then I catch up with myself, “It was like I was hovering on the edge of sleep.” There had been soothing music, and a soothing voice, and my head had felt heavier and heavier. I'm not sure I went out cold – though how can I be sure? – but my memory of being in the hypnotic trance is fuzzy at best.

The next voice is the hypnotist's. “Yes, that's what you are - just on the edge of sleep. That's the hypnogogic, or trance, state.” Earlier, before the hypnosis, she had explained the process of putting me into a trance. Apparently, it is simply a case of activating drowsiness ‘triggers’ in the brain. Valerie summarised: “Basically, I bore you rigid - I just drone on and on and on until your conscious mind says ‘Jigger this for a game of soldiers, I'm off.’” Intrigued, I ask how I would respond when ‘under’. Her reply was enigmatic. “Some people go to sleep, some people don't; some people can hear me, some people don't. A first session is interesting, because you never know what to expect.”

I, for one, hadn't a clue what manner of experience awaited me. Valerie Hird is a professional hypnotist working in York, whose clients include students wanting to work harder, teachers wanting to reduce stress and professionals wanting to give up smoking. Hypnotism is big business, ranging from stage and television hypnotists, such as Paul McKenna, to forensic hypnosis; where a hypnotist helps a crime witness remember salient facts. It is certainly no longer a two-bit smoke, mirrors and crystal ball operation. Valerie has undergone years of training to become a fully-fledged hypnotherapist, and is also a trained counsellor. When I ask what she finds herself most frequently treating, Valerie tells me that far and away the most frequent problem her clients need help with is smoking. Phobias, such as a fear of flying (or, as in a recent case, a fear of flour) come a close second. I enquire as to her success rate and she smiles broadly, “Very good, oh very good indeed. Almost all my clients come to me via recommendations.” Expecting the re-routing of mental pathways to be at best a lengthy and arduous process, I am stunned when she tells me she needs only one session for most of her clients to give up smoking for good.

Hypnosis as a phenomenon that



first appeared in ancient India used by Hindu priests to heal their sick - though it is not known how successful they were. Today's modern form of scientific and therapeutic hypnosis first emerged in the early 19th century. A French physician called Recamier successfully performed the first recorded medical operation, most likely an amputation, on a patient in a trance-like state in 1821. Freud was a fan of hypnotism, and attended the First International Congress for Experimental and Therapeutic Hypnotism in 1889. It was not until the late 1950s, however, that the British and American medical associations approved hypnosis as a viable and acceptable form of treatment.

This did not, however, stop me from feeling a touch nervous. I am about to let someone root around in the darkest depths of my subconscious and, if possible, make some measured adjustments. But what adjustments? Being a non-smoker, the obvious option was denied to me.

Where to begin? What, when given the choice, would you change about yourself - about your personality, your mind? What foibles would you have erased, what habits would you modify? I found these decidedly difficult questions to answer. After much self-examination, I sought help, vocalising these questions to some friends. The answers

I received were, predictably, less than helpful and in several cases a little insulting. At about this time I began to see a problem emerging. Hypnosis requires an exertion of will on my part as well as on the hypnotist's; basically, I have to want to give something up before I can be hypnotised to give it up.

After much soul-searching, I lighted on the idea of giving up, or at least cutting down on, my swearing.

‘It was similar to when you leave the dentist exploring a new filling with your tongue; that same feeling that something unnatural is going on’

Swearing was, I decided, something that I would like to do less; and furthermore, for the purposes of good journalism, it would be fairly easy to determine whether the hypnosis had been successful. It was therefore with vision and clarity of purpose that I approached my appointment with Valerie.

Arriving at a normal-looking house on a street somewhere the other side of Fulford, clutching my Dictaphone, I had absolutely no idea what to expect. I

Nicky is put into a hypnotic trance in an attempt to clean up his language

certainly did not expect the friendly, motherly, altogether down-to-earth woman who opened the door; nor her willingness to talk me through the process. We chatted about hypnosis in the media. She was keen to stress that her method is a different one to Paul McKenna's, but none the less effective. She is both a hypnotist and a counsellor, and ranks very highly indeed among British hypnotists. We discuss what I want to have changed; she approves of my choice and reassures me that the process is a simple one. Then she reaches over to her computer and puts on a specially-recorded looping track of calm, melodic keyboard music, and begins to murmur - and that's when things get a little blurry.

On my way home, feeling distinctly odd, I kept probing my mind to see if I felt any different - thinking a swear word, and gauging my mind's reaction. It was very similar to when you leave the dentist exploring a new filling with your tongue; that same slight feeling that something unnatural was going on. I didn't swear at all that evening, but then I didn't really have any cause to. I did swear the next day, casually for emphasis in conversation; but it felt somehow unacceptable, like I was letting myself down. It was not a pleasant feeling, and it did make me think twice about swearing after that. I also noticed more when others swore. My dilemma was this; was I feeling the effects of hypnosis, or was the effect purely caused by my desire not to ‘fail’? Was I trying to make the hypnosis work, and if that was the case, is that all hypnosis actually is? As weeks passed, I swore more; occasionally at first, but after a month or so I was almost, but not quite, back to my usual self, obscenity-wise anyway.

I don't think this can be called a failure of hypnosis, though. I can honestly say that I did feel an effect, whether actual or self-inflicted (if such a distinction even matters), and I truly believe that had my will to stop been greater, say if I really, really wanted to give up smoking, then Valerie's help would have been very valuable indeed, and I would recommend hypnosis as an alternative for those trying to give up.

What did I gain from the experience? Well, I still do notice swearing more, and I'm almost sure that it takes less of an effort of will not to swear. I also lost a lot of my preconceptions about hypnosis. I was impressed by the professionalism of it all, and the openness of method. Even if the results were not particularly dramatic, there was certainly an effect. Would I do it again? Yes, I think I probably would, especially as Valerie said that she would give a 25 per cent discount to students. Chalk me up as a partial convert then.

Bold Havana: city of salsa

Our man in Havana, **Bob Higson**, explores the idiosyncracies of local culture and uncovers the gritty underbelly of a city still struggling to define itself post-revolution

Havana is in parts a burgeoning and picturesque tourist destination, yet you only need to search a little further to discover the heady underside of a city with a dank and harsh history. It is a place which has enticed literary greats such as Hemingway. It has been the playground of American Mafioso; the stomping ground of Argentinean revolutionaries, and the palette of giants of Latin-American music, mariachi and salsa.

It's hard not to be seduced by your surroundings. Beneath the eyes of the cult-like Che Guevara posters which dominate the long and dusty streets, the potent fumes of cigars are so thick that even a leisurely stroll down the road becomes dizzying.

The cultural imperialists amongst us might note with dismay that the golden arches of a certain fast food chain are nowhere to be seen in Havana. There are, however, enormous billboards boldly comparing George Bush to Adolf Hitler for all to see. Despite large pockets of serious poverty, there's an ambience to the city that fills the restaurants, bars and pavement cafés that can be found at every turn. Cadillacs race past the front doors of old Spanish colonial buildings, creating the impression of a city lost in time; unsure of which decade it ought to belong to.

I have never in my life felt so painfully English as I did in Havana. Vast swathes of darkened and bronzed bodies populate the streets; all gyrating and flirting, even their walk is unashamedly rhythmic. Local 'habaneros' express little inhibition and as rum flows freely between the local men and women, so does the chemistry. Havana is not a place for the shy or faint-hearted. It makes for a hot and highly-charged atmosphere; a million miles from the side streets of York.

Landmarks throughout the city proclaim the politics of a bygone revolution and use it to commercial advantage, sustaining an expanding tourist industry. The Plaza de la Revolucion - dominated by the iconic image of the man affectionately known here as El Che - is the place where thousands flock yearly to hear the rallying cries of Castro and others.

The nearby de facto American embassy in Havana is now the scene of a long-standing propaganda battle

between the governments of the two nations, which has become a bizarre tourist attraction in itself. The American embassy (though officially a part of the Swiss embassy) projects messages via a scrolling electronic board on the face of the building, denouncing the political slogans of the Castro government for all passers-by to see. In retaliation, the Cuban authorities have erected the "Mount of Flags" just outside it. Black flags with single white stars fly on huge flag poles in order to obscure the board from view. It makes for an amusing sight, but it's more than just political tit-for-tat. Here, ideology truly shapes the lives of every ordinary citizen. Politics is everywhere.

It's for this reason that people are drawn here, but as one local man tells me, it's not the reason why they stay. Instead, it's the people, the music and the uniqueness of the city that defies categorisation. Whether you're sipping daiquiris in Hemingway's old drinking haunts or exploring the setting for Greene's 'Our Man in Havana', even the apparently mundane seems steeped in its own peculiar history.

We head out for dinner at the house of a local family who use their living room as a makeshift restaurant for tourists, supplementing their small income. Elbowing our way through the bikes resting against the tables, with the sounds of a family squabbling in an adjacent room, an enormous meal is laid in front of us. The family are incredibly hospitable and are grateful for our time in their house and the chance to practice their English. As dessert reaches us, we learn that the crumbling plaster walls around us once housed a founding member of the leg-

'Vast swathes of bronzed bodies populate the streets, gyrating and flirting. As the rum flows freely, so does the chemistry between the men and women.'

endary Buena Vista Social Club prior to his death. Away from the tatty tourist markets of 'El Che' merchandise, this is the real Havana.



In Havana, cult-like images of Che Guevara are everywhere

A country that so heartily proclaims its rebellious status certainly makes for an alluring visit. Indeed, it's why Havana is fast becoming a major tourist destination. Even the American citizens I meet there, who opt to journey via Canada due to poor international relations and the embargo between Cuba and the US, are enticed by the seafront walks along the Malecón, the grand hotels, the striking fortresses surrounding Havana bay, the vibrancy of the streets of La Habana Vieja (Old Havana) and the infectious soundtrack to the city. But the reality for the ordinary Cuban citizen is perhaps not as cheerful as many travel guides suggest.

What operates in Cuba is a dual economy: one for the average resident Cuban, and another for the tourist who simply flits through. Here, it is tourism that props up an economy that has heavily struggled following the collapse

of the Soviet Union. The economy has also faced ongoing US embargo policies against the nation, during the time which, since 1991, has been known as the 'Special Period'.

Tourists even use a different currency from the Cuban - the Cuban Convertible Peso (CCP) - which is worth approximately 24 times as much as the ordinary peso. Effectively, this means that access to convert pesos is highly sought, as many items that Cubans attempt to buy are sold solely in CCPs.

It's the reason why jobs in international hotels, bars and entertainment venues are amongst the best possible sources of employment for the average working Cuban. For this reason, as I'm told later by a local student, jobs as a waiter or a barman are in some places allocated by the government.

I meet Mario, the Cuban friend of a friend studying at the University of

and socialism



The Cuban flag flies high in the city. Photos by Bob Higson

Havana. Taking him for a drink on a nearby hotel rooftop, he whispers with a keen eye on the nearby waiter that this is the first time he's ever been allowed in a hotel such as this. Cubans like himself are not allowed in this hotel, he tells me, and are denied access to highly valued currency as the CPP. It's only because he came in with us that he was allowed through the revolving doors. This apparently bizarre cultural idiosyncrasy becomes understandable when one realises that a waiter here probably earns more than a doctor would on a measly state wage. I stir my Mojito guiltily in the knowledge that this one drink alone has just cost me more than my friend Mario can earn in a whole month.

Later, whilst taking a stroll along the Malecón - the seafront promenade on the edge of the city - I become engaged in conversation with a passing young businessman. When he inquires where I come from, I tell him I'm from England, and am suddenly treated to an impromptu, but highly enthusiastic, Beatles impression - air guitar included - in questionable Spanglish.

His fondness of the Liverpudlian group leads him to tell us of the numerous John Lennon memorials scattered throughout the city. I am at a loss, however, as to why he talks to us with his

mobile phone to his ear even though there is no one at on the other end. "This is to show I have money", he says. "If police see me talking to you, they can arrest me". For this man, passing police cars who spot him talking to tourists here naturally assume thievery. Apparently, in Havana, Big Brother really is watching you.

Cubans say the inherent inequality of the system is the single most exasperating issue that faces them. The social disparities - between those with access to dollars and those without - is crippling for some, and is disparagingly referred to as the "tourism apartheid" in some quarters. It remains unbelievable that despite such a well educated workforce that boasts one of the highest literacy levels in Latin America, such a system still operates so openly. It is even more remarkable in a country still screaming its socialist credentials, post-revolution.

Of course the real picture is far more complicated. Not everyone here is a staunch, red-starred communist battleaxe. Political ambivalence is especially prevalent amongst the student population; far more so than Granma - the official newspaper of the Cuban Communist Party - would have one believe. People are more concerned with what will happen to Cuba after Castro's impending death, the influence of the Miami mafia, and whether a communist economy can survive and truly be communist. For these people, there is a life beyond Castro and the celebrated communist revolutionaries that adorn the pavements throughout the city.

As I reach the end of my time here, I find myself feeling like I haven't even scratched the surface of a city so unlike any other. It does no justice to merely pass through so briefly, and so, even as I depart, Cohibas and rum in hand, I vow to return.

One thing I am sure of, however, is why Havana has for centuries captivated scores of people; from its grimier neighbours fleeing prohibition, seeking cheap liquor and gambling; to artisans, musicians, writers and political thinkers, all seduced by the charisma of a city so eclectic and contradictory, so idiosyncratic.

The scientific briefing with

Tom King

"Pillow Angel" or guinea pig?

Surely the most hotly debated scientific issue of the past few weeks has been the case of Ashley X, the little girl who will, to all intents, never grow any older. Ashley is nine years old but suffers from a rare condition called staticencephalopathy, limiting the development of her mental and motor faculties to those of a three-month-old baby. This makes her completely reliant upon her parents for all movement, feeding and changing.

It's a tragic story, but the thing that really marks Ashley out is that the severity of her condition and the lack of any prospect of improvement caused her parents to make the momentous decision to stop their "Pillow Angel" growing after her seventh birthday.

This was achieved first of all by a full hysterectomy, removing her uterus and ovaries to prevent her going through puberty and hence from ever menstruating. A drastic procedure was also carried out to remove her breast buds and an appendectomy was performed to rule out the risk of appendicitis later in life. As soon as Ashley had recovered from these surgeries the final stage of the treatment was enacted; high dose oestrogen injections over the course of the next two years causing her bones to fuse and meaning that her body will never grow past its current 5'4" or 75lbs.

Now I'm sure that for many of you your first reaction is, as mine was, one of horror and disgust at what seems like the grotesque maiming of a child, but, as one of Ashley's doctors has said, we must "get past this feeling and examine what harm is actually being done to Ashley." And indeed, upon closer examination, Ashley's parents may well actually have some valid reasons for their actions. Though a hysterectomy is a shocking thing for a nine year old to go through, the fact is that it prevents menstruation and the attendant cramps and bleeding which could prove both painful and disturbing for Ashley if she can't understand the cause of them. Yet while I agree that this is a good point, the same effect could have been achieved without removing her ovaries and thereby increasing her risks of osteoporosis and heart disease. Equally, the fact that she could remain childlike in appearance well into her thirties is a skin-crawling realisation. Ashley's parents rationalise this with the claim that they struggle to lift her at her current weight so if she grew any larger they would be unable to cope alone, but surely for less than the cost of the treatment a hoist could be supplied to assist them?

Other modifications, such as the removal of her breasts and appendix are less clearly warranted. Ashley's parents claim that she "has no need

for developed breasts since she will never breastfeed" and that, as her bust is apparently likely to be large, they would only cause her discomfort and put her at risk of being 'sexualised' to any care-giver. This might be a convincing argument if they hadn't stated that "other than her Mom and Dad, the only additional care-givers entrusted to Ashley's care are her two grandmothers" and that they have ruled out additional careworkers as not being "qualified, trustworthy and affordable" enough. The appendectomy also seems like an 'in for a penny, in for a pound' type of job, as there is only a five per cent chance of Ashley developing appendicitis. Following this logic every child should have their appendix, tonsils and adenoids out as a matter of course as they may become infected. The reason that this doesn't happen is that such operations are upsetting for the children and an unnecessary risk.

The main reason that the Ashley X treatment rankles with me is that she has no way of communicating her wishes. Therefore we simply must assume that her parents have thought through the risks properly and trust that their decision is in their daughter's best interests. The difficulty with this is that almost every problem they give as a reason for the treatments could be solved by other, less extreme measures, so actions like her height restriction seem like they've been done for the parent's convenience and not purely for the sake of Ashley's well-being. India Knight in *The Times* also makes the interesting point that her parents may just feel more comfortable with her condition in someone with the appearance of a child that they would in a fully grown woman.

Regardless of their motivations, the publicity surrounding Ashley's case, and the fact that it has been condoned by a medical ethics board (if not by a court of law) means that parents of other children with such disabilities may now see it as an option. British mum Alison Thorpe is now seeking a hysterectomy for her daughter Katy, even though at 14 Katy would be more likely to develop breast cancer as well as heart problems and brittle bones should the operation go ahead.

No-one who is not in such a position can understand the burdens placed upon the parents of severely disabled children but this should not be used to justify such extreme measures. In Ashley's case the treatment may have been warranted but there is no room for shades of grey in deciding whether to apply these procedures to similar cases. A line must be drawn to ensure that Ashley's story remains the exception, rather than the rule. After all, what happens if this is done to an individual who is aware of what is happening to them?

Famous former visitors to Cuba's capital city

Ernest Hemingway

Hemingway went to Havana in Spring 1932 and ended up spending four months there while having an affair with Jane Mason, the wife of the chief of Pan American Airways in Cuba. He later bought an estate in Cuba with third wife Martha Gellhorn and became a cockfighting devotee. After his death the Cuban government maintained his house as a museum.

Frank Sinatra

Stayed there soon after his wedding to Ava Gardner. The city's famous Hotel Nacional still displays a picture of them in their room.

Steven Spielberg

The Hollywood film maker visited Cuba in November 2002, meeting with Castro for an eight hour discussion sanctioned by the US government. He launched a festival of his films and called for the US trade embargo to be lifted.

Naomi Campbell

Another guest at the Hotel Nacional, the supermodel visited Havana in 1998 and met with Castro to discuss making a donation to Cuba's children. Campbell reportedly referred to Castro as "a source of inspiration", "intelligent" and "impressive".

Gay Christians have to fight prejudice on two fronts, forced to defend both their sexuality and their religious views. **Toby Green** explores the issues being played out on campuses, and discovers a group trying to challenge widespread assumptions

Praying for recognition

You get a strange reaction when you mention Christianity and homosexuality in the same sentence. People apparently tolerant towards all sexuality and religious choices laugh, look disbelieving at you, or generally just seem plain bemused by the idea. Yet young people that come out as homosexuals and believe in God have to grapple with this and much more. At a time when the media have portrayed Christians as rising up in anger against such measures as the Sexual Orientations Regulation Bill, a widespread assumption has developed that the religion is anti-gay as a whole. For young gay students this issue can be especially relevant: the religious scene at most universities is dominated by Christian Unions connected to the Evangelical Alliance, a group which has publicly stated that it accepts sexually active gay people but expects them “in due course to see the need to change their lifestyle”, or, in other words, to become celibate.

One website, www.ygcl.org.uk, has been set up to help these young people to follow through their lifestyle choices, and includes amongst its members many students from York, past and present. A subsidiary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement, the website defines itself as “a website for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered Christians aged 16-30 in the UK, a place to meet, socialise, hear from each other and support each other.” By candidly discussing the issues that its members face, not only does it make a great difference to often confused young people, but also tackles dangerous and widespread stereotypes about homosexuality and Christianity.

To discuss these issues I met up with two senior members of the website, James and Michael (names have been changed to

protect the welfare of those involved in the site). Both are in their mid-20's, and Michael was a student at the University of York. For James, it's the discussion of these issues that makes the website so special. “The group is made up of lots of different backgrounds and no one argues or condemns anyone. Instead the conversation is very free and also, very importantly, welcoming.” Michael agrees. “The problem for me when I came out was that I definitely didn't fit into my Christian Union [Michael came out whilst doing a Masters course, not in York], which was the main group available for me at the time. However I also didn't feel comfortable in the LGBT society, as I didn't feel it was me. This website is a place in between; here is somewhere that can mend the two sides.”

During his time in York Michael found the pressure on how people sought to state his religious views particularly troubling. “When people hear you're a Christian they seem to automatically want to define you. They say, oh you must think this, you must feel that.” He said this attitude was strongly typified in York University's branch of the Christian Union. “One of my housemates in the first year was a member, and it was never anything I'd thought about joining before so I decided to come along. However it seemed like they were saying, this is the way we think which is right and this is the way that everyone else thinks which is wrong. You could either side with them as a Christian, or not be regarded as a Christian at all, and I felt alienated by this attitude and as a result, never went again.

“I remember a little later in my time there, members of the CU went around making pancakes and handing them out on Shrove Tuesday. To get one you had to fill in a form about your religious beliefs. I filled



“Some Christians are saying that what gay people feel isn't love, it is a perversion”

mine in and the guy took it, read it and gave me a really puzzled look. He said ‘According to your answers you seem like a Christian, you look like a Christian, but you're not a member of the Christian Union?’ I told him that people are different and that what suited me may not have suited him, but he just wouldn't have it.”

The Christian Union at York, along with those at most universities, is affiliated to the EA (Evangelical Alliance), an umbrella group representing evangelical Christians and churches all over the UK. As a result of this the Union has to stand by the EA's statements on issues such as atonement, the Israel/Palestine conflict and homosexuality in the Church. In a recent report entitled ‘Faith, Hope and Homosexuality’, it concluded that “monogamous heterosexual marriage is the only form of partnership approved by

God for full sexual relations today” and that they “oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active homosexual partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian relationship.” For Deborah Fenney, a Social Policy and Social Work undergraduate at York, this meant that she had to leave her Christian Union committee position as Social Action Representative of the Union when she came out as bisexual last summer. “I met with the presidents [of the CU] and as they explained it to me, part of being a post holder is upholding the aims and values of the CU, whatever your private beliefs. Over the summer holidays I had the chance to pray and reflect on it, but at the end of it all I still couldn't believe that God necessarily condemns all homosexual behaviour. I decided I wasn't willing to be part of an organisation that promoted that view.” However she's not angry at her treatment, accepting it as a difference of opinions. “My good friends in the Union have remained my good friends, and even if their personal beliefs are different to mine, we can both accept that we have as much (or as little) authority on these matters as each other.”

However some people believe that the Christian Union's attitude could be causing more damage than is recognised. Rose Rickford and Ben Nichols, the LGBT Officers for the University of York Students' Union, believe that the Christian Union's policies is causing intimidation and antagonism on campus. “It's very frustrating when organisations such as these undo any good work that may be done by continuing to underscore the notion that LGBT people are somehow ‘wrong’ or ‘deviant.’” says Rickford. “We've had students come to us saying that the reason they have been confused about their sexuality is because of the messages from the CU. I think that the realisation that the message that they preach isn't necessarily the best way to ensure the well-being of those people would be helpful to them.”

This issue is of course being played out in the national arena as well as on university campuses, and as the modern world in general becomes more liberal towards the rights of homosexuals, the Christian Church, in all denominations, has found itself under pressure to change their ideas. One particularly contentious aspect of this has been gay marriage. Civil partnerships were made legal in the UK at the end of 2005, but in terms of Christianity there is a vast range of standpoints. Bishop Jonathan Blake left the Church of England because he was uncomfortable with their views towards marrying homosexuals, and instead has set up the Society for Independent Christian Ministry, through which he offers a range of services as a fully ordained Bishop. He appeared on Richard and Judy to bless a gay couple on live TV, which was labelled a “repulsive

Evangelical Alliance - ‘Faith, Hope and Homosexuality’

Extracts from the conclusions of the Evangelical Alliance's report on homosexuality

> We affirm that monogamous heterosexual marriage is the only form of partnership approved by God for full sexual relations today.

> We affirm God's love and concern for all humanity, including homosexual people, but believe homoerotic sexual practice to be incompatible with His will as revealed in Scripture.

> We repudiate homophobia insofar as it denotes an irrational fear or hatred of homo-

sexuals. We do not accept, however, that to reject homoerotic sexual practice on biblical grounds is in itself homophobic.

> We deeply regret the hurt caused to lesbians and gay men by the Church's past and present hatred and rejection of them.

> We oppose moves within certain churches to accept and/or endorse sexually active homosexual partnerships as a legitimate form of Christian rela-

tionship. We stand prayerfully with those in such churches who are seeking to resist these moves on biblical grounds.

> We commend and encourage those homosexual Christian people who have committed themselves to chastity and celibacy. We believe that such people should be eligible for ordination and leadership within the church.

> We call upon evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active homosex-

ual people, but to do so in the expectation that they will come in due course to see the need to change their lifestyle in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching.

> We believe habitual homoerotic sexual activity without repentance to be inconsistent with church membership.

> We would resist church services of blessing for gay partnerships as unbiblical.

<http://www.eauk.org/theology>

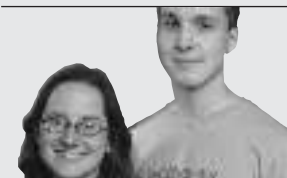
The polarised issue of gay and lesbian Christianity



Group members

Young Lesbian and Gay Christian Society

"It's not easy to put the negative images and messages of the press and the churches into perspective, alongside the Christian message of love and redemption. Yet my experience of both being gay and being Christian is fundamentally one of love."



Rose Rickford and Ben Nicholls

YUSU LGBT Officers

"It's frustrating when groups such as the Christian Union undo any good work that may be done by underscoring the notion that LGBT people are 'wrong'. Some students have said they are the reason why they are confused over their sexuality."



Evangelical Alliance

Alliance of Evangelical Churches and CU's

"We call upon evangelical congregations to welcome and accept sexually active homosexuals, but to do so in the expectation that they will see the need to change their lifestyle in accordance with biblical revelation and orthodox church teaching."



Society heads

University of York Christian Union

"The society exists first and foremost for Him rather than the members of the society. Anyone is welcome to attend any CU meeting, regardless of whether they're a member or not, and regardless of their opinions or orientations."



Gay Christians are developing an increasingly strong voice on the issues affecting them. Photos: Georgi Mabee

stunt" by *The Daily Mail*. He feels that it is homophobia itself that is the problem in the Church. "There is a growing momentum spurred on by the African Anglican Churches and the Fundamentalist Evangelical Churches that regards homosexuality as a sin and unbiblical and is therefore horrified at the liberal attitude towards gay issues found within Western Christianity and their associated societies. Rejection by Christian Communities does immense damage to gay people, which can fragment their entire lives. It is essential that universities ensure there are affirming and supportive Christian resources for rejected gay people."

Some of these accusations were put to the Christian Union and they were invited to join the debate. Instead of answering these questions directly they decided to give a general response, saying because the issue is "so emotive, often debated at extremes and can quickly become depersonalised and hurtful, we want to recognise how difficult an area this is and try and avoid oversimplification of the arguments given by all sides.

"The Christian Union is primarily

about a group of people who are focused on Jesus. The society exists first and foremost for Him rather than the members of the society. Anyone is welcome to attend any CU meeting, regardless of whether they're a member or not, and regardless of their opinions or orientations. Membership is free and for official AGM processes you have to be able to sign a membership statement which is on the website." For most though, the statement will be the stumbling block. Although it doesn't specifically mention its position on homosexuality, it does state it's affiliation with the EA.

James and Michael both see the views of such religious groups as the Christian Union as both understandable and acceptable. "These people's interpretation of what the Bible is saying is legitimate. However what is wrong with it is that it often declares that it is 'the' Christian view" says James. "I believe that if you are setting yourself up as the Christian Union, then you should at least be implying there are other views.

"They are not the only Christian body available on campus, for example some members of the chaplaincy at

York have very different and liberal views, but because of the Christian Union's absolutist view it can create animosity," says Michael. "The Christian Union can often make people not want to be any sort of Christian. It's not just homosexuals - anyone that follows a way of life that is condemned is told that their beliefs are 'the way' and that everyone else should follow their path. In fact there are so many different aspects in the Bible that simply come down to how we read it. There are passages in the Bible that can be read to condemn gay people if that's how they are read, but there are also instructions in there which in our modern times you just wouldn't live by, so why are the anti-gay bits being concentrated on?"

It seems likely that members of organisations such as the Christian Union would feel victimised for wanting to follow their beliefs, however the opposition to their viewpoint seems to take two angles. Some, such as the YUSU LGBT officers and Bishop Blake, believe that the Christian Union and Evangelical Alliance's view on homosexuality is wrong and immoral. Others, like James and Martin, accept their beliefs and interpretation of the

Bible as valid, yet believe they should make clear that they don't represent the majority of the Christianity viewpoint. What does seem conclusive though is that for Christians who are considering coming out as gay, or homosexuals who are considering becoming Christians, opinions are being upheld in some parts of the Church in a way that can be damaging. "There are Christians saying that what gay people feel isn't love, it's perversion. But there are bits in the Bible that say 'Jonathan became one in spirit with David and he loved him as himself'. Hopefully our website provides somewhere for people to discuss and embrace their homosexuality and Christianity, and show that they don't have to be a paradox."

Sources of support

York Lesbian Line
01904 646812
University Counselling Service
counselling@york.ac.uk
Nightline
01904 43 3735
YUSU Academic & Welfare Service
01904 43 3732

A different kind of sex education: the pain of looking good

Men often expect women to look good with no thought of how they get there. **Heidi Blake** and **Ellen Carpenter** show them

We were sitting in Goodricke bar one dark and stormy York night when a male acquaintance said something which got us thinking. Out of nowhere he volunteered, "It's so disgusting: my housemate doesn't see her boyfriend for two weeks at a time, and she doesn't shave her legs in between. I can see her hair poking through her tights. It makes me feel sick!" And from the small seed of righteous indignation he thus planted in our minds, this whole sordid scheme was soon to grow.

Why is it, we asked ourselves, that men expect certain aesthetic standards from women without having the slightest inkling about the extremities of work and pain which go into the beauty process? When men watch a beautiful woman walk into a room, all they can see is a desirable physical product, whereas women (sad as it may be) see botox, a boob job and breathtaking over-application of make-up. So, we got to thinking, would the attitudes of our otherwise liberal male friends change if they were made to experience in full the tortuous beauty process to which women are subjected almost daily?

So it was that, with the aid of 30 disposable razors, 18 waxing strips, a pack of Poundland French knickers and a crude concoction vaguely resembling a facemask, we decided to answer this question.

Our first recruit was Sam, a rather androgynous fellow with a penchant for hair straighteners and firm-hold hair spray, who was almost unnervefully willing to take part, claiming to be sympathetic to the plight of women already, not to mention having been on huge amounts of drugs when he agreed to it. However, once we had torn the first wax strip from his leg, his confidence in his femininity dissolved into tortured shrieks, as he wailed, "I used to sympathise with women, but I'll be a misogynist by the end of this!"

Second was Dan, perhaps the manliest of our subjects (complete with coarse facial hair, a thick Lancashire accent and a

'None of our subjects managed to push past the pain barrier beyond the half-way stage with the leg-waxing'

macho swagger in his step) who, contrary to our expectations, became absorbed in the process of beautification to such an extent that he emerged the only one of our four guinea pigs with faultlessly hairless legs, and was to be heard bemoaning his stubbly regrowth for days afterwards.

Then came Nicky and Raf, an inseparable duet of machismo, who cheated by using a large bottle of vodka as a makeshift anaesthetic throughout the operation. This pair began by thwarting our ruthless ambitions to cause grave pain by professing the process of waxing to be not painful in the slightest, saying, "if childbirth's anything like this, you lot are making a fuss over nothing." Needless to say, after the fourth or fifth strip had been torn vigorously from their legs, they were shrieking like dyed in the wool girly-boys.

It's no secret that men find the process of leg waxing painful, borne out as Sam punched the wall after one particularly vicious attack with a Boots Sensitive Skin waxing strip, and Dan proclaimed: "No, slow down! My heart can't cope with this!"

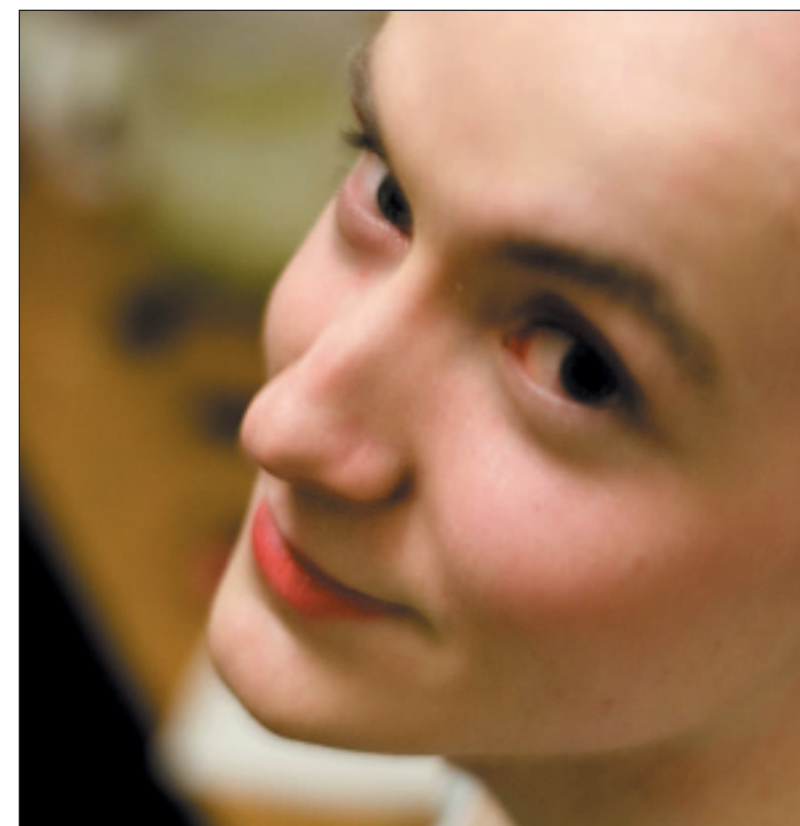
More interesting, however, were the various insights which emerged during the session. John, who had managed to gain entry to our hall of pain without being roped into the process, reflected that his views on female beauty had changed as he watched his male friends being subjected to the process it entails, saying: "I think if my girl-

friend stopped shaving and dressing up now I'd understand having seen what it involves." However, before we'd had time to feel victorious over having struck such a blow for feminism, he added, "But that's only because I love her. Don't expect me to sleep with any random mingers out of pity!" Not quite the outcome we were looking for, but a step in the right direction nonetheless.

Aside from Dan, whose meticulous nature and surprising enthusiasm led him to spend upwards of an hour and a half painstakingly removing every last hair from his bony little legs, none of our subjects managed to push past the pain barrier beyond the half-way stage with the leg-waxing. However, despite admitting that the process was painful and arduous, our subjects refused to accept it was as bad as we'd made out. As we lied that this was a process that women go through not just once but on a daily basis, we began to realise that perhaps not all of our techniques were as justified for the experiment as we initially claimed.

Chief amongst these was the homemade facemask we prepared for them, composed mainly of mulched avocado, glutinous honey, flour, oatmeal, sugar and a few glugs of vinegar for good measure. It was this that raised the most objections, and perhaps fairly, as Sam protested "I feel like I've got Shrek's jizz all over my face!" It was at this point that we realised the experiment was, for us, more about taking our pseudo-sadistic revenge on the opposite sex for the pressure we feel they place upon us than about scientific curiosity.

Having smeared the concoction liberally over their freshly shaved faces, we moved onto the process of dressing. Motivated by our sadistic frenzy, earlier in the day, we had purchased the itchiest looking red-lace French knickers and the most vicious control-top tights on the market. On first sight of the red laces, Sam declared: "I can't wear those; my knob's going to pop out!" A logistical difficulty us women don't have to face, but nonetheless we pressed on. Nicky - the most obdurate of our male guinea pigs - declared them to be not uncomfortable in the slightest, which momen-



tarily disheartened us, until we discovered he was wearing them over the top of a pair of soft cotton boxer shorts. Hardly in the spirit of the exercise.

The next challenge for our soon-to-be-reformed male chauvinists was the donning of the brassiere, a task which some took to with some relish than others. Dan, for example, enlisted the help of John (our objective onlooker) in stuffing his bra, and was heard on more than one occasion having done so declaring "Gosh, it's quite nice having titties", and inviting people to feel them. Nicky and Raf, however, couldn't quite believe the feat of engineering involved in putting on a bra, even declaring that the process was more painful than waxing. At least they felt they gained some insight on the behaviour of the opposite sex (however erroneous), saying: "This must be why you lot always want to live together. Is it so you can all meet up in the corridor in the morning and do up each other's bras?"

Another amusing spectacle was that of four swarthy gentlemen attempting to squeeze themselves into the control-top tights we had so thoughtfully purchased for them (particularly useful for Nicky, whose fresher's beer paunch nevertheless showed unappealingly through the white cotton dress we put him in). Dan was touchingly keen to learn the tricks of the trade, as our more benevolent photographer spent some time showing him the technique of

bunching tights in the hand before pulling them onto the leg. Sadly, even this cautionary action failed to prevent him from laddering them while violently dragging them over a horny toenail.

All that was left to complete the transformation were the skirts and tops we'd carefully picked out for them from our own wardrobes, and it was not without consternation that we heard their proclamations of "I look like somebody's aunt!" or "I feel like a prostitute!"

Then onto the make up - potentially the most time-consuming aspect of the process. By this stage even we, hardened glamour queens that we may be, were growing weary of the process of

Photos: Rachel Holloway

beautification, but we were heartened to notice that our chaps had been transformed into discerning charges, as they implored us to "go easy on the eyeliner!" and to ensure that their foundation was

'Dan was heard on more than one occasion, having stuffed his bra, to declare, "Gosh, it's quite nice having titties", and inviting people to feel them'

Some choice moments from the evening's revelry

Heidi: "We don't want to waste good wax."

Dan: "Yes we do! I don't care about dying kids in Africa, I care about my legs!"

Sam: "I need to get battered to regain some dignity after this."

Raf: "Dan, your leg looks like a chihuahua that's been on fire."

Dan: "What happens if the hair removal cream starts chafing and going all red and then my leg falls off?"

John: "I know what unshaven legs look like. I have an aunt who's Italian."

Sam: "My skin feels remarkably good after that face mask."

applied evenly. Dan, however, having become increasingly self-assured in the pursuit of physical perfection, declared "I don't need foundation - I don't have any blemishes! Do I?"

After the process was complete, we took the opportunity to discuss gender stereotyping with them while they were still attired in the get-up of the other sex. Nicky and Raf maintained that the process wasn't as arduous or painful as they'd been led to believe, though Dan - who seemed to have become completely immersed in his feminine role by this stage in the evening - pointed out that none of them could appreciate how tiresome the process could become when repeated daily, a point which was acknowledged by all.

Despite this, they maintained that the process is something which rightly comes with the package of femininity, just as hunter-gathering or jousting for sport comes hand in hand with the ownership of a penis. They were also at pains to proclaim their own innocence in the placing of expectations upon women, attributing it to the pressures imposed by the likes of Heat and Glamour magazine, as well as to general female bitchiness and paranoia.

We were, then, forced to question the extent to which expectations of beauty are self-imposed. The women in the room then began to unpack the sources of motivation behind the imperative to look good 24 hours a day, every day. Why

is it, we asked ourselves, that we feel we will be taken less seriously as people if we are not as close to aesthetic perfection as it is possible to be on a student budget? Particularly since it quickly emerged that none of the men in room could identify whether we were wearing makeup, and if so how much and where. Could it be that the beauty process is almost entirely self-imposed?

But then we thought back to Nick's admission that he would be reluctant to become involved with a 'minger' who failed to meet his pre-supposed physical standards. And of course the comment which inspired this whole article, reaffirmed our belief that whatever the pressures placed on women by women, men are heavily implicated in the creation of unrealistic expectations. After all, surely the bitchiness over beauty which exists between women is a product of patriarchal expectations; perhaps a throwback to a time when women were made to feel that physical beauty was all they had to offer in a society where a woman's chief goal was marriage.

So in the end, a salutary lesson was learned by all. Although John has no current plans to "sleep with any minger out of pity", at least his girlfriend might have an easier time in future. And a swift kick in the crotch reminded Nicky and Raf that childbirth is no laughing matter - and that women on a mission will stop at nothing to see their ends achieved.



Backstage with Russell Brand

After the York leg of his tour, **Natalie Carroll** gets the flamboyant comedian talking about overcoming his drug and alcohol addictions, skinny jeans and being 'sex mad'

“Coming to be in York”, announces Russell Brand as he swaggers into the room. “You’re all flooded, did you swim here?” In person, Brand is a striking figure. The stacked heels, impossibly tight trousers, and alarmingly unkempt hair are all present, as is his unique brand of charisma that seems to make him so popular with the ladies. “Lunatics, all of them!” he cries, as he escapes from the autograph hunters waiting outside for him. As he settles down, he seems keener to talk about the floods in York than his career. “I can’t believe it,” he announces, “it’s coming up the roads and everything!” After a brief discussion of how the water is, indeed, coming up the roads, he begins to talk to me about his rather convoluted and interrupted rise to fame.

A recovering drug addict and alcoholic, Brand has a past that is eventful to say the least. “I was expelled from school three or four times growing up,” he admits. His rebellion did not stop there either. After a council grant helped him get into Italia Conti Academy of Theatre Arts, he spent his time chatting up women and was eventually thrown out for drug taking. “I was under a drug-brella,” he jokes, “I was arrested maybe eleven times...it’s ever such a laugh, for a while!” As much as Brand may joke about his addiction, it led to the loss of his MTV presenting job in 2001, when he turned up to work the day after September 11 dressed as Osama Bin Laden. He was then fired from a series of media jobs, and it was not until 2003 that he finally left rehab and began to relaunch his career. Now, the comedian is proud to have been “clean and sober for almost four years.” As we talk, he swigs from a water bottle and jokes about having to put the cap on properly each time – “It’s sort of OCD, isn’t it?”

Despite no longer being under the influence of any kind of stimulant, Brand is an impressively lively and

sometimes boisterous character. “It’s sometimes difficult, sometimes sad,” he confesses, “but I prefer life with all its clarity. And I do have more energy now.” He will certainly need the extra energy as his career continues to grow, a fact made evident as he recounts his highlights of the past year.

“I loved appearing on Jonathan Ross,” he says, “and it was an eventful year for awards.” When asked about his accolades, Brand reels them off enthusiastically, as if he has done so many times before: “The British Comedy Award’s ‘Newcomer of the Year’, *GQ*’s ‘Most Stylish Man of the Year’, *Time Out*’s ‘Comedian of the Year’, *Loaded*’s ‘Funniest Man of the Year’, *The Mirror*’s ‘Funniest Man of the Year’ and *The Sun*’s ‘Shagger of the Year!’”. He currently presents Big Brother’s Big Mouth, fronts his own Channel 4 programme, The Russell Brand Show, and even has his own slot on Radio 2. Alongside all of this, he has recently toured the country with his stand-up act, released a DVD, and starred in salacious tabloid stories aplenty.

In relation to his ‘Shagger of the Year’ award, Brand explains “It’s not like they send someone round to test you, it’s about stories that they generate!” Nonetheless, Brand is the first to concur with ex-girlfriend Becki Seddiki’s claims that he has an extreme sexual appetite. “Guilty as charged,” he admits, “I’m sex obsessed.” He was famously photographed coming out of Kate Moss’s home last April, but is reluctant to discuss anything involving this particular exploit. More recently, his holiday activities with a young woman in Mauritius featured in

“I’m an androgenous sort of fella. My clothes are ever so restrictive. My goolies are permanently popped between my legs”

a variety of tabloid gossip pages. The discussion this time was centred not around his companion, but his appearance, which is something Brand is far more willing to expand upon. “I think I looked like a great train robber”, he says, “If I’d known they were taking photographs, I would have made more of an effort!”

However Brand may wish to describe himself, the persona he has assumed certainly works well on television. His excitable nature and flair for dramatics come across very strongly, as shown in Big Brother’s Big Mouth. “I really like live television. I embrace it, I find it exhilarating,” he explains. “It has an authenticity that you can’t recreate in an edit, and anything can happen.” As for Big Brother itself, Brand considers it to be “a great leveller. Ultimately it’s about humanity, about our ability to get on. And it provides us with a common set of neighbours that we can talk about, it gives us all a shared set of peers.” This is perhaps an interesting perspective from a man who himself features so much in the tabloids.

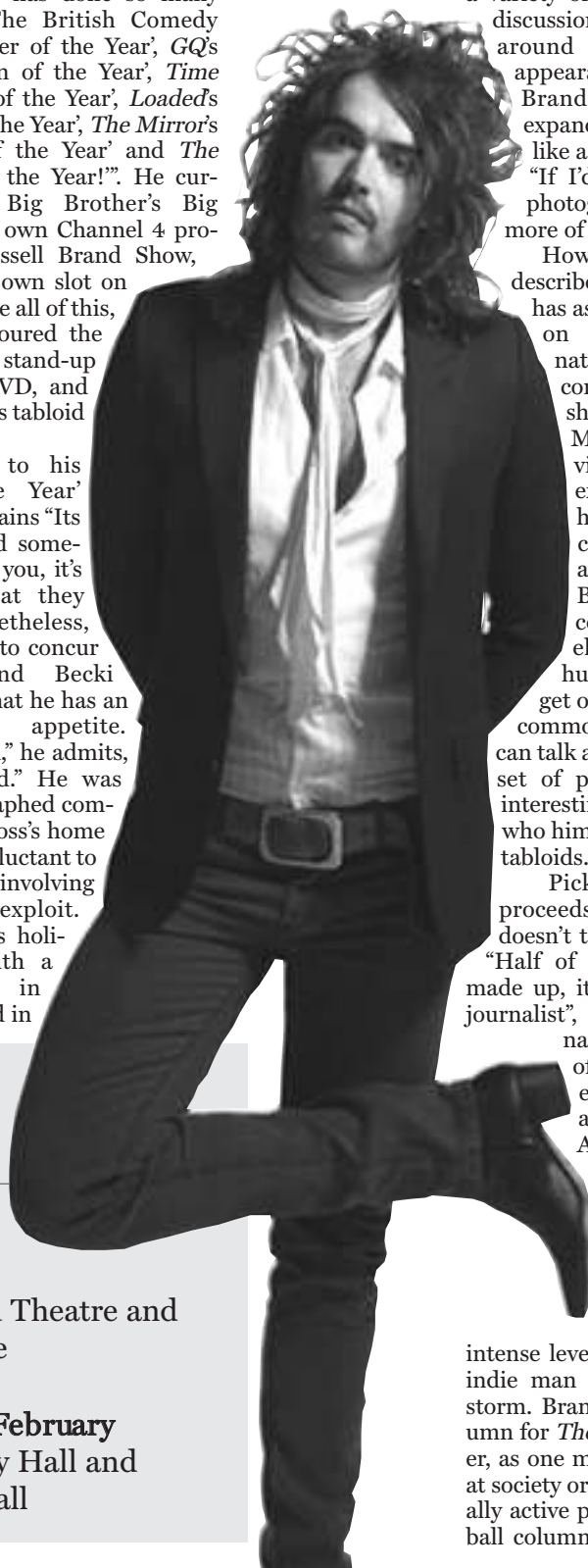
Picking up a newspaper, he proceeds to demonstrate that he doesn’t take any of it very seriously. “Half of what’s printed is entirely made up, it’s only in the mind of the journalist”, he pronounces. “I’m fascinated by tabloid culture. Out of sheer narcissism it’s interesting to see yourself abstracted from yourself.” And of course, it’s not only the tabloid papers that are fascinated by Russell Brand. Newspapers such as *The Observer* and *The Independent* have run features on him of late, reflecting the current intense level of interest in the modern indie man who has taken Britain by storm. Brand even writes his own column for *The Guardian*. It is not however, as one might expect, a satirical look at society or even a diary of his continually active professional life. It is a football column, bringing us onto another

of his favourite subjects.

A West Ham season ticket holder, he has recently started his own campaign to “enliven the terraces with new adaptations of modern songs,” notably encouraging all of Upton Park to sing Billy Joel’s ‘Uptown Girl’. “I pushed way too hard”, he smiles, “I’m trying to disassociate myself from it.” Leaving embarrassing terrace chants aside, his fame has brought other substantial downsides when he goes to watch his team. “All of a sudden I became notorious. I used to be able to go to the toilet untroubled and unruffled. Now the toilets are full of terrifying men!” What offends Brand most are the accusations of fellow season ticket holders that ‘You never used to come here!’ “I’m always telling them ‘It’s because you didn’t recognise me, I didn’t have a famous hairdo!’”

This famous hairdo, combined with Brand’s uniform of tight clothing, has led to speculation about his sexuality in the past. He declares himself to be “entirely heterosexual”, but concurs that when it comes to clothing and behaviour, “I’m an androgenous sort of a fella really.” His appearance provokes almost as much discussion as his love life. Carol Vorderman recently described him as “a swearing, strange person, not a hermaphrodite, but one of those you’re not quite sure what he is.” Remarks such as these apparently leave Brand unperturbed. Jonathan Ross believes him to have a “great look, kind of rock and roll” which Brand is quite happy to accept. When pressed, he surveys his attire and pronounces it to be “like a Dickensian gent, or perhaps an S&M Willy Wonka.” Is it uncomfortable on stage, I wonder? “They’re ever so restrictive. My goolies are permanently popped between my legs!”

If this is the case, Brand never allows himself to show it during his show. He saunters quite comfortably across the stage, jumps down into the audience to talk to those seated near the front, and even mimics himself ‘shimmying’ across a dance floor during an animated attack on an inaccurate tabloid report. His stand-up is surprisingly clever, particularly his frequent moments of improvisation. He is eloquent and intelligent, and a large proportion of his comedy is based around mocking himself. “My life is a series of embarrassing incidents,” he tells his audience, “which are strung together by telling people about those embarrassing incidents. I feel safe here, don’t make me go back out to the embarrassing place!” As tempting as it is to try and keep the comedian for just a little longer, Brand claims he must return to London for filming. “Lovely to meet you,” he smiles, and with a pirouette and a flourish he disappears through the door.



If you missed Russell Brand in York there are plenty more opportunities see his show ‘Shame’ in the new year

Monday 5 February
Manchester Opera House

Sunday 18 February
Liverpool Empire Theatre

Saturday 24 February
Newcastle City Hall

Sunday 25 February
Leeds Grand Theatre and
Opera House

Monday 26 February
Sheffield City Hall and
Memorial Hall



Househunting horror stories

Collette Kerrigan on the good, the bad and the Sinclair Properties of York's student housing market

The first year bubble is already on the brink of bursting. It took very little back in October to accustom ourselves to the cosy campus, with Costcutter, laundry rooms and cash machines within easy walking distance of our bedroom doors. Yet no sooner does it seem that we have unpacked our suitcases than we are told to start thinking about student housing for October 2007. Realising that life stretches beyond the No. 4 bus route is a big obstacle for any first year. From there on in, the rat race begins.

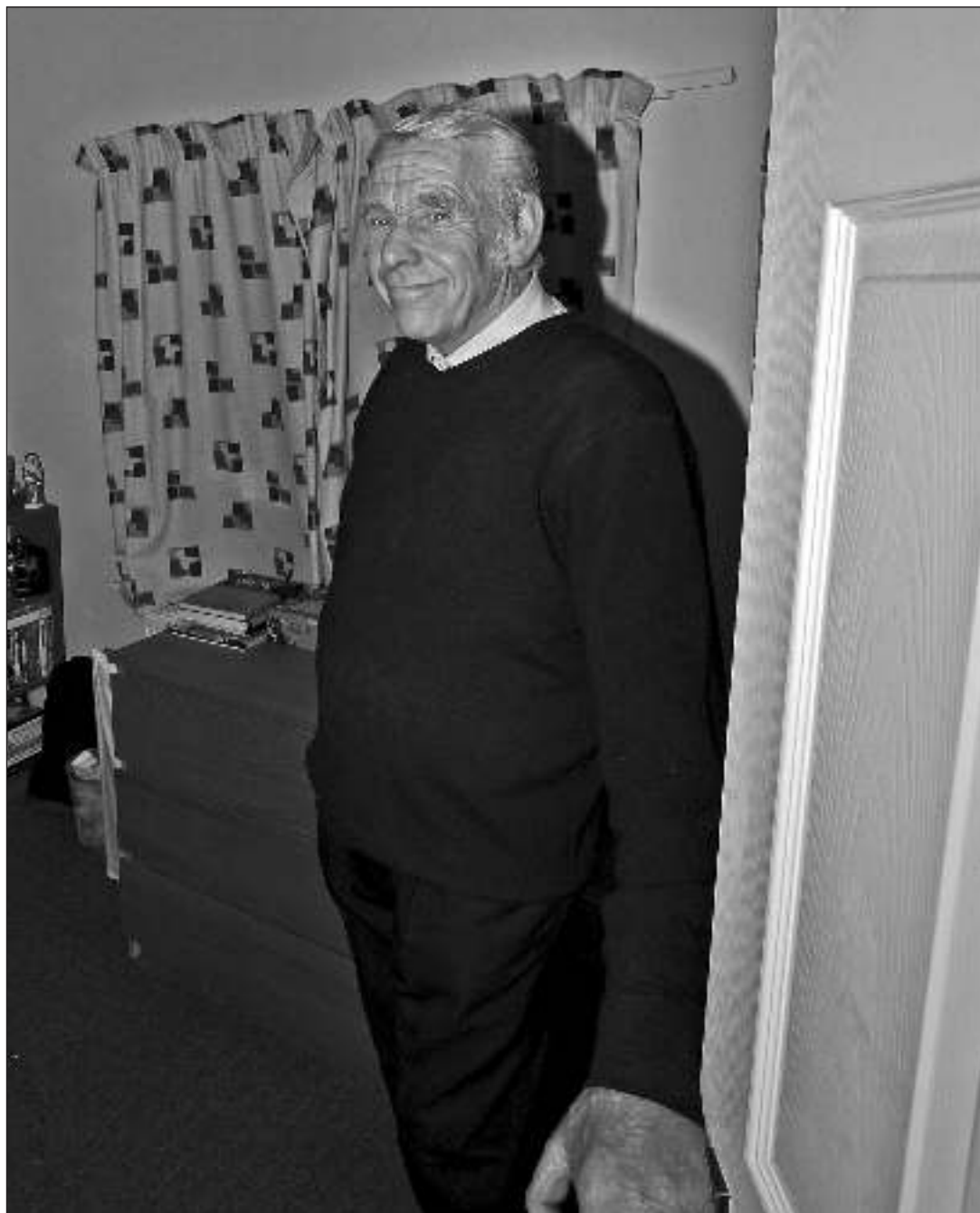
The major concern for any student is who they'll live with. When I started looking for a house, I found myself wondering whether living with my closest friends would be too close for comfort. Would I even still be friends with them ten months down the line? It hasn't, however, been finding my future housemates that's been the problem. It's been the compromises. My naivety in thinking that it would all be just plain sailing was quickly banished. There were decisions on whether to live closer to campus or town, and whether two bathrooms really are necessary (the answer is a definite 'Yes' if you're living with boys). Already we are fighting over the bedrooms of a house that we haven't actually found, while TVs and Playstations vie for a place amongst the tables and posters cluttering up our imaginary lounge.

Location is of high importance. Most students with a rough idea of York's social geography will know to steer clear of Tang Hall, whether out of student snobbery or general concern for

possessions. In anticipation of this ghetto-fabulous lifestyle, my housemates and I were slightly disappointed when we visited a house there last week. A grotty area, yes, but not unliveable, and considerably more attractive once we'd realised that a group of attractive guys lived just across the road. Of course, this may appear (and, okay, probably is) a feeble attempt to dissuade the masses who are looking for a house on Heslington Road, Badger Hill or Lawrence Street. Within close distance of the University and town, it's no wonder that houses in these locations are snapped up within hours, unlike those in South Bank - a definite no-go for those who don't delight in a 55 minute walk to campus in the morning.

The wonders of modern technology also mean that you can begin your house search online. The Sinclair Properties website is a good place to start, as it has photos and ground plans of all their properties. Sinclair also have the pick of the bunch as far as student houses go. With such a monopoly, it's no wonder that for every student house there are about forty groups of students interested. It's important to keep in mind, however, that they are not the only agency out there, and that they are not always the best either. Sinclair have limited my housemates and I to three house viewings that are yet to take place, while a far more helpful freelance landlord spent over two hours yesterday taking us to see six different properties.

At the risk of sounding like your typical complaining student, there are some companies who have really cocked



Choose your landlord carefully.
Photo: Ally Carmichael

up over the past couple of years. One particular group were lucky enough to experience an infestation of rats and electricity problems within weeks of moving last term. Not exactly the second year lifestyle they were expecting.

'Having anticipated Tang Hall's alleged ghetto fabulous lifestyle, my housemates and I were a bit disappointed. It was just grotty'

Nonetheless, student housing horror stories have become the norm; from leaking ceilings to lost deposits, boiler breakages to break-ins, you're sure to know at least one group of students who've dreamt about suing their landlord. Last year, a student house's kitchen in Tang Hall was robbed of food, alcohol and a George Foreman grill by a gang of twelve year olds. On another occasion, a money hungry landlord converted an already cramped five bedroom house into six rooms, using a flimsy wall in the attic which accommodates only those who are sincerely vertically challenged.

And where is this infamous landlord when you've got a problem? For one group, he was over three thousand miles away, living in Ghana. A third year commented: "There are two types of landlords: those that care about their job, and those that couldn't care less. If you're lucky, your landlord will come to mow the lawn but won't give you hassle.

If you're unlucky, he'll constantly be on your back but won't fix a heating problem four months down the line".

Those that have gone through agencies seem to have bigger problems contacting individual landlords who often fail to give their details out to students at all. The York Accommodation Office is insistent that contracts are triple-checked for authenticity and they advise students to be wary of landlords who make claims that clearly can't be kept. In the same vein, keep in mind that the offer of a garden Jacuzzi is probably taking it a bit far.

Those who have been let down by student housing companies have generally seen moving back on campus as the safest option, but it's not always the easiest. Not only the excitement of 'fresh meat', but also the cheap and easy way of life entices a huge number of people to apply for limited third year campus accommodation. The problem is that these students will only know in June whether they have a place on campus, by which time, if their application has been unsuccessful, they might be stranded with no accommodation at all.

However, it seems a shame to be casting such a shadow over what should be the beginning of 'real' student living. Perhaps I am just finding it difficult to accept the impending change from the free lifestyle that I have now grown accustomed to here on campus. I am sure that when next year comes, Tang Hall's suburbia shall be just as much part of life as my pyjama clad runs to Costcutter are now. Best not to speak too soon though.

The welfare angle: advice from YUSU's Amy Foxtan

>> Attend the University-run housing talk in Central Hall on Friday 2 February at 1pm. Also get yourself a copy of the University's list of landlords who have signed the Voluntary Code of Practice for Student Accommodation; it's available online from Week 4.

>> Deciding who to live with can be stressful. If you're having trouble finding housemates, there are always lots of people looking for an extra housemate or two advertising on flyers across campus.

>> Choose who you live with

carefully. Living in a house can be a lot more intense than halls and you may be arguing about the phone bill, who hasn't cleaned the bathroom and who forgot to lock the back door.

>> Try not to live with anyone you're romantically involved with. There's always a chance that, in a year, you won't still be together, and you won't want to be reminded of his or her new partner on a daily basis.

>> Decide what you're looking for as a group: is someone happy to pay less and live in a smaller room? Do you need to

live near town so your archaeologist friend can get to King's Manor?

>> Speak to the students who live in the house you're interested in for an unbiased view. Unlike the landlord, they'll know what it's like to actually live there.

>> Get your contract checked by a University welfare adviser - based in Sally Baldwin Block B - before you sign up.

>> You'll be paying around £3,000 for a room for a year, so don't rush into anything.

Andreas Masoura



Fascists, anarchists and Daleks: the political whirlwind of York University

Dalek attacks students

Apparently a local York resident who is fed up of noisy students walking by his house has responded by constructing a Dalek outside. Once a student approaches the house, the Dalek's inbuilt student sensor (the malevolent local huddling within the contraption) triggers off a vicious vocal attack. Many students find the ordeal traumatic, with at least one recorded death in the past month. So the resident is effectively doubling the noise created by students. I didn't realise farming skills incorporated robot building.

Locals must surely realise that universities are vital in reducing the proportion of stupid people in the population, ensuring the proletariat remain at bay. As for chav watch, I have found an effective yet humane solution to deal with the 10 year old scoundrels that run through my garden. It involves a trip wire and some broken glass.

Rooting out terrorism

Rumour has it that Red Watch are being employed to survey for any ethnically-based terrorist activity occurring around campus. Initially the scheme had proven a great success, with a total of zero suicide bombs recorded last term. However there has been a steady increase in young,

Middle Eastern-looking males walking around campus clad in backpacks and coats that appear excessive given York's mild climate. Very suspicious behaviour indeed. Rest assured, Red Watch, vigilantly protecting upright York society from the "unwashed scum of the Marxian left", have managed to keep track of me. I swear the library barriers go off even if I have no books. Imagine what could happen if the ethnics had access to the chemical labs. They could even make explosive Fair Trade apple juice.

My recently received and most informative York BNP leaflet raised several concerns for me. To quote one particularly enlightening section, "Thousands of possible terrorists study chemistry and biology in universities..." Redwatch have already proven their ample credentials for this vital job by spotting a York University lecturer at an anti-war demonstration. It's certainly refreshing to see such a liberal and open-minded attitude in England. Perhaps this long-held perception of mine could be slightly misinformed.

In a scientific attempt to scratch the surface and reveal York University's attitude to other cultures and to smoke out any potential Jade "poppodom" Goodys lurking around campus, I embarked on a bit of investigative journalism with a friend, whom I am unable to name for legal purposes and so will hereon refer to as "The Serb". We decided to go to a

Goodricke 70s-themed event dressed up as members of the Jackson 5 (Jermaine and Michael, to be specific) complete with brown body paint and Afros. To most present we were entirely unrecognisable and so we were able to anonymously and vigourously conduct our social experiment.

The Serb and I found that while the white males present looked on with a barely disguised mixture of fear and envy, the women simply flocked to us and our dancing became infinitely better. I am now resolved never to leave my house looking white again.

Radical student activism

Some York student "anarchists" have recently squatted in an empty house. For the record, they are not actually homeless but simply aiming to rebel against the oppressive confines of The State and the injustices of The System. However, the house in question was quickly reclaimed after the bastions of student extremism at Freesoc went home for some of Mummy's Christmas

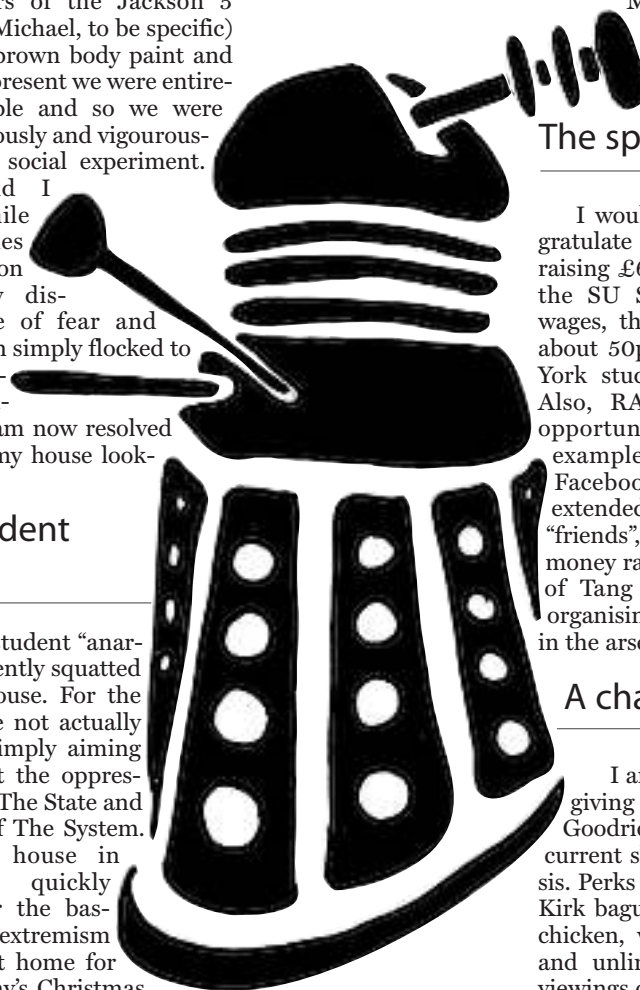
home cooking, and no doubt to ask Mummy and Daddy to continue funding their anarchy and to pick up a new Jack Wills gilet.

The spirit of giving

I would also sincerely like to congratulate the York uni RAG team for raising £6000 last term. After paying the SU Student Action Officer his wages, that will have left them with about 50p for charity. I didn't realise York students were quite so stingy. Also, RAG misses many excellent opportunities to raise money. For example, Rich Croker's Big Gay Facebook event could have been extended to include all of his 700 "friends", an entrance fee charged and money raised for the poor and hungry of Tang Hall. But then I suppose organising it would have been a pain in the arse.

A change of direction

I am quite seriously considering giving up university to become a Goodricke porter in order to ease the current shortage and recruitment crisis. Perks of the job include free Roger Kirk baguettes (except for Coronation chicken, which is a premium filling) and unlimited Pole Exercise session viewings on Tuesdays.



Filling in the gaps

Just imagine the scene a year from now. A cold, wet, betowelled and bedraggled first-year joins the line of impatiently muttering students outside one of the few remaining porters' lodges – lets say Goodricke's – and waits patiently for his chance to claim a key to his room. The queue is a motley bunch; some were locked out during a shower, others are post one-night-stand and sheepish, still more have been victims of vicious Dalek attacks (the student-hating alien killing machine has now been fitted with not just a water cannon but a police-issue taser and some kind of spike-launching machine or something).

The ceiling is leaking, as the upkeep budgets have been cut to raise money for a new Olympic-standard curling rink on Hes East. The temperature in the queue is a frigid two degrees, as the money for heating Goodricke has been spent building an enormous sandpit for Ken Batten and Keith Lilley to bury their heads in.

Several of the less hardy students have given up all hope, and are huddling together for warmth in what's left of Goodricke JCR. One of them is trying to catch a duck to eat, but without much enthusiasm, and it outwits him easily.

A shifty-looking swastika-tattooed skinhead is taking notes for Redwatch; they now target students, labour voters, ducks, journalists and the elderly as communist scum.

The elderly, massively overworked porter behind the glass partition has been brought over from the Physics Department and is nearing the end of a 12-hour shift. He wipes the perspiration from his brow as he begins the day's ninety-fourth journey to the parcel store around the corner.

Unrealistic, you think? Just sit by and watch Batten and Lilley fail to return portering to normal. Just don't say I didn't warn you.

By Nicky Woolf

Arts Reviews

BOOK: CHILDHOOD INTERRUPTED
 AUTHOR: KATHLEEN O'MALLEY
 PUBLISHER: VIRAGO
 PRICE: £10.99
 REVIEW: RACHEL HOPKINS

★★★★☆

In this terrifyingly true story, set in the 1950's, Kathleen O'Malley relives her disrupted childhood, in which she was seized from the confines of her home and forced to work in an Industrial School run by the Sisters of Mercy.

Kathleen and her sisters were forced to leave home after Kathleen became the victim of a brutal sexual assault at eight years old. Her mother was found guilty of negligence and Kathleen and her two sisters became just three of thousands of Dublin's 'orphans', who were physically and emotionally abused, stripped of their dignity and humiliated with beatings.

This story is not one of self-pity and resentment that is so often found in books of this nature but is one of survival and success; despite this horrendous experience, the author tells of her escape to England in a desperate search for a better life and now confronts her hidden past in a beautifully written journey through her childhood, which is bound to captivate your imagination and draw you in to the daily terrors that greeted the O'Malley sisters. Impossible to put down, this book is a truly remarkable story and certainly well worth a read.

CLASSIC BOOK REVIEW

BOOK: THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO
 AUTHOR: ALEXANDRE DUMAS
 PUBLISHER: PENGUIN CLASSICS
 PRICE: £9.99
 REVIEW: AMY SHACKLETON

★★★★☆

The sheer size of this book can understandably be off-putting, but perhaps comfort can be found from the knowledge that the first half is easily one of the most exciting stories to be found in its genre. In *The Count of Monte Cristo* we encounter a clear divide in mood, tone and action between the conspiracies lodged against its protagonist, Edmond Dantes, and his long and ridiculously complicated revenge. However, once Dumas has entirely captured our attention with the violence and romance of Dantes' early experiences, we cannot help but read on, encountering a huge transformation in our hero - he is now 'the Count'. We are no longer his confidants; he has become distant, exotic and mysterious. In this way the second half is saved from complete drudgery, for we are as much in the dark as Dantes' enemies.

This is the perfect book for a long, lazy holiday. Eloquently written and steeped in contemporary culture and politics, it is saved from being a dull or weighty classic because, at its core, it's a good old-fashioned adventure story.

Amy Scott talks to Langwith Provost John Issit about his latest artistic venture on campus

Langwith College is known for many things. Some are good, such as community spirit in the face of hilariously bad facilities or the Langwithian fondness for ducks. Others, however, are not so good, with a seemingly permanently closed bar and 'Derwent's weedy younger brother' tag. But one man, namely the new Langwith Provost John Issit, wants the college to be known for something else. He wants it to be known for art, and is starting his campaign with an exhibition to be held in Langwith this term, entitled 'University Space'.

Issit's scheme for artistic development within the college, in association with the rest of the University, came about through a desire to revive Langwith's oft forgotten gallery space. The gallery, situated upstairs from the Langwith JCR, is a great place for an exhibition, full of light and visible from seminar rooms and accommodation blocks around the Langwith area.

Issit recalls that "we'd been looking for a way to rejuvenate the gallery space in Langwith and after deciding upon a University-wide calling for an exhibition, it was just a case of coming up with

a theme; I think 'University Space' works as it can be interpreted in so many different ways.

"The ideas can be very wide-ranging, coming from different tribes of students and covering academic life as well as the obviously important social aspects - students meeting in the corridors and JCRs and all the ideas that flow there. Plus, there are a number of different spaces that can be interpreted, from accommodation, to the library, or even market square!" When asked about his own definitions of 'University Space', Issit leans towards the abstract. 'Maybe the space inside a Computer Science student's head! Or I could envisage a Philosophy student, sitting in the library reading a difficult and windy text, the long struggle this would require, and the wistful and dreamy thoughts of the student.'

The concept has excited many across the University, including second year History of Art student Isabel Buxton, who intends to submit a piece for the exhibition. "As LeFevre said, 'what would happen to the Church if there were no churches?' What would happen to the concept we call 'university' if there was no 'spatial mooring' with which we



The 'University Space' exhibition will be at Langwith College

anchor this concept? A physical space is to a collective concept as a word is to an idea - it provides a recognisable 'sign' shared by those within the group. Regardless of our own personal 'university space', we all share the same space and therefore our own intellectual space is informed by our shared physical environment."

The project hopes to encourage as many people as possible who are involved in the University to submit work. Issit wants to celebrate the artistic abilities of "the people who live and work in the space and who will use and develop the gallery - which, let's not forget, is a 'University Space' itself. I'm hoping to use this initial exhibition to see what level of interest there is out there. How many stu-

dent artists are there on campus and around York who have creative skill but at the minute no motivation or outlet?"

Judging by the response so far, there are certainly a lot of active and talented artists around. The exhibition is non-selective so all entries will be displayed. If you'd like to get involved, or have a tortured artist in your house or halls who needs a bit of motivation, it couldn't be simpler. Let the organisers know by contacting Suzanne Decker.

All submissions are to be handed in to the Langwith Provost's office (just along from the Porters) by Friday 16th February (Week 6). The exhibition is open to all and will commence on Monday 19th February.

WHAT'S ON

Meditainment

A therapeutic cinema experience
 19 - 25 January
 City Screen

LUX

Small-scale public artworks by York St. John art students
 19 - 28 January
 Selected venues in Micklegate

Relationships

A celebration of modern art through contrasts in material and form
 27 January - 8 May
 York Art Gallery

Lenny Henry, Where Are You From?

The comedian brings his new one-man show to York
 2 February
 York Grand Opera House

South Pacific

Adapted by York Stage Musicals from James Michiner's short stories
 2 - 10 February
 York Theatre Royal

Thoroughly Modern Millie

Presented by the York Light Opera Company
 13 - 24 February
 York Theatre Royal

Jorvik Viking Festival

5 days of Viking-themed festivities featuring a huge range of activities and events
 14 - 18 February
 Visit www.jorvik-viking-centre.co.uk for full events programmes.

The Other Side Comedy Club

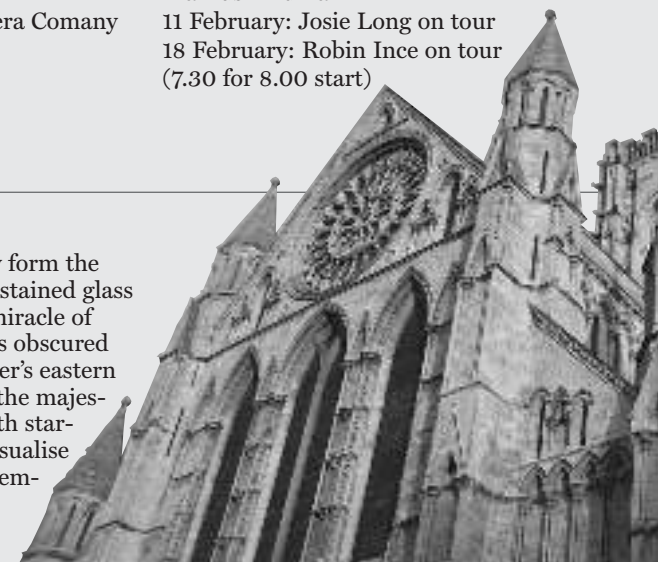
City Screen
 28 January: Brendan Riley, Danny James, Dan Nightingale
 4 February: Jim Jeffries, Sarah Millican, Markus Birdman
 11 February: Josie Long on tour
 18 February: Robin Ince on tour
 (7.30 for 8.00 start)

SPOTLIGHT ON

Illuminating York, York Minster until 28 January

Despite the heavy scaffolding covering the eastern side of the Minster, Paul Kaiser and The OpenEnded Group have created a dazzling light exhibition, with their project Recovered Light. With the backdrop of the Great East Window, the light acts as an 'x-ray', illuminating what lies behind. As projected light emanates and spreads, deep crimson red and majestic bright blue run down the canvas and intersect with the

bright white light. Together they form the striking image of a Renaissance stained glass window in a celebration of the miracle of life. Although the scaffolding has obscured much of the beauty of the Minster's eastern façade, Recovered Light evokes the majestic architecture of its interior with startling brilliance, allowing us to visualise its beauty through something seemingly mundane.



TheatreReviews

Oh yes it is! **Sarah Jeffries** and **Amy Milka** report for our panto special

At any mention of pantomime I can't help but conjure images of inescapable jollity and headache-inducing colours, so I was wary at the prospect of Cinderella at York Theatre Royal. However this is no ordinary panto. Written and led by Berwick Kaler who has been in the role for 29 years, with Martin Barrass his trusty sidekick for 21 of those, they have refined it to an art form. As Barrass says, the mantra for pantomime creation is "is this the best we can do?" and it is this dedication that gives the show its magic. Barrass cites the "laziness" that has built up (complete with questionable 'celebrities') and given pantomime a bad name. Kaler has flipped this around, and in any YTR panto "the only celebrities are in the audience".

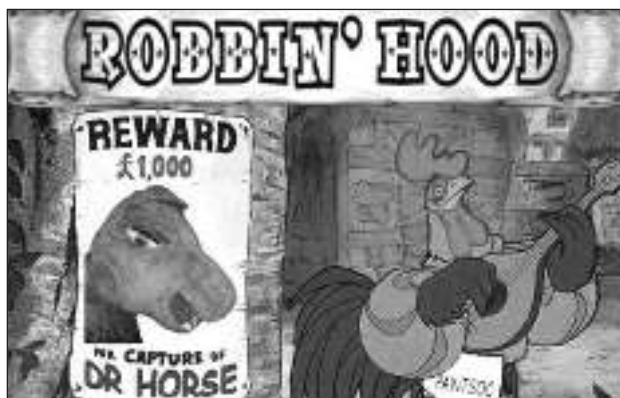
The term 'postmodern pantomime' has been used to describe the show, and was justified within the first five minutes. We were greeted with a typical English Morris dancing scene, yet after just two minutes of the chorus's 'good old pantomime' song, the Pussy Cat dolls belted out and the demure village ladies became somewhat burlesque. Berwick dislikes "anything twee", with

Barrass and Vincent Gray (Buttons) emphasising that the show is all about "the unexpected". This attitude of challenging audience expectations results in a fantastical assault on the senses.

Cinderella's modern edge comes from the careful interlacing of pop culture witticisms, with 2006 summed up with a video remake of the irritating 'Sheila's Wheels' adverts and of course the Hoff. Barrass highlights the heavy emphasis on "physical theatre" which Gray continues with the importance of "partnerships" within the production.

Asking about the traditional moral message of the performance, I received a mixed response: Barrass concluded "it's nicer to be nice than nasty, then I get beaten up for it", with Gray adding, "don't stop trying and it will eventually happen". If you are still questioning whether to see Cinderella, from Gray himself: "you can't get a funnier night out anywhere". In all its pythonesque glory, I really have been converted by the show; long may Kaler and his team's reign over the pantomime season last.

All the fun of the panto can also be found on our own doorstep. For three whole nights, Central Hall becomes a



Robbin' Hood promises not to be pants

fully-fledged forest, complete with merry men. I met Will Seaward, director of Robbin' Hood, who explained his unusual take on the classic story.

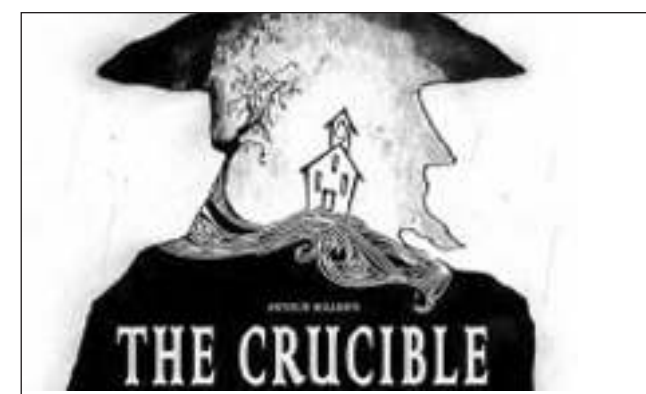
"It all begins in Tang Hall": not often a phrase connected with a heart-warming story. Seaward's Robin (Rebecca Chalk) swaps Sherwood for YO10, roaming the dangerous territory off Hull Road. Here, in the process of stealing her handbag, he meets Marian (Amy-Claire Scott), the beautiful SU officer who will turn him from slumming it by the Co-op towards a valiant

crusade against the evil Sheriff, terrorising the students of York to fund the Heslington East development.

Although Seaward's version carries a clear message to the student audience, let's not forget that we're still talking pantomime. Enter Will Scarlet (Catrin Jones), a girl dressed as a boy in order to win the affections of Robin, who (s)he thinks is gay. Add a Friar Tuck who only talks in rhyme, a Little John confused by his amorous feelings towards comrade Will, and, as if that isn't mayhem enough, a despondent Cupid with suicidal tendencies.

Pantsoc have clearly gone all out on this one, but they are on a strict budget. "We don't receive any SU funding", Seaward explains, "so we've been raising money by waxing our legs" (he shows a shiny shin). Overall this promises to be a hilarious and successful student production.

Robbin' Hood is in Central Hall on 25, 26 and 27 January. Tickets are £3 on Thursday, £4 on Friday and Saturday, and available at Your:Shop, Vanbrugh stalls, or from pantsoc@yusu.org.



PRODUCTION: THE CRUCIBLE
VENUE: THE DRAMA BARN
REVIEW: SOPHIE DAVIES

★★★★★

Ever since the unprecedented amount of interest at Dramasoc's auditions for this revival of Arthur Miller's increasingly relevant *The Crucible*, it was clear that Sophie Larsmon's production would be highly anticipated, and duly sold out within hours. The Drama Barn was transformed into a Puritan building with a brown and white paint job, providing an atmospheric setting for Miller's tale of the Salem witch trials. Larsmon's inspired decision to stage the play in traverse allowed for an ideal setting for the courtroom scene, whose intimacy meant that the audience themselves became jurors.

The play opened in style, with a dramatic scene of dance and drums in the woods. Credit is due to Rina Nalumosu as Tituba, whose singing and hysterical exchange with Hale (Matt Spingett) added a mystical and exotic dynamic to the play. Other exceptional performances included Dominic Allen (Paris) as well as Spingett. Things picked up pace in the courtroom scene where a real sense of tension was created through the rapid exchanges during interrogations.

It was the tender scenes between John and Elizabeth Proctor (Marcus Emerton and Katie Kelly, respectively) which were the most poignant of the play. In the final scene, Emerton brilliantly captured Proctor's own conflict between his huge sense of guilt at his affair and his desire to live, and was complemented by Katie Kelly's gentle and honest performance.



PRODUCTION: CHICAGO
VENUE: YORK GRAND OPERA HOUSE
REVIEW: AMY MILKA

★★★★☆

An antidote to a dreary January night: immerse yourself in the "old razzle-dazzle" of Chicago. The musical has once again been revived and is on the road, even stopping in York for a fortnight, and filling the Opera House to bursting point.

The cast certainly didn't disappoint. From the first, the audience was swept up into the high-kicking world of Chicago vaudeville. Roxie Hart and Velma Kelly were appropriately reckless, flirtatious and egocentric; Billy Flynn wonderfully sleazy yet suave, and Roxie's unwitting husband Amos, had the audience whimpering sympathetically into their programmes. The dancing was truly superb, especially the raunchy "Cell Block Tango", and the unexpected harmonies in some of the songs were excellent.

The band and conductor were also worked into the narrative, which was refreshing. Characters stopped and chatted on their way on and off stage, and after the interval we were treated to a lively instrumental rendition of "All That Jazz". It was clear that the stage was significantly smaller than the cast were used to, but they coped well with barely any slip-ups.

However, for me, Chicago has always lacked something; it is one of the few musicals from which not all the songs are truly memorable, and seems to peter out towards the end, when the audience is expecting a spectacular finale.

Unfortunately, the Opera House uses Ticketmaster with extortionate service charges, leaving me with a rather light wallet, but certainly a shimmy in my step all the way home.

COMING SOON: DRAMA BARN

DramaSoc puts on student productions at the Drama Barn every Friday, Saturday and Sunday of term at 7.30pm. Tickets cost £3 for Fridays and £3.50 for members, £4.50 for non-members and are available Thursday and Friday 12-2pm from Vanbrugh Stalls, or on the door. Spring term will see a variety of productions showcasing York's student talents:

Week 3
'Epitaph'

Directed by Ollie Jones, produced by Neil Arden

Week 4
'Enola'

Directed by Katie Kelly and produced by Molly Bird

Week 5
'The Glass Menagerie'

Directed by Emma Miles, produced by Heather Barber

Week 6
'Stone Cold Dead Serious'

Directed by William Bowry and produced by Anna Rohde and Edd Fortes

Week 7
'Lying for a Living'

Directed by Doug Kern, produced by Chris Hogg

Week 8
'Cricket on the Moon'

Directed by Kate Lovell and Beth Pitts, produced by Rina Nalumosu

Week 9
'Women Beware Women'

Directed by Matthew Lacey, produced by Helen Fletcher

Week 10
'The Fire-Raisers' (RESCHEDULED)

Directed by Mark McDaid and produced by Adam Formby

MusicReviews

SINGLES REVIEWS

Air – *Once Upon a Time*

Unfortunate choice of title. Propelled into fame by Sofia Coppola and monopolisers of the 'memorable ad music franchise' Air, once upon a time, were arguably quite good. It makes you wonder where that inspired decision to release a filler-sounding track as their first single came from. Perhaps Jean-Benoit's comment on his own track will shed a little light. "We like the fairies".

LCD Soundsystem – *North American Scum*

Aptly living up to their name, LCD Soundsystem endorse the "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" ethos and offer up a solid (if easily forgettable) piece of white boy electro-pop protocol. Derogatory comments on the single's title *North American Scum* would indeed be unjustified. Really, it's a lot less exciting than that.

Matt 101 – *Dangerous Cat*

With an opening reminiscent of the Buffy theme and lyrics relishing, "I would love to bite your neck", it'd be easy to say, "nuff said", right there. Unfortunately, Marty's Dracula-clad-in-60s-Mod and insouciant cigarette 'look' on the cover manages to jolt even the most indolent into passing comment. Watch out, he's a dangerous kitty.

Sophie Ellis Bextor - *Catch You*

In which Sophie discovers electro-pop and becomes better than anyone ever imagined she could be. After having a baby and getting married to that bloke from The Feeling, Bex is back with the first single from her new album *Trip The Light Fantastic*. *Catch You* is like a slice of Goldfrapp coated in pop icing, and her best effort by a long way.

The Klaxons – *Golden Skans*

In which The Klaxons continue to edge towards being as good as the NME tells you they are. Falsetto oohs and aahs drag the single towards a chorus just earnest enough to distract you from the fact that it nicks its melody from Hot Chip's 'Over and Over'. More focused than previous singles, this is the sound of a band hitting their stride.

The Good, The Bad & The Queen - *Kingdom of Doom*

When a band has such remarkable credentials, Albarn of Blur, the Clash's Simonon...you start to worry a little. Even Slash's fro-mane couldn't save Velvet Revolver. Thankfully, this time we were pleasantly surprised and just a little dazzled. Mixing haunting balladry reminiscent of the Beatles' White Album with a melodious, catchy refrain, Albarn has again proven himself to be no one trick pony. As one review succinctly extolled Albarn's talents: "Jammy bastard".

Singles this week were reviewed by Sara Sayeed and Ben Rackstraw.

On the up: Jess Gardham

We all need to start getting out more – and no, I don't mean staggering into Toffs after a pitt-stop at Nags head, only to emerge still lurching to "time of my liiife". I mean absconding from the banal predictability of Tuesday/Wednesday night forays and becoming a little more imaginative, more explorative with our free-time ventures.

Easy to say, a little more difficult to do; I half-managed it last Tuesday, when on my way to Toffs, my housemate enforced a detour via The Living Room, to watch Jess Gardham's live set. Apart from what we've seen and heard on Campus, the majority of us are about as knowledgeable about York's music scene as Ostriches are about defense strategies. So it's time to start dragging our heads out of the mud and having a little gander.

The vital mix of folk, soul and Tracy Chapman-esque vocals, is fresh but still retains a comforting familiarity. When the current slew of avant-garde music can render listening a arduous and demanding

process, sometimes you just need a bit of unfussed acoustic melody to kick back with.

Gardham's set exemplifies easy-listening in the best sense; it is wonderfully spare, unexpectedly poignant and not devoid of a little tongue-n-cheek – her rendition of The Black Eyed Peas, "Where is the Love" is actually quite moving, unlike the grating moralizing of the original. Although, predominately playing intimate venues like The Black Swan and the Living Room in York, Gardham is no trivial local musical token, she's already shared the stage with KT Tunstall and last year played at Glastonbury.

So, next time you're stumped for a nightly activity, try and think out of the Toffs/Ziggys box, exercise a little musical snooping and you may just be pleasantly surprised. I know it's difficult to envisage, but there are somethings' which merit a somewhat higher accolade than "soon playing on a Toffs dancefloor near you...."

Gardham's debut 'Beyond Belief' is out February 2007.



BAND: FIELD MUSIC
ALBUM: TONES OF TOWN
REVIEW: BEN RACKSTRAW
OUT: NOW

★★★★☆

If there was a barrier to commercial success in Field Music's self-titled 2005 debut it was that the note-perfect pop was constantly interrupted by rhythmic innovations. The drums cutting through the vocal harmonies was both praised as part of their inventive sound and criticised as difficult to follow, with some critics dismissing the band as part of the 'angular' scene.

It is ironic, then, that the very thing that made the debut so interesting should add a note of banality to their follow-up. The tricks of rhythm that pepper *Tones of Town* have become such a familiar trademark that they fade into the background; fortunately the songwriting that this exposes is wonderful enough to take centre stage.

The playground melodies of upcoming single *A House Is Not A Home* and Supertramp-influenced piano of *Sit Tight* and *A Gap Has Appeared* underline a very British pop sensibility that sits beside the aforementioned inventiveness, especially in the fantastic bass solo that closes *In Context*.

This will not be the album that catapults Field Music to the heights of their fellow Mackam scenesters Maximo Park and The Futureheads but is all the better for having retained an endearingly knotty intricacy.

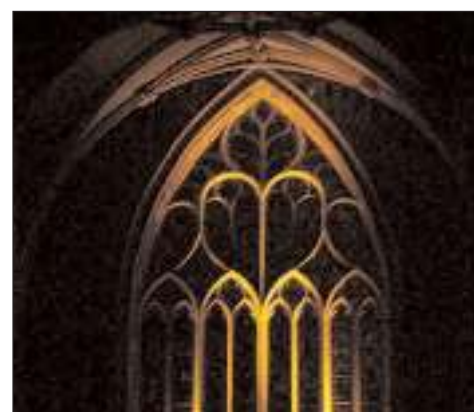


BAND: JAMIE T
ALBUM: PANIC PREVENTION
REVIEW: SARA SAYEED
OUT: NOW

★★★★☆

Life is full of little nuggets of bizarre, incongruent delights. Cases in point: banana, chocolate and mozzarella pizza; salt & vinegar crisps dunked in Nutella; those unforeseen feats of culinary genius compiled around 3 a.m. when you're still swaying to Baywatch. Jamie T reminds me of Nutella & Walkers butties—his music is an erratic amalgam of anything and everything, fused together in a sozzled haze. Punk-funk, ska, garage, bit of hip-hop, all jammed together and recorded in a bedroom on budget equipment – this shouldn't work, frankly it should be disastrous.

The unfathomable thing is that not only does T make work, he does so with brilliance. The "let's just bung it all together and see what happens" feel of the tracks is just cunning pretence, as the genius lies in the subtle detail. Brackish bellows of "Loonndoon!", hollered "lalalas" and snippets of John Betjemen's poetry frequently puncture the melodic texture, never skipping a chance to provoke or pique. The music constantly revivifies itself, with every play exposing new harmonies and unpredictable kitschy beats, so all you have to do is plug it in your ears, go for a walk somewhere and revel in the "blue blooded murder of the English tongue".



SHOW: SPIRE
VENUE: YORK MINSTER
REVIEW: BEN RACKSTRAW
DATE: SATURDAY 20 JANURARY

★★★★☆

The breathtaking acoustics of the Cathedral were put to a slightly different use last weekend, as the ambient electronica of Spire filled York Minster. The audience was invited to explore the space in new ways: the performance sandwiched electronic treatments of organ sounds between selections of predominantly twentieth-century organ pieces, lending the vast interior a dream-like quality.

Christian Fennesz's improvised laptop soundscapes (incorporating the sound of the sea with inspiration drawn from the storm earlier that day) filled the Chapter House; Philip Jeck used two vintage record players and a Casio sampler to loop, scratch and distort organ records, and BJNilsen's melodic washes of sound inspired one woman to walk sideways in a trance-like state along the front of the nave. The electronic ventures fit perfectly with the organ pieces that were at times as ambient, melodic and discordant as their electronic counterparts.

The final pieces, a fourteenth-century motet first sung, then played on the organ, placed Spire in a tradition of exchange between musical media and its roots in the Middle Ages. In the decorated vastness of the Minster we felt bathed in this history while experiencing its newest creation.

MusicPreviews

SAM NOBLE



Hit the road, Jack

"They don't call it the toilet circuit for no reason," said a friend to me recently, having just come off a nation-wide tour promoting their debut album by visiting the arse-end of every 'cosmopolitan' metropolis our nation offers. As he chain-smoked all afternoon, I remarked that he looked as if he'd fought in both world wars and hadn't slept during the interval. "Sounds 'bout right," he croaked, whereby he fell asleep where he sat, cigarette in hand. This is what touring does to you. As I looked at my slumbering friend, physically and mentally beaten to an incoherent pulp of a man, I asked is it worth it? He hesitated. Hours passed. Seasons changed.

Rock n Roll has long been the adjective to describe the care-free, fuck-you attitude which embodies our tight-jean clad heroes, who write songs to emblazon on backpacks, gargantuan riffs to melt your face off and lyrical slogans to rally even the most disinterested crowd at Fibbers. But these days, for most hard working bands, it's a vision as elusive as the Blue Peter badge.

At the best of times, touring is tough, taxing, thankless, dispiriting work. My sleepy friend enlightened me on a typical day on the road. Wake up around lunchtime, hung-over and in the clothes you've been wearing all week - "Otherwise you lose them" he deadpanned. Then, drive three hundred miles with seven equally tired, hungry, hungover men. Finally, after an hour of wrong turns, arrive at the venue too late to soundcheck.

Drinking becomes an antidote to boredom while you wait and wait some more backstage, which is as about glamorous as the toilets in Reflex. Drunk but capable, go on stage to five frowning teenagers. Plough through the set which by now is so familiar you're on auto-pilot. Muted applause. The promoter didn't show so no one gets paid (not that bands new to the circuit get much anyways. Opening acts usually get paid measly £7-10 pounds a night each) Drink, smoke and eat more takeaways to relax and console each other to get through the next day.

Touring conflicts with any notion of healthy living. You're too poor, bereft of time and hung over to care most of the time. Even the hedonism that drugs offer become a convoluted necessity on the road; to stay awake for a few more hours or to sleep on a wooden floor next to semi-naked shivering men. I've heard horror stories about guitarists catching scabies off dirty mattresses, electric shocks from rat-bitten cables, throat ulcers, vomiting blood, punch-ups, lacerated hands, punctured lungs and up to the eyeballs in debt.

So, after hearing more horror stories from fellow circuit trawlers, I ask my friend again, is it really worth it? He wakes. Lights a cigarette and looks at me intently. "Hell yeah, I'm in a fucking rock band!" And there it is. With an expletive and a cigarette in hand, I understand the irresistible lure rock n roll provides. The joy of playing music you're passionate about. That's it. Overwhelmed at the physical abuse my friends stoically numb with drink, just to pursue their passion, I'm imploring people to support any hard working band and enthusing about your mates as much as I do.

BAND: LARRIKIN LOVE
VENUE: LEEDS COCKPIT
PREVIEW: SARA SAYEED
DATE: 02/02/07

☆☆☆☆☆

NME once remarked that when they fed Larrikin Love's record into their "secret NME Band Pigeonholing Machine" it generated a "huge explosion followed by an automated reply: 'Service is out of order'". Possibly, (at least I'd like to think so) this little disclosure was intended to reveal the delusional, foam secreting crazy of the NME office clan. Witless similes aside, the general gist is that the band certainly deserve some kudos for their cunning skirting of any genre.

The Freedom Spark skittishly meanders around a plethora of sounds, easily oscillating between Gypsy-ska and what sounds like a hillbilly-hoe down on speed, all in one song no less. So, tedium and monotony is something you can definitely count out if you head to Leeds - and besides, the rough, shambolic amalgam that lends the album such a restless feel is rumored to amplify into an energetic, infectious, flurry when uncaged and let loose live. Not a bad start then.

Larrikin form part of what the NME has dubbed the 'Thamesbeat scene' (with such overuse no wonder that "secret machine" busted a gasket). Larrikin's sonic mongrel certainly possesses a poetic troubadour-like quality - think of them as the iPod generation's version of the daffodil and Tintern Abbey-loving Romantics. Citing Wilde, Orwell and Byron as influences, the band



Larrikin Love: modern, musical Byrons

may have somewhat of a literary ponceyness to them:

"The Freedom Spark is an exploration of innocence, of childhood, of human nature, and, ultimately, the yearning to have a real sense of freedom... it is the first instalment of an ongoing exploration" expounds Ed Larrikin. Big things to come then.

If you're up for some musical dynamism with a poetic varnish, the Cockpit will be your haven on the February 2. Still unconvinced? Consider going for the visual spectacle alone - with Ed Larrikin's one-side skinhead, other side Vernon Kay 'do', their coiffeurs are a work of avant-garde artistry in themselves.

BAND: MIKA
VENUE: LEEDS COCKPIT
REVIEW: BEN RACKSTRAW
DATE: 28/2/07

☆☆☆☆☆

Lets get one thing straight: Mika is going to be absolutely huge. Huge like a mountain or the sky or some other traditionally large concept. You might have heard his single 'Grace Kelly' - not released until the 29th January, but currently riding high in the charts due to those handy new download rules - on the radio, or, as I did last week, over the speakers in HMV. But if you haven't, it places him as the British answer to the Scissor Sisters and is the pop single of the year. No question. With a relish of retribution, this tour comes after years of rejection. Mika himself admits, "too weird for the record companies but too commercial and melody based for the Indie crowds". Those musical parameters seem to have turned to his advantage, his Myspace plays rose from 400 to 45,000 in a week after a mention in the Popbitch newsletter and now he has a major label deal with Casablanca (ex-home to Lindsay Lohan, fact fans!). Oh, and he's just been revealed as the BBC's 'Sound of 2007'. This is why it is so fantastic that he is playing a venue like The Cockpit; this is a night that promises either to be wonderfully intimate or like having a full-on pop band at a house-party. This could be the gig that you dream about in that 'wouldn't it have been amazing to catch (insert name of huge band now playing only stadiums) on their first tour?' fantasy. Book your ticket now.

CAMPUS BAND SPOTLIGHT

Juliet Bravo

Who? Dom Shaw: Guitar, Steve Chan: Drums/Percussion/Samples, Ben Nichols: Bass, Marc Sanders: Vocals

What? Apparently it's "Progressive brown noise". To clarify, they're influenced by Refused, Tool, At the drive-in, Mike Patton, Twin Peaks.

How? Dom and Ben were fresher neighbors. Brought together by Derwents paper walls, their shared musical tastes forged a bond to rival Frodo and Sam. One day Bandsoc threw up Steve and original vocalist Ed. When Ed ran away, Marc valiantly stepped in and took his place, completing the current line-up.

Where? They killed it at Certificate 18 and one campus event early last year.

Sing to us! "Walking either side of trees, separation is killing me." Abandonment issues do poignant lyrics make.

Quality of life for bands on campus? They commend Bandsoc for all their best efforts with sourcing equipment and practice space. Unfortunately, Dramasoc and others hoard central hall, leaving rehearsals in Town as the impractical and expensive alternative. "You'd think it would be easy enough to have one or two dedicated rehearsal rooms on campus in the evenings", they whimper.

Fancy your chances at BOTB? "We think there is a good chance for one of the less well-known bands to win this year as quite a few of the bigger bands that have been successful in the last couple of years either aren't around anymore or haven't entered."

How do we stalk you? www.myspace.com/forgetaboutthemovement and they're BOTB on Thursday 1st February.

Magic P and The Innuendoes

Who? Aaron Berry: Fiddle, Martin Coumbe: Guitar, Phil Merriman: Bass.

What? They claim "progressive-jazz tinged, folk-metal funk that the bastard spawn of Michael Flatley would dance to." That's that, then.

How? Like many University tales it begins with alcohol... "Aaron got drunk, and went upstairs with his fiddle." At 3 a.m. these things often make sense, only to become the victim of alcohol induced amnesia the next day. In this case, however, the mood lasted and the friends Aaron made on his fiddling mission formed Magic P the very next morning.

Where? To be found at intimate venues like Goodricke Cell Block C, The Side of the Lake, and Wentworth.

Sing to us! Unfortunately with all those genres there isn't any room left for lyrics.

Quality of life for bands on campus? The band have felt the squeeze of the bar closures, "it's harder for new bands to gain a foothold and exposure" explains Aaron, "although there are still good opportunities in Woodstock and BOTB there could be more live music events with established headliners and support slots for newer bands."

Do you fancy your chances at BOTB? The boys aren't taking the competition too seriously, "it's a chance to make music, entertain a crowd, enjoy ourselves play on the same bill as other good musicians; if we get through, so be it." However, as a questionable incentive for supporting them, Phil reveals that "if we win Aaron and Martin will strip naked and run through campus."

We need to see more! Check out www.myspace.com/magicpandtheinnuendoes, and see them at BOTB on Tuesday 30th. January.

Film Reviews

EDITOR'S COMMENT



David Coates

Children of Men, The Departed, Aliens, The History Boys, Borat, Easy Rider, The Host, Marie Antoinette, Twelve Monkeys, Jackass Two, Falling Down, The Prestige, Tenacious D in The Pick of Destiny, Dog Day Afternoon, Pan's Labyrinth, Deja Vu, Casino Royale, The Untouchables, Flags of Our Fathers and Babel.

There's a decent chance that out of the above list, you can pick out half a dozen very much worth seeing. Starting with Alfonso Cuarón's brilliant *Children of Men* this Thursday, a five-pound membership card will get you into as many of these movies as you please (and there are still others not mentioned above) for only £1.50. Compared to £5.50 for City Screen, and £4.95 for Vue at Clifton Moor, it's great value for a chance to see a movie on the big screen.

Children of Men stars Clive Owen as an office worker in a vision of Britain in the future, where no children have been born in the past 18 years. Though it plays heavily on nightmare-future movie conventions, the film, adapted from P.D. James' novel of the same name, effuses a spirit of hope and defiance lacking in other works of the genre. *Minority Report* and *Blade Runner*, while great films in their own right, suffer like most Philip K. Dick novels from being insufferably bleak. Not so *Children of Men*. It instead weaves a redemption plot: Owen's reborn activist escorts a newly pregnant girl cross-country to a safe haven that may exist only in myth. Driven by a supporting cast that display an almost incredible warmth, Cuarón gives the story a rich emotional core, without ever stepping into cloying sentimentality. Check out Michael Caine as a hippie. No foolin'.

Flags of Our Fathers is unmissable, despite its obviously American slant. Reuniting Academy Award winners Clint Eastwood (Best Director 2004) and Paul Haggis (Best Original Screenplay 2005), who last collaborated on *Million Dollar Baby*, the film revolves around the battle of Iwo Jima and the six American Servicemen who were subjects of the most iconic photograph of the 20th century, raising the American flag on top of a battle-scarred hill. Along with its sister piece, *Letters From Iwo Jima*, Clint Eastwood has been able to establish himself as one of Hollywood's great directors.

YSC has outdone itself this term and membership is well worth the money.

FILM: THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND
DIRECTOR: KEVIN MACDONALD
STARRING: FOREST WHITAKER
JAMES MCAVOY
GILLIAN ANDERSON
REVIEW: PAUL BECKER
RUNTIME: 121 MIN

★★★★☆

Kevin MacDonald, an Oscar-winning documentary film-maker, has now put the truth on hold and come up with this film, a fictionalised account of Ugandan dictator Idi Amin's relationship with a young Scottish physician, who becomes his doctor and "closest advisor" during the 1970s.

Aligning himself firmly with the ascendant genre of the "Africa Movie", MacDonald has drenched his film in topical colour and sound: rich green and ochre dominate the beginning, before the shadows take over and reveal the dark heart of Amin, the whole backed up by bongo rhythms and black, dancing bodies.

This is, of course, the propagation of a very simplistic view of Africa, where the artist takes whatever is picturesque, makes it twirl until your eyes and ears ache, then adds a more or less timid "yes, but..." The African movie thrives, of course, on a Western point of view. This isn't the story of

Uganda, or General Amin, but that of Nicholas Garrigan.

Played by James McAvoy, this young doctor is a charming rogue who, bored at home, comes to the country in search of fun, validated by the idea of "making a difference" treating locals in a small mission. After a spirited wager for his boss's wife (Gillian Anderson), he runs into Amin, who latches onto him like a lion and never lets go, installs him as his personal doctor and corrupts him without letting him know. At the end of his sojourn, Garrigan has directly, though not deliberately, caused two deaths.

The question of his naive guilt is also that of Western complicity; the British government that brought Amin to power is represented only by a sleazy agent (Simon McBurney) who refuses to equip Garrigan with a life-saving new passport unless he murders Amin. Under such circumstances, it is easy to see how it would be difficult to look Africa in the eye without cowering.

This brings us to the performance of Forest Whitaker as Idi Amin – bulky, terrible, towering. There can be no conversation on equal terms with this man, and not just because the camera looks up to him, awestruck: everything he says and does is designed to ply people to his will. He correspondingly possesses a huge amount of per-



sonal charm and charisma, but Whitaker understands his character well enough to make his smiles and gestures of bonding more terrifying than any outburst. It's all there in the split second that occurs in most conversations as you can practically see Amin deciding how to react to his protégé, processing Garrigan's goodwill in terms of love, respect and obedience.

This makes him something of an heir to Orson Welles in *Citizen Kane*, though more extroverted and utterly unabashed – when he feels unloved, or betrayed, his big face fills the screen and the camera circles around him, as though he were trying to suck in each and everyone, near by or far away, to keep himself going. As Garrigan notices slightly too late, he's a child. And a symbol for Africa's tragedy.

FILM: THE PURSUIT OF HAPPYNESS
DIRECTOR: GABRIELE MUCCINO
STARRING: WILL SMITH
REVIEW: STEPH CREWES
RUNTIME: 117 MIN

★★★★☆

In his first English film, Italian director Gabriele Muccino presents novel insight into an otherwise conventional Hollywood rags-to-riches story in *The Pursuit of Happyness*. Set in San Francisco in 1981, the film explores the struggles of salesman Christopher Gardener (Will Smith) as he falls out with his wife Linda (Thandie Newton) and attempts to build a lasting relationship with his son Christopher (Smith's own son Jayden). When his wife leaves them with three months rent unpaid, Chris secures an internship at a successful stock brokering firm, pulling through with desperation, determination and his ability to solve a Rubik's Cube. The title's spelling mistake refers to the graffiti on the wall outside Christopher's dilapidated childcare centre. The point is; it doesn't matter how it is spelt. Happiness is happyness. Conventional American morality runs throughout; *The Pursuit of Happyness* is a classic Hollywood fable.

Muccino does an admirable job, turning a melodramatic, overdone storyline into a film with depth and beautiful texture, achieved through largely handheld



camerawork and muted mustard-yellow and brown tones. Most powerfully, however, he films people walking throughout San Francisco in close-up in the very first frames, suggesting the film is not only about an individual pursuit, it is about a decidedly American dream, in which happiness equals money. With overly moralistic dialogue, it is every man for himself. "You got a dream, you gotta protect it. People can't do something themselves, they wanna tell you that you can't do it." Smith carries the film with an intensely believable performance, whilst Thandie Newton is underused, limited to the angry black woman we saw in *Crash* (2004). *The Pursuit of Happyness* is not a brilliant film, but it is one to see if you believe in happiness.

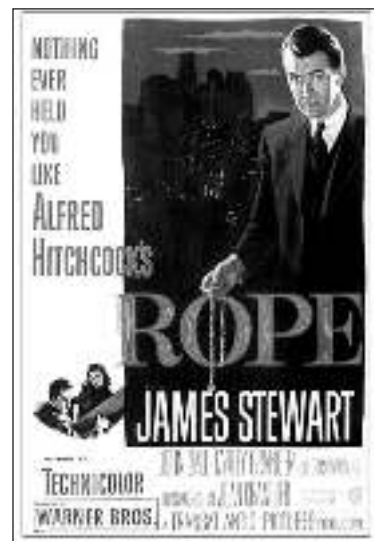
FILM: ROPE (1948)
DIRECTOR: ALFRED HITCHCOCK
STARRING: JAMES STEWART
REVIEW: JAMES FANNING
RUNTIME: 80 MIN

★★★★☆

Hitchcock's 1948 film *Rope* is clear evidence of his artistic genius. Shot in continuous ten-minute takes (except for two cuts), the level of choreographic precision and technical mastery is stunning.

The entire film takes place in one apartment, as Brandon Shaw (John Dall) and Philip Morgan (Farley Granger) murder their friend and host a party with the corpse locked inside a chest.

Hitchcock's stylistic virtuosity dominates the film. With the action confined to one location, the camera becomes critical in maintaining and accelerating tension. The camera often becomes more important than the characters, focusing upon the chest for example, as Mrs. Atwater (Constance Collier) prepares to place some books inside whilst the other characters chat off-screen. Hitchcock grants us a position of privileged insight, exposing minute details as the plot begins to unravel. The camera dollies in on Philip, when, mistaken for the deceased Kenneth, he shatters a wineglass in his hand. Similarly, when Rupert (Jimmy Stewart) finally works out what is going on, the audience does too, as the camera zooms in on the initials inside



the dead man's hat. The film has been criticised for its ludicrous acting and shamelessly punning script: "I hope you knock 'em dead" and "I could strangle you" spring to mind. Certainly, Hitchcock's technical mastery allows viewers to overlook such inconsistencies – yet the ridiculousness of the film is part of its appeal. This was also one of the first films to deal with homosexuality (however subtly) with the murderers involved in a peculiar sexual quadrangle, involving themselves, the deceased man and former teacher Rupert. Dall's performance suggests sexual gratification through murder, a far darker premise than that of *Psycho*. *Rope* is a brilliantly self-contained thriller, as tense and exhilarating a cinematic experience as anything produced in the past half-century.

Food&DrinkReviews



WHICH COCKTAIL?

The world of cocktails is a world of choice: bitter or sweet? Smooth or thick? Once you've navigated the menu, however, you're free to enjoy the blissful experience that is cocktail drinking. Muddler, strainer, blender, flamer. No, we've not lost the plot, these are the techniques you may encounter while watching that indie-looking chap in Evil Eye whip you up one of his "specialities". Not to worry though, we've chosen three of our favourites.

BAR: BAR 38
COCKTAIL: FLYING GRASSHOPPER
PRICE: £4.75

A cocktail for the more sweet-toothed of patrons. A blend of creme de menthe, white creme de cacao and vodka provides a new take on the original Grasshopper. Its flavours lie somewhere between a melted mint aero and mint choc-chip ice cream, providing the perfect substitute for a third course.

BAR: BILTMORE BAR AND GRILL
COCKTAIL: INGA FROM SWEDEN
PRICE: £5.50

This tall, red nordic cocktail is definitely not one for the faint-hearted. Inga's shapely curves invite you to sip the eclectic mix of sweet xante pear liqueur, fresh strawberries, cranberry juice and a drop of campari. This Swedish beauty combines a cooling fruity taste with a European sensuality. She certainly will not disappoint.

BAR: EVIL EYE
COCKTAIL: MOJITO
PRICE: £6

Inga's Cuban counterpart is a classic. A favourite of Hemingway's and popularised by Bacardi adverts, this traditional cocktail blends rum, lime, sugar, mint and soda to create a hard-edged drink. Although it's come in for criticism for being a cliché in cocktail society, it can't be beaten.

BAR: HAHA
COCKTAIL: TOKYO ICE TEA
PRICE: £4

For the more alcohol-inclined of York students. Containing six shots, including vodka and tequila among others, it's fairly easy to end up a few sheets to the wind after a glass or two.

Lauren Menzies and Sam Whittaker
 B&R Deputy Editors

TAKEAWAY: KFC
ADDRESS: 47 BLOSSOM ST.
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £3-4
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £1.50
REVIEW: LUCY PEDEN



I was filled with anticipation, excitement and anxiety. Where could my lover be taking me? There I was, stood in that most romantic of spots, between the motorbike repair shop and the tattoo parlour, counting the seconds until we would be together, when he appeared, emerging from a cloud of traffic fumes, tall and hairy, like a gorilla in the mist. He took my arm and ushered me into an intimate bistro. The red sign above the door seemed to glow with amorous promise, and the heavy scent of grease and meat by-products stirred my passions further.

Manfully, he positioned me at a table by the window. How many other couples had stared into each others eyes over that slab of stained Formica? He asked me what my heart desired the most, and I told him that of

all the tokens of affection he could offer me, only a Zinger Burger would make me his. Tenderly he murmured "what about a Zinger Tower Meal?" It was a proposition that I was to find irresistible. As I gazed out of the window, watching boys in tracksuits urinate against the Odeon building I pondered what the night had in store for me.

When he returned with my Zinger and a Salsa Toasted Twister Meal I was a little shocked his tastes could be so deviant, but something about the authoritative way he chewed made me realise that he was a man who always got what he wanted. I watched him, leaves of flaccid iceberg and sodden peppers trying to escape from his jaw, but being reined in by his powerful masculine energy, rivers of grease falling from his mouth to his broad chin. It was undeniably erotic, so much that I was distracted from my Zinger, the chicken tasteless, the fiery sauce bland against the fire of my passion, the fries limp in my fingers in comparison with the thought of his firm, throbbing manhood. My ardour burned as brightly as the neon strip-lights, and soon I was begging him to lead me to the gentlemen's lavatories and take me roughly against the urinal.



BAR: BLUE BICYCLE RESTAURANT
ADDRESS: 34 FOSSGATE
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £15
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £6
REVIEW: NICKY WOOLF



Set in the sumptuously refurbished environs of one of York's oldest brothels, the Blue Bicycle restaurant by the river on Foss gate sets out to provide the ultimate decadent dining experience.

Rich sexiness is the tone; artfully risqué paintings adorn the dark red walls, and the restaurant offers diners the option both of the eclectic upstairs dining room or romantic private booths where a couple can enjoy a romantic dinner reclining, roman-style, on futons.

Served with a certain panache, the food, predictably, is as rich as the atmosphere. Nonetheless it is delicious, if a little pretentiously dressed (I'm not sure I really know what a coulis is, nor, for that matter, a fondant or a jus). The wine list is accomplished; not only did it range from the most delectable wines of southern France but it also encompassed the Champagne region, explored recently by the BBC's Oz and James on their *Big Wine Adventure*.

This, then, is a restaurant with a specific purpose, which it fulfills splendidly; whether it be an anniversary, an apology-meal, a birthday treat or a splash-out date, I can recommend no better place for a romantic dinner for two.

BAR: BUZZ BAR
ADDRESS: 37-39 SWINEGATE
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £12
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £5
REVIEW: EMMA FITE-WASSILAK



The first impression upon walking into Buzz is Yuppie (yes, capital Y), thanks to the modern décor, the strange neon lighting and the weird music. There are also a few kooky touches, like sushi-rolling mats used as placemats and soy sauce in a decanter that looked more suited to balsamic vinegar.

The main courses are reasonably priced considering what they are, and the amount of food is substantial. The Mixed Tempura Bento box was a little weak, as the tempura was too greasy and it seemed like there was too much to centre a box around, but the accompanying rice and salad (with a ginger sesame dressing) were lovely. The Mixed Sushi Bento, enjoyed by my companion, was divine: the fish is chosen according to market availability and it practically melts in the mouth, which is particularly refreshing when the only thing you've had to slake your sushi craving has been supermarket crap.

Luckily for those frightened by raw fish, Buzz also provides noodle dishes (akin to Wagamama). Their wide range of drinks, including sake and Japanese beer, may prove too much for those on a tight budget, so stick to either the food or the drink to keep the cost down. As a sushi-addict, I know I'll be going back.

BAR: BOBO LOBO
ADDRESS: 5 LITTLE STONEGATE
AVE. FOOD PRICE: £10
AVE. DRINK PRICE: £6
REVIEW: JONNY DACK



Blood red napkins wiped away the remains of vibrant mouthfuls that had missed their target. The taste of Latin America was becoming almost too strong. The regular sips of San Miguel acted as anaesthetic between bites.

As I surveyed the geography of the menu, it became apparent I was in for a perilous journey. The origins of flavour ranged from Mexico, Columbia and Ecuador over to Cuba. However, with enthusiasm to experience these rich dishes, and with Senor Miguel as my faithful guide, I felt prepared.

My taste bud bombardment started in Mexico. After my initial hesitation, I forked through the enjoyable goat cheese stuffed chillies. I then searched for refuge in the familiar face of chicken fajitas for mains and had a strawberry daquiri cheesecake for dessert.

South America's culinary influence is truly the shiny side of the peso. The collaboration of these countries' cuisine produced an impressive list, only disappointing in the fact that my menu wasn't a peace treaty. The intense passion of everything South American made my visit to Bobo Lobo authentic and exciting. However, I left with a firm reminder that where there's heat, there's fire.



Clockwise from top left: Students enjoy last term's RAG Parade; Pablo Picasso print; Gary Mullen as King of Camp Freddie Mercury; Ben Whishaw stars in Perfume as a serial killer with a sensitive nose.

Live Music

Saturday 27 January

Levi's One to Watch presents the Noisettes, Fibbers

Likened to the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and the White Stripes, fresh from their stint supporting Muse. Appearing with the Pixies-esque The Victorian English Gentlemens Club and bluesy one-man-band Mayor McCa. £8 at the door, £7 in advance.

Sunday 4 February

Lior, Fibbers

This Aussie presents catchy, melodic tunes that smack of Jack Johnson, Jamie Cullum, and a hint of John Legend. £6 door, £5 in advance.

Tuesday 13 February

The Long Blondes, The Welly Club, Hull

Hailing from Sheffield, this glam-punk band doesn't really need much bigging up to those who know them. Definitely one to check out. 8:00, £11.50 in advance. www.ents24.com for tickets.

Saturday 24 February

One Night of Queen with Gary Mullen, Grand Opera House

A Queen tribute band headed by the winner of the 2000 Stars in Their Eyes series, backed by his band The Works. Promises to be a night of camp fun. From 7:30, Students £15.00 in advance.

Campus Events

Saturday 27 January

Wild Wild Wentworth

The James JCRC will be putting on a reportedly 'wild' night, with tequila shots for £1. Get your chaps out for this cowboy-themed event, with a prize for the best fancy dress. From 9:00

Monday 29 January - Friday 2 February

Battle of the Bands Heats

Every night of Week 4 Goodricke will be hosting the heats for this year's Battle of the Bands. 30 campus bands will fight it out for a place in the Week 6 semi-finals. Doors open every night at 8pm with a late bar on Friday, open til 1am.

Thursday 8 February

RAG The Viking Raid pt. II

Tickets are £5.50, including a free t-shirt, transport into town, and entry into the club. All proceeds go to RAG. Loads of drinks deals, prizes and competitions to be won. Get your shirt at Vanbrugh Stalls this week (week 3). Starts at 6:30pm.

Saturday 11 February

RAG parade and street party

The annual, free RAG parade in association with Montey's Rock Cafe, starting at 1pm. There'll be performances from Dancesoc, Capoeira Soc and a Brazilian Samba band, and all for charity.

Art and Performance

Until Sunday 4 February

Japanese art in life, York Art Gallery

An exhibition of prints and ceramics, all linked by the theme of everyday life. Features pots by Katsue Ibate (known for wearing a cat suit while creating). Open 10am- 5pm, admission free.

Until Sunday 28 January

Gateway to the Quarter, Finkle Street (opposite VJ's)

Exhibited from dusk (4:00pm) until midnight every night, Gateway to the Quarter is a digital urban art gallery on the streets, with contributions from local artists of varying experience.

Until Sunday 28 January

Recovered Light, York Minster/St. Williams College Green

From dusk to midnight, The Open Ended Group provide an x-ray stylee rendering of what is hidden by the scaffolding on the Minster's eastern facade, namely the Great East Window and some of the interior.

Until Sunday 18 February

Histoire Naturelle: Prints by Pablo Picasso, York College Art and Design Foyer

A collection of prints created to accompany the French naturalist George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon's work. 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday, admission free.

Cinema

Perfume

Starring Ben Whishaw, Dustin Hoffman, and Alan Rickman, Perfume is an adaptation of Patrick Suskind's *Das Parfum*, a reportedly "unfilmable" book. A young man born into the all-too-pungent 18th century Paris slums has an extraordinary sense of smell, and ends up killing young women.

The Return

A cliched horror film starring Sarah Michelle Gellar about a girl with a phobia of Texas (who can blame her?) She's haunted by visions of a town she's never been to and a man she's never met, and is aided by a guy with a decidedly shady past.

Dreamgirls

Follows the story of the ups and downs of the music business and fame, involving loved ones getting hurt in various scrambles to the top. Featuring Jamie Foxx, Beyonce Knowles, Eddie Murphy, Danny Glover, and Jennifer Hudson.

Venus

Peter O'Toole plays an elderly actor who becomes interested (both lecherously and pedagogically) in his friend's grand-niece (played by newcomer Jodie Whittaker.) Their unlikely friendship provides some insights into desire, power, and the transcendent nature of human life.

Stop chavving a laugh

Smirking in Burberry is just middle-class snobbery



Jenny O'Mahoney
Deputy Politics Editor

Last Saturday saw the first Derwent event of the new term, wittily billed as 'Chav D'. The premise was simple: hoodies, Burberry, football shirts, huge hoop earrings and a lot of alcohol. Less simple was the snobbery underpinning it. You needn't look far around campus to realise the vast majority of us are white, middle class and come from comfortable backgrounds. That's not wrong in itself, but it easily breeds negative attitudes toward minority groups, in this case those from a poorer background.

Dressing as a chav is the classist equivalent of the Black and White Minstrels, but clearly the latter would not receive official sanction from YUSU. This is because the white working classes are the only group left whom it is socially acceptable to snub and mock.

Racism, sexism and religious intolerance are rightly condemned as divisive and immoral, yet heir to the throne Prince William often dressed as a chav for 'bling' parties at Sandhurst (another from the Royals' inexhaustible supply of fancy-dress gaffes) and no-one batted an eyelid. Harry, on the other hand, was universally condemned for his Nazi outfit, contrary to our ethical sensibilities.

If you take a moment out of your day to peruse the website chavscum.co.uk, you'll find that the

ideas expressed there are far from liberal. Discussion of the 'world-wide chav epidemic' are supported by the forum, which contains the following comment: "All chavs should be sent to an island off the coast of Norway or sum otha reject country like scotland or St. Helens where they will be trained not 2 be SUCH F**KING SCUM!!!!"

In 1729, Jonathan Swift, the great satirist, suggested that the famine in Ireland had an ingeniously simple solution: eating babies, "whether stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled." Is it really so difficult to imagine the chav-bashers suggesting such an idea as a way of saving benefit cash? "Yeah, let them eat their babies, they'd only grow up dirty little chavs themselves."

Our friends at the Daily Mail have their own litany of chav-based phrases, including the 'council house facelift', coined to describe



York's finest: Derwent chair and friends keep it classy

the effect of having too tight a ponytail. A constant stream of drivel about feral youths and their total inability to be cured of a need to commit crime exacerbates the existing problem of ingrained class consciousness.

For once, the Conservatives have taken it upon themselves to look at solutions for delinquency, rather than laughing at the dress

sense of the working classes. Cameron's 'Hug a Hoodie' campaign, though liberally gloss-painted, at least acknowledged some common responsibility. Similarly, Iain Duncan Smith's Centre for Social Justice seeks the involvement of politicians of all colours in fighting for a fairer society. If right-wing politicians recognise a problem in attitudes, students classed on Facebook as 'Liberal' ought to have thought twice about Chav D.

It was probably a great night for many of those in attendance. But sometimes the unquestioning nature of great swathes of the student population is worrisome. Chav D sends out a clear message to anyone at York who grew up in a place where those clothes were simply what everyone wore: *You* are not one of *Us*. The bland acceptance of ideas of such questionable taste is something we should all be wary of, and Chav D is a prime example.

Exterminating stereotypes

Don't tar all students with the same beer-soaked brush



Stephanie Dyson
Contributing Writer

"I don't like students. You will be exter-min-ated!" Not a sentence you expect to hear on a night out in York, particularly when issued from a life-sized Dalek belching smoke and squirting water at a group of unsuspecting, drunk students nearby. No, this scene is not a figment of my over-imaginative mind, nor an alcohol-induced construct, but a futuristic anti-student device currently roaming the streets of York.

The owner, Andrew Simpson - who professes a passionate dislike for students - spent eight months building the ultimate nemesis of all intoxicated students. But why would someone go to such lengths to prevent students weeing on his garden wall? Do we really deserve such zealous animosity?

In all fairness, the common view of students isn't particularly positive. The links between students and excessive alcohol consumption, disorderly behaviour and avidly collecting all forms of street furniture and supermarket trolleys are hard to deny. The splatters of sick riddling the pavement on a morning in Heslington; the recent complaints by residents of Hes Road regarding the anti-social behaviour of students returning from town; the media fascination with the quantities of alcohol drunk on sports' socials: all are manifestations of students' most deplorable features.

Nonetheless, I don't believe

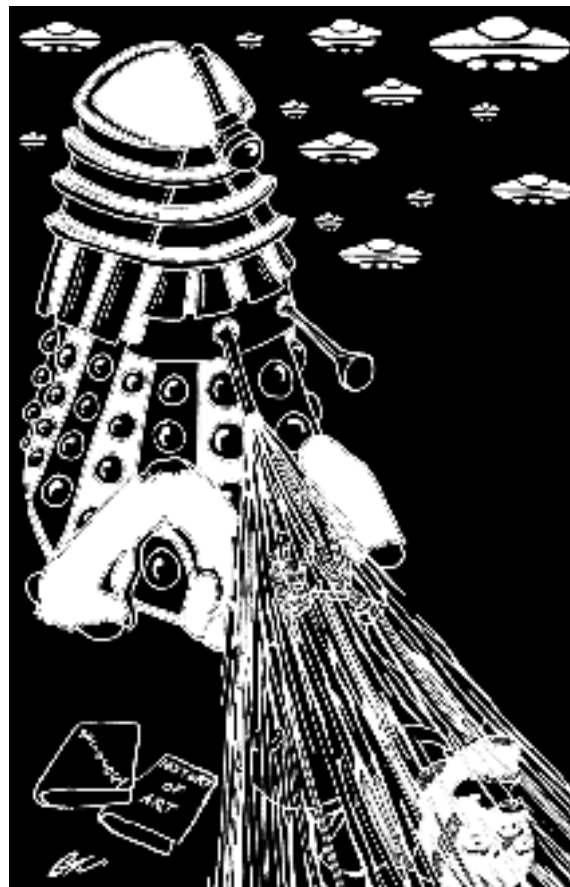
that this image of students is accurate. It is more of a generalisation, conflating the extreme with the commonplace. Some of us may see fit to imbibe numerous alcoholic beverages, decorate the concrete with a distant memory of a former meal whilst attempting to swear

inordinately, before being taken home in a trolley with a traffic cone for company. However, others do not. Posters issued by the University's Social Policy Research Unit indicate that four out of five students at York University drink only twice a week, if that; perhaps we're not as debauched as some may think. It's unfair to tar all of us with the same, beer-soaked brush.

My exoneration of students from their characterisation by society extends, paradoxically, into their interactions with the local community. Students can be incredibly selfless and positive creatures; think of RAG, the Union's largest society with over two-thousand members, all helping to raise cash for local, national and international charities. Consider York Students in Schools, where you can spend a morning assisting in classrooms. And what about

Student Action, where around seven-hundred students a year help with projects in and around York? We may be a noisy and disorderly lot, but surely we pay the community back for the trouble we cause.

So is Andrew Simpson justified in his attempts to "EXTERMIN-ATE" the student population? Personally, I think not. And I believe that a Dalek would take fantastic pride of place in my room, amongst my collection of traffic cones and other pisshead memorabilia. Daleks of York take heed: never underestimate the blind determination of an inebriated student...



Ftr: it's (still) a bus

First can kiss my plummy posterior



Richard Bateman
Contributing Writer

This, before you all stop reading, is not another piece debating which human organ the ftr most resembles, or how useless the ticket machines are. No, this time aesthetics take a back seat (purchased with exact change) in favour of economics. It emerged last month that the amount of money shelled out by the city council on the new service has risen to over 1.5 million. Allow me to explain how this happened, by way of a cunning analogy.

Imagine that you have owned a car for many years. It has served you well, but is beginning to look a little shabby. You fancy a new car, and, assuming you have the means, you buy one. So far, so reasonable. It would be less reasonable, though, if you had elected to buy, say, a tank, and asked the council to use everyone else's cash re-surface the roads, widen the lanes and adjust the traffic lights for you while you polished your hubcaps and smirked. Yet York council are doing precisely this for First Group.

Quoth the ftr website: "First are delivering the service however City of York Council are delivering all that is needed to support ftr by providing new technology systems and new road layouts as well as ftr stops and shelters." What a wheeze that is. No wonder the boys at ftr were allowed to play with whatever concept of the 'future' they fancied. If it's too big for York's roads and over-designed, never mind: taxpayers can rebuild the city around it.

And whatever line First's propaganda ministry might like to put

about, the ftr is nothing more than a fleet upgrade with a purple hair-dye. Their line about providing 'the comfort, style and convenience of a tram without the rails' can be translated for greater brevity as: 'it's a bus'. There is nothing wrong with the idea of updating

the fleet. But in the case of First - already heavily subsidised, and charging passengers absurd fares relative to distance travelled - to get the taxpayer to fund them a third way for doing it is absurd.

The only thing that would make it less so would be if the 'partnership' was a functioning one on both sides. Yet whither First's 'service'? One of my favourite pet experiments is to leave friends at the Clifford Street bus shelter, and stroll home along the ftr route. On an unscientifically calculated 67% of such occasions, I've got to the end of said route before the bus. My walk takes twenty minutes, suggesting that the 'up to every ten minutes' claim proudly emblazoned on ftr's plummy posterior is more than a little optimistic. This partnership is a patently unequal one.

Maybe this is unfair. It is just possible (in the sense that nothing is impossible) that York taxpayers' pounds will roll into visible improvements to the service. 'What improvements?!' I hear no-one cry. Well, 'ftr' to me says jet propulsion, as well as the ability to vaporise oncoming traffic, and at least a primitive molecular transporter system, in case of emergencies. Until this happens, First Group should refuse the council's money and pay for their own infrastructure as a thank-you for the continued profits they get from the residents whose custom they take for granted. That really would be futuristic.

Nicky Woolf Goes way back

It seems that those who would prophesy doom are entirely wrong - students at the University of York are, in fact, getting cleverer by the year! That is, if the age-old institution known as University Challenge is anything to go by. Since the beginning of term, our lads and lasses have resoundingly thrashed both Harris Manchester College Oxford and Brighton University at Jeremy Paxman's famously tricky quiz show. Congratulations all, on a stunning victory. It's a pity, though, that our parents' generation here at York couldn't achieve such heady heights.

Forty years ago, our student predecessors were, according to *Nouse* of 26 October 1967, viciously torn limb from intellectual limb by students of Cardiff University. The extent of our defeat was absolutely spectacular. We scored fifteen points to Cardiff's one hundred and sixty - a record-breaking whitewash. I can almost hear Paxman sneering. But according to the Editorial of that edition of *Nouse*, the fault is not (prepare for elderly smugness) entirely attributable to advances in student intelligence.

The Editor, who had obviously taken the embarrassment of York's defeat deeply to heart, was quick to point out furiously that, unlike the 2007 team forty years later, York's 1967 foursome contained not one History or English student. Furthermore, the team was apparently cursed with poor organisation from the start by the infamous (at the time) Desmond Fitzgerald, who, according to the editorial "is the first person to admit that he takes very little seriously except his golf." He was decried for having only seen the program "a couple of times!"

What a mess. But you have to admire that sort of cavalier attitude. Remember, at this time the University was only a couple of years old, while Cardiff students had had since 1893 to cut their University Challenge teeth. Despite the time constraints, sixties York's miniscule student body and any number of setbacks (including, we are told, Desmond's personal devotion to perfecting his swing, and his congenital apathy) we still managed to break a record - even if it was for failure. Still, to be fair to Desmond, he stuck by his team through their shame; insisting despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary that his team "could beat any proffered from within the University." Sure they could, Desmond. Sure they could.



Letters

Nouse welcomes your letters. Please indicate if they are not intended for publication. We may edit them for brevity. Email socs12 or write to:

Nouse, Grimston House, Vanbrugh College

Star Letter

Dear Sir,

I wish to refute the allegation that the Rugby Club was responsible for ripping off a £10 towel dispenser (no condom machines then) in Derwent College toilets and removing a bowl of flowers and several scarves (Nicky Woolf, 28 November 2006). As your issue of 9 November 1967 makes clear, the culprits were hooligans from Hull and Durham Universities.

The context of the dispute with Professor Harry Réé, Derwent College Provost, (formerly of Special Operations Executive, code name César, and responsible for the bomb attack at the Peugeot tank turret factory at Sochaux, France in July 1943) was the attempt by the AU and Rugby Club to provide suitable facilities for liquid refreshment after matches. On behalf of the AU and the Rugby Club, I appeared before the East Riding Magistrates' Court to get an early extension for The Charles XII on Wednesdays and Saturdays. This was initially turned down on the grounds that the University

should provide the facility. It continued to refuse to do so. My recollection is that I made another application for an extension for The Charles XII to the magistrates, who, incidentally, on this occasion were chaired by the Vice-Chancellor's wife, and the application was finally granted.

York rugby students have been accused of many things over the past 44 years, often without justification. May I take this opportunity to refute, once again, that the Rugby Club was responsible for the destruction of the statue of Diana the Huntress in the courtyard of Heslington Hall, also in 1967. The culprit, subsequently a very senior member of the University, is known to us, but we continue to refuse to divulge his identity.

Finally, the Rugby Club in 1967 was quite capable of drinking for many hours without getting pissed!

Yours nostalgically,

David Jenkins
President, Rugby Club 1966-68.



Rich Croker
SU President

The word most often heard last term was 'kitchens' - this term it appears to be 'portering'. So, just how important are the lodges in the residential colleges to the life of the average student?

There's no denying that the porters provide essential services to students - from secure mail delivery, access to keys and equipment, to directions and taxi money when things aren't going right. But more important are the unquantifiable services they provide. With sympathetic cups of tea, and knowledge of people and colleges that enables them to spot when something's awry, they are always there. The truth is that they are an essential cog in the wider college system. But with the move to Heslington East seemingly imminent the question of what aspects are crucial to a college at the

University of York arises.

It is not enough to have a college that consists of a bar quiz during the week and a Club D or Xtra event at the weekend. This social aspect is important, and the JCRCs perform other essential and varied services to students, but they alone cannot be 'The College'. The staff infrastructure is crucial - provosts, administrators, facilities managers, deans and tutors provide vital support. The sense of loyalty and belonging must be just as strong among the staff as it is among students. The truth is that York will never be a Durham, Oxford or Cambridge in regards to the college system - indeed, it doesn't attempt to be, and shouldn't. Some of the systems used at those Universities are too archaic and out of date for the needs and wants of the modern day student.

The simple answer is that if the University wants to keep attracting students to York on the back of the college system, there has to be a strong commitment to it across all areas of student life. Continual cuts to the bars, portering and the services inside the colleges will destroy the atmosphere they need to thrive. Preaching commitment but enforcing cuts helps nobody, least of all the future of the University.

Elitism and snobbery

Dear Nouse,

I am outraged at the decision to once again hold a 'chav' themed event on campus. The image of the 'chav' is subject to enough demonisation without Derwent College providing a forum for over 500 students to spend an entire evening ridiculing and stereotyping their peers.

I believe this to be a clear display of elitism and snobbery. In an age where much emphasis is, rightly, placed on raising awareness of the dangers and needless nature of stereotyping of any kind, it is frightening that this type of behaviour is being condoned and promoted by the next generation of University of York graduates.

There has been an appalling lack of sensitivity in sanctioning this theme and hopefully in the future the supposed educational ability of those attending this University will allow a more imaginative and less offensive theme to be dreamt up for 'the best event on campus'.

Lindsey Hyde
Derwent College

College sport: get in

Dear Nouse,

I am writing in protest at your article on college sport last edition. I can't help but feel you have overlooked the entire point of college sport. It aims to make competitive sport more accessible to more students, those who don't have the time or ability to play for the University.

You say you don't know anyone who plays sport for their college, so how would you be in a position to pass judgment on it? As a college sport player myself, I can honestly say it is less cliquey than most of the University clubs I have experience of, and all the reasons you gave for playing University sport (e.g. pure enjoyment, making new friends) also apply to college sport.

Surely getting people playing more often and giving students the opportunity to try more sports - that they may just excel at - is a good thing. My suggestion to you would be to get involved and see for yourself how fun it can be. College sport is accessible, fun, free and encourages involvement. I don't understand how it could possibly be a bad thing.

Nikki Hayden
Sports Rep, Halifax College

Vanbrugh Paradise Corner

This week: the mysterious "Bonding Warehouse Collective"

“ The Bonding Warehouse Collective formed to meet the need for a non-commercial community space in the centre of York, which is dominated by the pursuit of profit.

In our marketised public spaces, buying and selling have become substitutes for more human interactions. In this environment it is only by examining and re-inventing what we call 'our world' that we make it ours.

The Bonding Warehouse Social Centre was established to reclaim a corner of our city - to open it up for the possibility of creative and non-regulated social interaction. It pro-

vided a free space for conversation, music and art.

The BWC consisted of everyone who was involved in the social centre; thus it numbered in the hundreds. We transformed this abandoned building into a vibrant community space. We acted on no-ones behalf but our own. We did it because we wanted to, because we could, and because it was fun. We invite you all to try for yourselves.

Every commercial space is a ”

The Bonding Warehouse Collective

Heslington East: environmentally unsound

The plans for Heslington East are unimaginative, environmentally damaging and driven more by money than academic logic. If the government is serious about environmental performance it must turn down this application. The proposed lake is not needed and, even by the evidence of the University's own consultants, unlikely to be sustainable.

The plan to build offices for 2500 Science City York companies on greenbelt land cannot be justified by the University's own data. On evidence provided, a maximum of 300 jobs might be created in the next 20 years which have genuine academic links, not 2500. The existing science park has a capacity of 1200 and currently 900 people there

work for companies or organisations with no valid academic links - the current Science Park is simply a property development.

There are brownfield sites available at the former Terry's site, Hungate, the soon to be closed British Sugar Factory, the soon to be available half of the Nestle Factory or the York Central site behind the railway station.

Is it not remarkable that none of the plans for the proposed new campus went before the University's Environmental Performance Working Group? I wonder why?

Dr Richard Finn
Biology Department

Religious protest over gay rights

By Anjali Raval

The House of Lords have voted for the backing of new government regulations making it illegal to discriminate against gays and lesbians in relation to the provision of goods or services. The vote, which took place at 7.30pm on 9 January, occurred against a backdrop of Christian, Muslim and Jewish protesters outside parliament demonstrating against these new laws. Despite vocal opposition from several religious groups, peers supported the introduction of these laws by 199 to 68. The government plans to introduce these regulations across England, Scotland and Wales in April, having already come into force in Northern Ireland on 1 January.

A wide range of churches and other religious groups have strongly criticised the sexual orientation regulations, saying that they will undermine freedom of religion and conscience and could have a serious impact on faith schools, charities and adoption agencies.

One of the most contentious areas of the sexu-

al orientation regulations is that of accommodation, whereby owners of larger guest-houses, hotels or boarding houses can now be sued if they refuse to allow a gay couple to rent a room with a double bed for the reason that this may cause offence to the hotel's other guests. Consequently, many Christians feel they will be at risk of legal action in the event that Christian guest-house owners refuse to allow same-sex couples to share a bedroom. Thomas Cordrey, a barrister with the Lawyers' Christian Fellowship, said, "Christians must not be forced to actively condone and promote sexual practices which the Bible teaches are wrong".

One argument that has been propogated is that these regulations will affect the individual who wants to practise his faith in his daily life, and that this new regime would mean that a choice would have to be made between God and state, penalising someone who had moral objections to homosexuality. However, Lord Smith, former Labour culture secretary, defended the new legislation, stating that: "People have the right to believe that homo-

sexuality is somehow wrong, but I do not believe they have the right to put their beliefs into action."

A petition, which has been signed by 10,000 Christians, will be handed to the Queen, aiming to persuade her to use her "position and power" to stop the Government. A judicial review has been granted for March after claims from many Christian groups that these regulations interfere with their right to act according to their own beliefs and moral philosophy. A spokesperson from the York University Christian Union said that the YUCU were unable to comment but stated that "all people are welcome [to the YUCU meetings] regardless of their sexual orientation".

The Trade Union Congress has urged the Government to stand firm and resist demands made by religious groups to tone down the regulations. Brendan Barber, the TUC general secretary said, "No one should be denied a room in a hotel or the right to adopt simply because of their sexual orientation, but this is what some religious leaders believe should happen and they are pressuring the



Government to continue to allow lesbians and gay men to be treated as second-class citizens."

Goodricke College LGBT representative Malcolm Connolly said: "I was nearly refused entry into a swimming pool when I went with my boyfriend, on the basis that there were public showers. We were only granted access as a concession after talking to the manager". Rose Rickford, the SU LGBT Officer, stated that members of LGBT are only "demanding equal rights", thus "refusing services on the basis of sexuality is no different

from refusal on the basis of race". She has welcomed these regulations, saying that they are an important step forward for the rights of the Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual community. Nevertheless, the National Secular Society, which supports the measures, admits that "the real battle" would be the implementation of the legislation. Stonewall, a gay rights group, has been blamed by religious groups for creating a false picture by citing unlikely examples. The campaign, which has been strongly supported by the Daily Mail, has stirred up a

The Gay Rights Bill was passed by the House of Lords.

degree of homophobia which this gay rights group is appalled at. The change in the law is a recognition of equality, in the same way as racial, sexual or religious discrimination has been condemned.

"The Christian Union can often make people not want to be any sort of Christian. It's not just homosexuals, anyone that follows a different way of life is condemned"

Feature >> M10

Government proposes to redefine sexual assault to secure higher conviction rates

By Claire Yeo

Trials such as the one that recently took place in York Crown Court have become the subject of a well-heated debate that has sparked an outraged and emotional reaction from various groups and individuals.

The debate has been triggered partially by government proposals seeking to redress the highly uneven balance of conviction rates in rape trials, and partially by the incidence of "false" cases, which have seen some women "crying wolf".

To combat this, ministers have proposed the naming of women who are found to have falsely accused men of sexual assault. This has already been practiced in the recent case of a man who spent three years in prison

after being falsely accused. The House of Lord's Court of Appeal has since named the woman involved. There is, however, the worry that this legislation would further deter many women from coming forward to report such crimes. The numbers of reported attacks are much fewer in comparison to the actual suspected incidence of sexual assault.

The real crux of the current furor is, as always, the delicate issue of consent. Cases of alleged rape are notoriously tricky to prove, often culminating in a moral judgement on behalf of the jury as to whether the accused or the accuser is telling the whole and honest truth. This is reflected in the shockingly low rate of conviction in such cases, with only 5-6% of accused rapists being convicted, according to the Association of Chief



The Crown Court in York.

Police Officers (ACPO).

The role of alcohol in many cases makes the jurors' decision all the more difficult. Not only does alcohol confuse the mind, altering the accuracy and even existence of memory, but it also lowers inhibition and

alters normal behaviour patterns.

The water is further muddied by the apparent proliferation of the use of so-called "date-rape" drugs such as GHB and Rohypnol. Yet the extent of the usage of such drugs is, in reality, much slimmer than is often imagined. A study from 2004 -2005 has shown that of 120 victims only two cases showed evidence of such drugging. Detective Chief Superintendent, Dave Gee, a co-author of a recent ACPO report, has claimed, "The most common method of spiking drinks is alcohol."

This has led government ministers to propose amendments to legislation concerning the legality of "drunken consent". The core of the amendment would be to invalidate a female's consent to sex if she is inebriated. In practice this could

mean many men becoming liable for charges of rape or sexual assault, following sexual intercourse with a "drunk" female.

How, in this case, is "drunk" to be defined? Need the person involved consumed as much as a bottle of Jack Daniels or is half a glass of wine enough? What if both consenting parties are under the influence? Where is the line to be drawn between rape and consent? The proposal is in this respect outrageous. While it is one thing to affirm that it is morally wrong for a male to take advantage of an inebriated female, it is another to label consensual drunk sex as rape, with the accused facing the serious possibility of a long prison sentence and being listed on the sexual offenders' register.

The reaction to the proposal has been predictably

fierce. Some have proclaimed the responsibility to be among the women themselves who get so drunk that they have no idea where they are and what their name is. Some even go to the extreme of seeing it as women's own fault. Others, including a number of women's groups, have reacted equally strongly, asserting that the blaming of victims is totally unjust. They are still victims of a crime and should be treated with equal sympathy.

The debate seems set to continue. What seems to have been overlooked, however, is that it is almost impossible to proclaim universal judgements about cases as a whole, when each case is unique. Perhaps we should all leave the decision to the jurors - having access to the evidence from both sides, they are the ones who are most informed.

The reality of campus sexism

Josh Dodd discusses the validity of the allegations of sexism in York University's campus events.



The University of York's pole exercise society has been singled out by the report

It may be many years since feminism's peak, but apparently sexism still blights our society. York University has recently been in the spotlight for its alleged "institutional sexism". An article from online magazine *The First Post* singled out this University for its chauvinistic campus practices, citing Goodricke's Playboy Mansion and the Pole Exercise club. York was not alone: Loughborough's Students' Union was criticised for extending an invitation to both Nuts' Brat Pack Tour and FHM's High Street Honeys. Kat Stark, NUS Women's Officer even compared such things to a theft of feminism, a claim that, if fair and accurate, should be troubling for just about everyone. The most important question, then, is: are we at a university infested with sexism? Or, more prosaically: is there really such sexism on York campus?

Those who have had criticism levelled at them naturally disagree. Ben Wardle, Goodricke Chair, and Matt Hood, President of Pole Exercise, both outright denied the charges of sexism, and with good reason, it seems. Goodricke has yet to receive a complaint about its events and their popularity on campus can barely be denied. Last year the AU nominated Pole Exercise as its club of the year, not least in recognition of their charity achievements: last year Pole Exercise raised almost £1,500 for Medicine Sans Frontiers with a single event. Besides, perhaps Pole

Exercise is liberating and empowering for the women of York. Club President Matt Hood dismissed this idea out of hand, and rightly so. "It's just an exercise class. We keep people in good health, that's the only point." Pole Exercise is fun and healthy. The sessions focus on fitness moves rather than dancing. The nearest thing to sexism in Pole Exercise is the logo: a girl on a pole. But even that is stylised and abstract. Is there really a problem here?

What of Goodricke's evocation of the Playboy brand to market events? Playboy is a name that is certainly connected with pornography and the objectification of women. But, as Ben Wardle emphasises, describing Goodricke as the Playboy Mansion becomes ironic as soon as one calls to mind the less-than-palatial hall in which the event takes place. Irony is, of course, subjective and maybe its invocation is an ad hoc defence. Further, whether irony can be a defence or not is even more difficult to say. But if we can accept the rampant anti-semitism of Borat or, less controversially, the high camp irony of the recent Yorkie adverts without harm, can we not also make space for the Playboy Mansion? That Goodricke JCRC is yet to receive a complaint implies an agreement across campus.

However, maybe things aren't quite so positive as the picture just painted. Perhaps the complaints made by *The First Post* should be projected onto current British socie-

ty as a whole rather than just our little corner. It cannot be denied that the maxim "sex sells" still holds currency in the advertising world and the steady liberalisation of our culture has been trailed by an equally steady sexualisation. From the cheek-caressing temptress promised by the Gillette adverts to the proliferation of "lads mags" – sex is everywhere.

And if at any point this seems like a singularly male phenomenon, do not forget the "Top 10 Tips to Please Your Man" features in the aspirational women's magazines, the orgasmic Herbal Essences adverts or the media obsession with whom our celebrities sleep with. But so often, this sexualisation leans in favour of the masculine, certainly in favour of certain gender stereotypes. The often-raised example is the difference in connotation and meaning between the words "slag" and "stud". There is even an asymmetry in the terms "man" and "woman" that could be seen as revealing – though the etymology of these words is not necessarily indicative of sexism.

Relative to the rest of British culture, the name of a termly campus event and the nature of a fitness club seem moderate and tepid in nature. Yes, students should be progressive and radical: that is so much of their social role, but there are certainly better places to direct energy and anger. The sexism in British culture lies at a deeper level than the Goodricke ents team.

University's report confirms NHS failure

By Tim McEvoy

Last month a study released by academics here at the University of York showed the National Health Service grossly under-reports incidents that harm patient safety. Their research indicates that almost a third of admissions resulted in a "patient safety incident" and, shockingly, only 5% of the incidents that resulted in harm to a patient were picked up by the NHS's voluntary reporting system.

This comes at the same time as two other major NHS-related news items. The first was the government's blunder over the new

contract for GPs' pay, costing the taxpayer £300m more than expected.

The second was an even greater fiasco, involving the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), where private firms build hospitals that are then rented to the government. These private firms will earn some £23 billion profit over the next thirty years. Once selected, the firm in question effectively has a monopoly position sealed in place and can take the treasury to the cleaners. This means taxpayers' money is granted to a private company, yet none of the competitive benefits of privatization are in play. Even worse, the contracts can last up to thirty years, meaning we will continue to



Private healthcare trusts: the way forward for Britain?

pay for these hospitals even if the nature of healthcare changes over the next few decades.

Just what causes this widespread mismanagement within Britain's largest institution? The root cause for all three problems is the same.

The NHS is an unwieldy, over-centralized monolith, prone to institutionalised thinking and inefficient practice. Poor practice, of which the safety reporting system is just one example, is all too often ingrained, with no competition to counteract

this inefficiency. Because of the service's structure, bad policy decisions (such as the PFI or the GP pay deal) are made on a national scale, costing unnecessary billions.

The centralized nature of the NHS also means that it is massively distorted by the political motives of whoever is in power. The current government has promised that the £512m worth of deficits will be eliminated by 2007-2008. In practice, this means massive redundancies and writing off debts of some trusts. Hardly the long-term thinking that is needed for efficient practice. Even worse, 90% of hospital closures will be occurring in Liberal Democrat and Conservative-held con-

stituencies, with most of the new openings occurring in Labour ones. Due to devolution, the Labour heartland that is Scotland gets 20% more spending on health per head than England.

The only way to create an efficient, workable health service for the 21st century is to move to a publicly-funded insurance-based system. Such a system need not have the gross health inequalities of the USA. Instead we should model our healthcare after the likes of France, Canada and Scandinavia, who frequently come top of health league tables while achieving healthcare for all. Only then can Britain have the healthcare system it deserves.

Russia: a land of conspiracy

By Albi Furlan

Russia has always been able to inspire great conspiracy stories: from the fate of Anastasia to the many theories and novels such as *Day of the Tryffids* and 1984, the former Soviet Union has always been a backdrop for intrigue. Now, judging by recent events, it could easily supply a plot worthy of any mobster movie.

Vladimir Putin, the Russian President, is at the centre of an increasingly complicated web of suspicion and speculation, and the Russian media's silence on it is just as shady. From trade wars to conspiracy, from murder to outright massacre, the blood-tainted list runs long.

Putin's most recent act of playground bullying is to shut off oil supplies to parts of Eastern Europe, including Germany, after to a spat with the Belarus government last Tuesday. About twelve million barrels of oil flow daily through Belarus in the Druzhba pipeline, but after a series of taxes and penalties imposed by the two countries on each other on the oil flowing between them (a dispute that was started by Russia), Putin's government has decided to stop oil supplies completely, cutting off about 96% of Poland's supplies, as well as those of other Eastern European countries.

Russia threatened Belarus with an all-out trade



Russians Litvinenko (left) and Politkovskaya (right) died in suspicious circumstances under Putin's presidency

war, and eventually the latter caved in and removed the tax on Russian oil flowing through its borders. The European Union has demanded greater reliability of Russian oil supplies to Europe. But this is only the latest, most public and least "lethal" act of bullying that Putin and his government have been accused of.

Now, the death of ex-KGB security guard Alexander Litvinenko is yet another in a suspicious line of disappearances, all relating, in one convoluted way or other, to Putin.

Last October, journalist

Anna Politkovskaya was found dead, gunned down in the elevator in her apartment building in Moscow. An extremely outspoken critic of Putin's presidency, she had written dozens of articles and a book uncovering atrocities and human rights abuses perpetrated by Russia during the war against Chechnya. She had declared that Ramzan Kadyrov was "a modern-day Stalin" in a radio interview, after having found a video which linked the Chechnyan Prime Minister (instated by the Putin administration) to the kidnapping of two



Chechnyan civilians who are still missing.

There is also the question of the bombings of August and September 1999, which killed over three hundred people and destroyed an eight storey building in southern Moscow. Preliminary evidence at all bombing sites seemed to initially point towards Chechnyan terrorists. However, according to independent investigators, which included Litvinenko, none of the few bombers who were actually identified were Chechnyan, but merely branded "Chechnyan sym-

pathizers".

At the same time, sacks of explosives were found in apartments in the city of Ryazan after investigation by the FSB, the successor agency to the KGB, which had until days before been chaired by Putin. The FSB claimed that the sacks had been placed there for an "attack simulation" to gauge how people would respond to a terrorist alert.

The independent investigators who revealed this and other suspicious facts about the bombings; Sergei Yushenkov and Yuri Shchekochikhin, were both

found dead in 2003, murdered within weeks of each other. These are only a few in the long list of people who have stood in Putin's way, or tried to unveil covert government operations, who have been murdered or have gone missing.

The Litvinenko affair, the latest fiasco, has raised a flurry of questions and produced a string of conspiracy theories. There are still doubts about who is behind his death by polonium-210 poisoning. The main suspect, Dmitri Kovtun, is still in a hospital recovering from the radiation himself.

Polonium is an easy substance to conceal, and if handled properly can do no damage to anyone who doesn't swallow it. Yet Kovtun has managed to irradiate, as well as himself, about one hundred other people in London alone, and traces of radiation have been found in various European countries he visited on the way. While there is no doubt of his former KGB-related ties with Litvinenko, some question whether he was ever aware of committing a murder.

As for motive, the conspiracy theories abound, a great number of which implicate Putin and his administration. The theories run wild, and while some are clearly more outlandish than others, independently of who might have killed Litvinenko, bombed Moscow or issued the various murders, Putin and Russia are still providing material worthy of the best political thrillers.

The Campus Soapbox

By James Townson
New Generation Society

As we move into the fresh year of 2007, the British political landscape appears ready for change. We are assured of a new Prime Minister by early summer, the two opposition parties will begin to set out their stalls and we may even see a General Election. But our country's politics are also facing a much more long-term shift.

For over half a century the 'baby-boomers', who are now just a little older than most of our parents, have dominated British politics.

Their conception was encouraged by the post-war government. The NHS was designed to keep them in good health. Their education was, on the whole, some of the best our country is ever likely to see (They were even paid to go to university). In adulthood they have enjoyed the economic buoyancy of the Thatcher years, and as they now consider retirement it is no surprise to see Pension Reform hitting the political agenda. Perhaps inevitably in a democracy, such a populous section of society with its accompanying voting power receives the most attention from our politicians.

However, the end of the age of the baby-boomers is in sight. As retirement, and of course nature take their course, the baby-boom generation is starting to lose its electoral clout. Into its shoes must step a New Generation. Our generation, shaped not by post-war austerity but by Thatcherism, reaches maturity at just the moment when we can have an enormous influence on the future of our society. If we play our cards right we have an opportunity to define our country's political agenda for the next fifty years.

What do we want to do with our new power? The

New Generation faces many of the old challenges, and many new ones as well. But I would suggest that the first issue we must look at closely



New Generation's creator.

is our political system's relevance to the electorate of the 21st Century. Major constitutional reform is often advocated, but more subtle

changes need to be explored first, and questions asked about the sustainability of a party system without ideology.

Once this has been addressed we can move on to consider the great issues of our time. It would be presumptuous even to try defining what those issues are, but as we indelicately extricate ourselves from Iraq it seems wise to reassess what we want Britain's role to be on the world stage in the next century. Our Prime Minister-in-waiting seems determined to define a sense of British identity for modern times and following his lead may be a very good idea considering the cultural instability we see on our doorstep. It is also, surely, time to give some direction to the European issue. Decades of drift and dithering over Europe have bene-

fited nobody. The New Generation can and must bring new attitudes to the table.

Then there are the less obviously political issues – our relationship with the developing world and the environment, the challenge of accommodating the decline of the family unit into our society, and the rise of religious extremism and intolerance.

All these challenges require deep thought and fresh thinking from our generation – it is we who will have to live with the consequences of our success or failure in addressing them. As we begin the long farewell to the age of the baby-boomers, now is the time to lay the foundations of our own half-century in the spotlight. It is an exciting time to be part of the New Generation.

Toby Green



Why pace and athleticism are overrated

THE RECENT Americisation of David Beckham has got me thinking about whether I didn't give my own sporting career enough of a chance. Commentators, who revel in attacking what both the Mirror and the Sun called 'Posh and Bucks' (don't you love it when tabloids match each other for stupidity and bad punning), have criticised the former darling of English football, and our best performer in the World Cup, for losing a yard or two of pace.

Yet of all the players at a late stage in their careers, this seems a strange accusation to throw at poor ol' Goldenballs since he was never actually that fast anyway - you would certainly not have labelled him as a consummate athlete.

In a similar way (don't scoff, there's plenty of similarities between me and the only English player to have scored in three World Cups) I am not blessed with the most athletic countenance, mentally or physically. Yet I feel both Becks and I fall into the role of 'The Thinker'.

As a Tottenham fan, the role of 'The Thinker' has had a great tradition playing in the lily-white over the years. Glenn Hoddle epitomised the 'attacking stylishly yet not being bothered to track back' attitude that us Spurs fans love to



claim as our trademark, and Teddy Sheringham is another whose unwillingness to sprint hasn't prevented him from still turning out for West Ham in his post-40s.

More recently Michael Carrick has also epitomised this I-can't-bear-sold style yet still cost United a cool £18 million, and 'The Thinker' role at White Hart Lane is now being filled by the 6'3 giant that is

Tom Huddlestone.

So on the rare occasions that I do get out on the football pitch, I play with these so-called athletes in mind. I dictate the play. I spray passes from right to left. I break up opposing attacks, not by tracking back and making violent yet committed lunges but by simply being in the right place at the right time. This is all thanks to a footballing

mind cultivated by Andy Gray's magic pen and a shit-load of Pro Evolution Soccer.

Of course what actually happens is that I stand stranded in the centre of the park, whilst being slowly strangled by a football shirt several sizes too small (long-sleeved with gloves, natch). I normally start well, making a couple of tidy passes, before making the rash decision

of getting caught in the heady excitement of a counter attack.

As I foolishly attempt a spring in the faint hope of arriving in time to score a rocket from the edge of the area, I forget the repercussions. As the game restarts I realise my fitness restrictions have left me out of the game. One run and all dignity is lost, and I find myself operating in a deep sweeper role (just in front of the keeper) or getting subbed off.

However I have come up with a tactical masterstroke, and it might just be a winner. The likes of Carrick and Beckham have tried this, but I reckon I could really perfect the tactic of playing in, and only in, the centre circle. Sure, my influence on the game might not be total, but as long as the opposition players are willing to let the ball come to me and give me time to whip out another pinpoint pass then I could be the talk of the town. This has the added bonus of not needing to have a shower already.

However Beckham might have already taken advantage of this idea already. Nowhere will he be allowed more space and time on the ball than in the MLS, and now he'll have no need for a post-game wash before carrying his wife's bags back from Hollywood Boulevard.

Relationship between the Special One and Russian billionaire sours

By Tarun Patel
 DEPUTY SPORTS EDITOR

ALL IS not rosy in the Jose Mourinho garden. Whilst on the surface, his Garden of Eden exhibits a beauty unmatched by any European equivalent, and despite its sparkling array of floral talent, the Tree of Knowledge has ominously begun to bear its forbidden fruit. The gardener, who has spent the past two years sculpting his masterpiece, and who was once previously labelled, albeit through his own wording, as "The Special One", has diminished much in stature, and the envious neighbours, who once glued their eyes through the peepholes green with envy, have suddenly turned away for pastures new.

Chelsea Football Club, for the first time in what seems like ages, is a wounded animal. A quick glance at the top of the Premiership, with Manchester United seemingly beginning to saunter away with the

title, is perhaps evidence of this.

For the rest of the Premiership, it has been a long time coming. The incredible Chelsea machine that steamrolled itself, rather robotically and with an efficiency previously unmatched in the English Premiership, to two consecutive league titles, had to combust at some stage. The surprising element is that it has done so at the precise point when Chelsea have splashed the cash on world-renowned superstars for the first time - the grandioso names of Andriy Shevchenko and Michael Ballack. However, whilst shirt sales will soar beyond belief, helping Peter Kenyon's mission for Chelsea to take over the world, Ballack and Shevchenko seem to be unfamiliar with their scripts. Even for a man with divine qualities such as Jose Mourinho, patching Frank Lampard and Michael Ballack, identical players in every way bar the haircut, into the same outfit has proved to be a rather difficult task.



Is the Special One losing control?

Perhaps Ballack's failure to endear himself to England has only been overshadowed by Shevchenko, who on present form would fail to score in a Soho brothel. Sergei Rebrov will be chuckling himself to sleep.

Yet Mourinho's greatest mis-

take has been to eliminate the wings from his formidable, flying outfit which put so many teams to the sword in recent times. The ram-paging runs of Messrs Duff, Cole and Robben are what epitomised the explosive Chelsea, the Chelsea that bore wave after wave of torture until the other side could take no more. Whilst the special one is keen to point towards the absence of John Terry and Petr Cech from his team in recent weeks, the £400 million empire he has built must be able to withstand a few body blows. His relationship with the board, and indeed his sugar-daddy Abrahamovich, has also deteriorated, to an extent where even Roman seems to have mastered the age-old art of "saving." If this is the case, "privacy" is certainly found wanting in the Russian's vocabulary. His disputes with Mourinho should have been firmly resolved at home, not aired so spectacularly in a country where the journalists lie like wolves awaiting fresh meat. Despite the

cuddly rabbit face, Abrahamovich is proving to be a hard taskmaster.

Perhaps Chelsea will recover from this blip, as those with financial clout often do. But the biggest challenge will be to remain a football club, and not the plc which it is fast becoming. Players are used, crushed and then ejected out the other end (remember Shaun Wright-Phillips?). Many of the current playing staff would do well to consider how their careers may have differed had they been playing more regularly. But money is a sweet lubricator. The anti-Chelsea brigade who anxiously await the death of Chelsea Football Club through the end of a Russian sniper's rifle aimed precariously at Abrahamovich's head, may receive an early yet pleasant surprise. Indeed the defeat at Liverpool can be put down to the loss of John Terry but it has often been the case that when outside problems affect a club, the results are often seen on the pitch.

Minstermen's impressive Yuletide form inspires hopes of promotion

By Simon Craft
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

YORK CITY'S push for promotion to the Football League gathered pace over the festive period with three wins from four matches. The Minstermen currently lie third in the Nationwide Conference, and with early pace-setters Oxford stumbling and current leaders Dagenham & Redbridge selling two key players, a continuation of their good form could see Billy McEwan's team challenging for top spot in the division.

City went into the home derby against Halifax Town on the back of two impressive away results; a 1-0 win at Forest Green followed by a goalless draw at Grays Athletic. York took the lead after five minutes thanks to a composed close-range finish from Clayton Donaldson, who doubled City's lead from the penalty spot after the break. Any hopes of a comeback for the Shaymen were effectively ended when striker Danny Forrest was sent off for foul and abusive language midway through the second half, and York held on to clinch a 2-0 victory - surprisingly their first win by more than one goal all season.

The only blemish on the



The York City board have turned down a £100,000 offer for Clayton Donaldson in the hope of more goals

Minstermen's record over Christmas came in the next fixture, a home tie against mid-table Woking. In torrential conditions, York City dominated the game but failed to turn their superiority into clear-cut chances, and were punished late on. Craig

McAllister latched onto a misplaced backpass from City captain Emmanuel Panther, and set up Jamie Taylor to score an unlikely winner. The result, though, was overshadowed by a touchline brawl in stoppage time, in which Woking coach

Matt Crossley headbutted City substitute James Dudgeon, and following a farcical scene in which several punches were thrown, the pair were both red carded along with another York substitute, Nathan Peat.

Billy McEwan's side

then faced a New Year's Day trip to Morecambe, their second visit to Christie Park in a fortnight following a 2-1 defeat in the first round of the much-maligned FA Trophy. On this occasion, however, York overcame their promotion rivals com-

fortably, with goals coming either side of half time from strikers Clayton Donaldson and Craig Farrell, and Steve Bowey putting the result beyond doubt on the hour mark. Chris Blackburn headed a consolation goal for the Shrimps but York ran out 3-1 winners, a remarkable result considering that their squad was hit by a virus on the eve of the match.

York carried their good form into the following Saturday's clash with Crawley Town, as the KitKat Crescent spectators were treated to a 5-0 rout from the home team. Conference top scorer Clayton Donaldson opened the scoring with an early penalty, and by the time he had added another just after half-time - his 20th goal of the season - York were 4-0 up, with midfielders Bowey and Panther both having got on the score sheet in the first half. Craig Farrell's header completed the thrashing, and perhaps just as encouraging as the result was City's performance, an example of the slick passing football championed by manager McEwan.

The York boss will undoubtedly be looking to add to his squad during the current transfer window in order to return to League Two and League football.

York clubs prepare for the new year

By Simon Lickley
SPORTS EDITOR

THE YEAR 2007 promises to be an exciting one for sport at York University.

Highlight of it all will undoubtedly be the Roses tournament, which this year York will host, although many clubs have a varied programme for 2007 for both the high flyer and keen amateur.

The rugby club have quite literally astronomical aspirations this year as one member, Des Pond, will be hoping to go into space, having registered with the British National Space Centre. Back on planet Earth the men's 2nd XV will be hoping to gain promotion: the deciding match to see if that will be the case will be against Sheffield University on February 7th. The men's football teams



The rugby club have lofty ambitions for the upcoming year

aims this year are fairly straightforward. The first's to get promoted, and to win the Varsity and Roses tournaments. Easier said than done but with greater unity throughout the club, there is confidence that this can happen. They also have a trip to Amsterdam to look forward to.

In hockey, should the men's 1st XI win their remaining games against Newcastle University, they will finish top of their league. The men's 2nd XI and women's 1st and 2nd XI will be looking for mid-table finishes. They will also be looking to build on their strong showing at Roses last year by taking a clean sweep against Lancaster.

The tennis club will be looking to build upon a highly successful 2006. Having taken an impressive 57 out of 60 points so far this season,

the men's team are currently top of the league. The crucial game will be against Durham this week, the winner of this clash virtually assured of promotion to Division 2 of the BUSA league.

The women's team will be looking to maintain their solid start to the season, and finish in mid-table of Division 2. They will also be looking to repeat their impressive Roses performance where they took 10 out of the available 14 points last time around. The men's firsts have the toughest task in this annual event as Lancaster sit top of the division above them. Other events to look forward to include entering a team into the LTA league for the first time and the first annual University of York tennis tournament.

The two events of note for the athletics club this

year include participation in the first Steel Cup Championships, organised by Sheffield University. The summer term will also see the outdoor BUSA's which take place in Bedford.

The canoe club have got around the problem of the recent floods closing the Kings Arms and the Lowther by paddling there for a pint, fully living up to their motto of "paddle, drink, pillage". Away from the pub, 2007 will see the canoe club having its annual trip to Scotland as well as competing in the National Student Rodeo in Nottingham.

As you can see then the year 2007 promises a lot for sport at York University. With many of the clubs determined to meet the new year with success, and what with us hosting the Roses tournament this year, 2007 is a year that promises much.



AU
Edge

With AU President
Tom Moore

So the annual round of Christmas and examinations are over. The bright jumpers and family arguments soon faded into last minute revision for those crucial exams and now you are probably sat there thinking that you can go back to doing nothing in particular until the next set of exams are upon you. That is partially correct but you need to do something over the next term or so to keep the boredom away.

Therefore perhaps now is the time to give those people you have learnt to avoid over the last term (or years) a chance to talk to you. I am talking about your college sports reps. If you ever find yourself thinking that you are bored and can't bear the idea of sitting in the library any longer, I guarantee that college sport will take a few hours of your time up and that you'll have fun in the process, as well as releasing the competitive edge inside of you. Events this term includes things such as a contact sevens rugby tournament, a swimming gala as well as the usual weekly sports. Check out the Athletic Union website or get hold of a sports rep for more information. Especially if you're a part of Halifax college!

On another note, the Varsity tournament is coming up in week 6. This is our annual tournament with York St. John. Nearly 30 fixtures will take place on the Wednesday of week six, rounded off by a ceremony in Toffs. This really is a growing event and is well worth putting in your diaries. Come along and support our university in the quest to achieve bragging rights for university sport in the city.

There are plenty of other events to watch out for this term as well, including a charity dodgeball tournament, quad-racket tournament and elections for positions on the AU for next year. If you fancy having a go at my job next year, now is the time to start thinking about it - the whole election saga will be with us in no time. If you want to know anything about these, do feel free to come into the office or send me an email. Other events you might be interested in are the trips that are currently being organised by the Surf Club and the Ski and Snowboard Club. Both these clubs are organising trips over Easter. These are always popular events and rightly so, not only are they a chance to show your prowess on the slopes but it is also a great chance to make new friends. Contact the clubs for more details.

Athletic Union look forward to a bright future for Varsity

By Daniel Whitehead
DEPUTY EDITOR

YORK HAS a proud if not particularly distinguished sporting history. Since the early years, sportsmen and women have lined up on either side of the Lancashire/Yorkshire border in a battle for the War of the Roses. The event brings mass popularity and has been hugely successful since its early years.

In 2004, the then AU President Stuart Leslie founded a new concept where instead of the war being between two historical opponents, it would be between two sides of the city; the University of York and York St John. The event was named Varsity, and was intended to become winter version of Roses. However, similar to how the Winter Olympics lives in the shadow of its Summer counter-part, Varsity has so far suffered from poor attendance and a lack of enthusiasm from the student body.

So what does Varsity mean to the Athletic Union and its sport clubs? To some it represents one of the most exciting days of the sporting calendar, while for others it is either a chance to practice for the more important BUSA matches in future weeks or, even worse, seen as a pointless hindrance.

According to Hockey club chair, Andy Hook, the event offers "another set of competitive matches that can be of benefit to the



York University football team will be keen to hold bragging rights for the city of York when they compete in Varsity

teams who compete in games in BUSA and the Yorkshire league, providing excellent preparation for these fiercely contested matches". The words "fiercely" and "contested" seem to be in question in some sports though, backed up by relatively comfortable victories for York in both years of the competition so far. This is particularly the case for the Volleyball club who are said to have found the competition relatively easy so far.

UYVC President Ben Brown said "For the volleyball club the games in past

year's haven't been too worthwhile due to a big difference in standards. Overall the event does give the whole of sport at the University something to work towards, but I feel it will never be taken as seriously as Roses. If Varsity didn't exist I don't believe it would be detrimental to York either."

There are distinct differences in opinion though, as men's football president Simon Oatridge thinks that Varsity is a worthwhile event which gives his players a chance to prepare for Roses later in the year. Although he

did add: "It provides a welcome change from fixtures and boosts the second term. The cancellation of Varsity would be a loss to York's growing sporting climate and the all round feel of the sporting calendar."

AU President Tom Moore was optimistic about the eventual progression towards Varsity, finding an increased support from the student body. He said: "As the event grows in age and stature the interest will naturally increase - it is worth noting that Roses began with a sole boat race organised by

the Vice-Chancellors.

Although we are a much larger institution, recent results has shown that many of the fixtures are competitive. The reason that the event isn't as big as Roses is that the two institutions have to agree on a level of competition that will be there before adding it to the days timetable."

Varsity 2007 is to be held on Wednesday 14 February at the University of York sports centre.

Latest College/University Sport Results/Standings:

BUSA Results:

Football (Men's):

a	Newcastle Men's 2nds	3-0
h	York St John Men's 3rds	2-1

Rugby Union (Men's):

a	Leeds Met Men's 2nds	0-54
a	Durham Men's 3rds	21-44

Rugby Union (Women's):

a	Newcastle	7-49
h	Hull	15-47

Squash:

h	Leeds Men's 2nds	3-2
a	Sheffield Men's 2nds	4-1
h	Newcastle Womens 1sts	1-3
a	Sheffield Women's 1sts	0-1

BUSA Standings:

Football Men's 1sts - Division 3B

	pld	pts
1. Leeds Met 2nds	10	26
2. Leeds Met 3rds	10	24
3. Trinity & All Saints 1sts	10	19
4. Durham 2nds	10	9
5. York 1sts	10	4
6. Huddersfield 1sts	10	4

Hockey Men's 1sts - Division 3B

	pld	pts
3. Durham 3rds	9	18
4. Huddersfield 1sts	8	15
5. York 1sts	8	9
6. Teesside 1sts	9	9
7. York St. John 1sts	9	6
8. Sunderland 1sts	9	0

College Results:

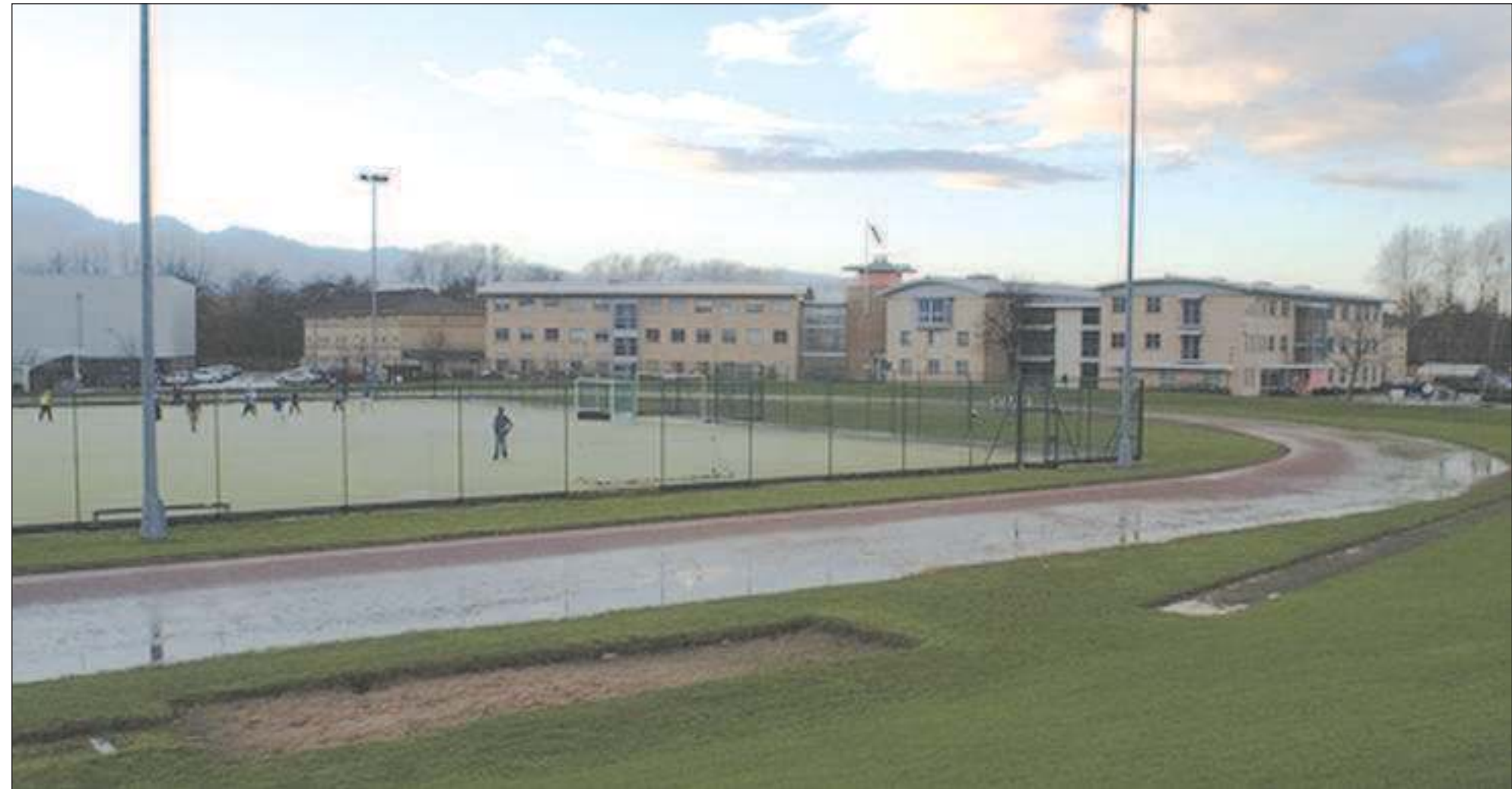
Langwith vs Derwent (Football 1sts)	0-2
Alcuin vs Vanbrugh (Netball 1sts)	17-4
Halifax vs Langwith (Hockey 1sts)	1-0
Wentworth vs Derwent (Basketball 1sts)	24-10
Goodricke vs Alcuin (Squash 1sts)	6-2

College Standings 23/01:

	pts
1. Goodricke	89
=1. Halifax	89
3. Derwent	71
4. Langwith	65
5. Vanbrugh	61
6. Alcuin	52
7. James	49
8. Wentworth	41



York bids to play an active role in running London Olympics 2006



The University has been rumoured to be part of York City Council's Olympic plans, although facility improvements would be needed. Photo by Adam Sloan

By Simon Lickley
SPORTS EDITOR

IT MAY BE 200 miles from London, but York is keen to join in when it comes to the world's largest sporting event. Whilst it is unlikely that the city will be witnessing the world's top athletes strutting their stuff on the lawns of York Minster, York City Council has been keen to be part of the plans for the 2012 London Olympics.

Rumour has it that venues such as the Next Generation Club in Heslington, Huntingdon Stadium have declared an interest, even if it just as a pre-games camp for competitors.

York City Council is a key player in the Yorkshire 2012 initiative which aims to make sure that the region gains recognition in the 2012

games. Local councillor Paul Blanchard has vowed to fight York's corner on the Tourism and Sport Board of the Local Government Association and recently returned on a fact finding mission to China, where he undertook research on how Chinese provinces were set to benefit from the upcoming Beijing Olympics in 2008.

At the moment the University has remained tight lipped on its plans for hosting events in 2012. It is perhaps telling that Councillor Blanchard recently was quoted saying that our near neighbours York St John have "excellent sporting facilities", yet on our own University nothing was said. This should probably come as no surprise, with the University not even having its own swimming pool. The rowers could always use the lake, although judging by

how highly regarded the ducks are at this University this remains unlikely. Perhaps with an athletics stadium being part of the plans for the Heslington East campus, there is hope for us yet.

So how well equipped is the rest of York for holding major sporting events? They are certainly not a novelty in the city. The racecourse proved to be more than capable of being a substitute for Ascot in 2005, and the Barbican has played host for the last two UK Snooker Championships. It is clear to see that the city is no stranger to welcoming tourists, however the Barbican remains eerily quiet for the rest of the year, and the racecourse is used more for University balls than horse races. It is questionable as to whether money should be wasted on

such grand schemes. It is also difficult to see one enjoying the rowing from the comfort of the Kings Arms: the Ouse would be a scenic location, but it is not quite the Thames.

It would also appear that local support for the Games has been mixed. Many feel that public money would be far better spent on health and education rather than something that many perceive to be a white ele-



Next Generation Gym

phant in the vein of the Dome or Wembley Stadium. Others feel that despite efforts from the likes of Blanchard, York will be overlooked by larger cities and ones closer to London in the race to be a venue for an event. Certainly it appears that the grand mission statement of Yorkshire and Humber to "engage, energise, and involve everybody in the region and beyond the banner of the London 2012 Games to achieve a lasting sporting, cultural, and health legacy for all" has yet to filter through to most York residents.

Whilst there is perhaps little hope for the University of York to play host to the 2012 games, for Yorkshire as a whole there is greater hope. In an audit of the regions facilities, Sport England Yorkshire found a particular strength in the number of

disabled facilities which suggests that the region could be a major venue in the ever growing and popular Paralympic Games.

However, it is debatable how many events will actually be staged in Yorkshire. Whilst the official London 2012 website argues that the Games will benefit "not only London but all the nations and regions of the UK", it looks unlikely that any major events will be staged in and around York.

The city is a long way from London and does not really have the sport facilities or transport infrastructure that larger cities can boast. It has the tourist sights but it is likely that most foreign visitors to the city will go merely for that. It appears for the time being that York's only role in the Olympics will be confined to the odd training camp.

