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Induction lecture brands home students as 'lazy and unhelpful'

**Jim Bulley
Peter Campbell**

HOME STUDENTS are "lazy", "unhelpful" and "only interested in going to the bar" according to a welcome lecture given to overseas students by the University.

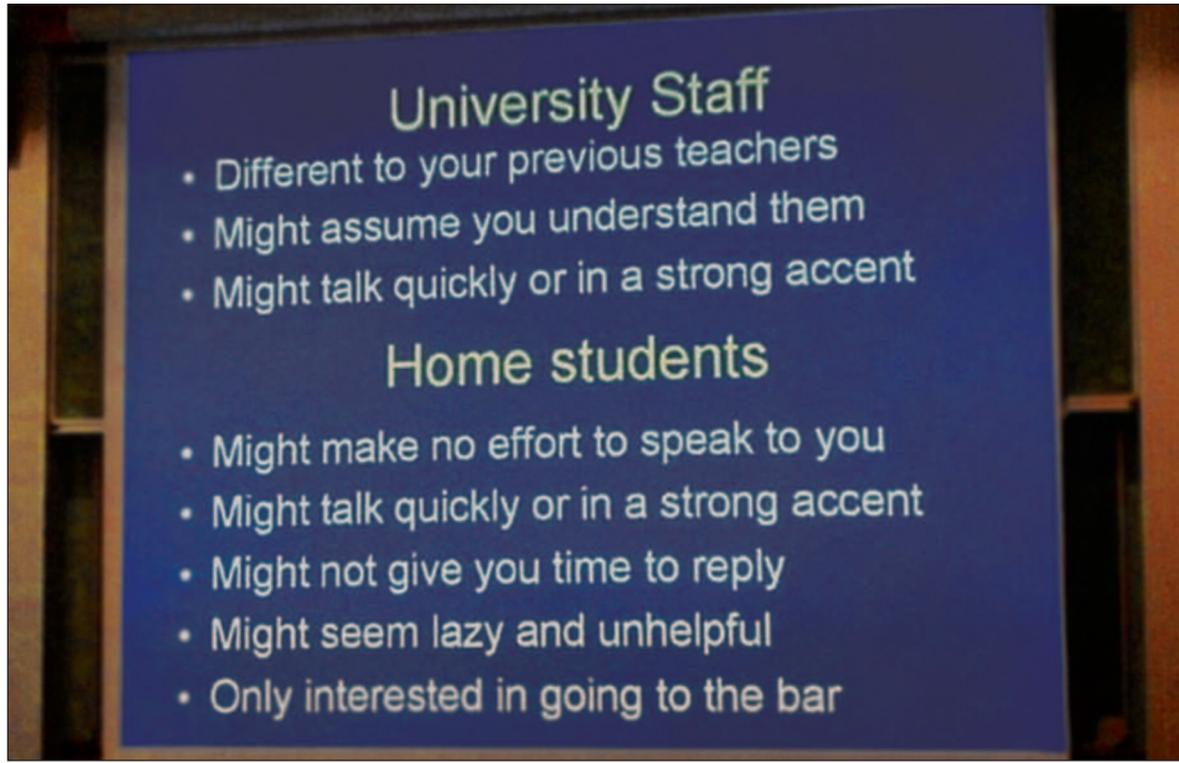
In the lecture, overseas students were told that home students "might make no effort to speak to you" and "might not give you time to reply."

Students and student groups have united in condemnation of the perceived racial stereotyping, labelling it "inappropriate", "unhelpful and grossly unfair."

Adam Malik, President of the International Students Association, described the lecture as "trying to isolate international students and giving certain preconceptions about home students."

He went on to say that he "could easily see it as racist". Malik condemned the University for failing in its primary concern to "integrate and to meet new people", saying that its actions "definitely deter integration between international students and home students."

YUSU have also criticised the lecture, stating that it is "vehemently opposed to stereotyping, whether aimed at ethnic minority students, or home students." John Apea and Nadia Aziz, YUSU Racial Equality Officers, commented that the content is "inappropriate in any context" and that "integration and



The lecture, held during the overseas student induction week, has been labelled 'inappropriate' and 'unhelpful'

cohesion should be primary aims of the University and International Office and unfortunately these statements may impede this process."

The lecture concerned took place as part of a series of induction talks for overseas students in orientation week, and was organised and run by the Student Support Service.

In response to the accusations,

Student Support Services Manager Steve Page, commented that he believes many home students "may not be sensitive to or interested in [cultural] differences". He argues that professionals who "have undertaken extensive research into the experience of international students here at York" make these speeches and presentations and they are based on the experience of

previous students.

Page added that some members of staff do not give "much consideration" to the needs of international students who are from "very different educational cultures to that in the UK".

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University defends 'sensible and accurate' information

**Henry James Foy
EDITOR**

THE STUDENT Support Office has moved to smother student criticism of their induction lectures by stating that the information included was "sensible and accurate."

Steve Page, Student Support Office Manager, said that the intention was to "explain to international students that there will be a range

of awareness and sensitivity to their situation amongst the people they meet."

Page defended the lectures, stating that "the purpose of the programme is to assist international students to think about and in so doing prepare themselves for student life here in York."

The slide was presented, according to Page, to "give examples of some of the difficulties that international students have quot-

ed in some of their dealings with some staff and home students."

"They are not presented as the norm but as some of the difficulties that may be encountered," Page continued.

"There is a very considerable body of experience, understanding and research which points to the significant benefits to international students of orientation programmes which help prepare those students for the opportunities and

the challenges that studying abroad is likely to present to them," Page added.

Page said that neither him nor his office has "had any adverse feedback about that specific presentation that links in any way to the comments," but called on any students to come forward with their concerns. He also confirmed that the orientation would be re-reviewed in light of the concerns detailed to *Nouse*.

Campus nursery provision criticised

THE LACK available places for children of students at the campus nursery has been highlighted as a large failing by both YUSU and the GSA. With a waiting list allegedly three times as long as available places, nursery managers have defended the provision, stating that places are awarded as soon as they become available >> NEWS P3

National praise for York research

A NATIONAL assessment has confirmed York's position as one of the leading research universities in the country. Several departments topped overall lists, and York placed highest overall out of the 1994 Group of universities. The results, released once every seven years, secure important funding for York's research projects >> NEWS P4-5

Halifax social space to be extended

HALIFAX'S common room, the former bar JJ's, has been granted a conservatory extension following negotiations between college administration and senior University officials. Karen Fritz, Halifax Provost, said the extension is to improve the social aspect of the space and its popularity with students to promote college spirit >> NEWS P8

Lacy planning bold sporting projects

AMBITIOUS YORK Sport President Alex Lacy is planning to use the upcoming UGM to lobby the University to create a sports department and bring forward the beginning of term to help sports teams with competition and funding. >> SPORT P19

Travel on a shoestring: The joys of couch-surfing



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Halifax college common room to get conservatory extension

Liv Evans
NEWS REPORTER

PLANS HAVE been announced to build a conservatory as an extension to JJ's, the Halifax College Common Room.

Karen Fritz, the Provost of Halifax, stated that it was a move to "improve the Halifax College social space as a common room for students," and said that all suggestions from students regarding further improvement would be welcomed. The decision was reached after joint consultation between the Halifax administration, the Halifax College Student Association (HCSA), Vice-Chancellor Brian Cantor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students Jane Grenville.

The decision was reached in order to combat the lack of natural light in JJ's. It is thought that the dingy atmosphere makes it less homely for students and discourages use. It is not possible to build a stand-alone conservatory in JJ's due to the common room's proximity to residential accommodation in Younger Court.

The move follows concerns that since being de-licensed as a bar, students have not made particular use of the facilities available in JJ's. College events, where students were encouraged to bring their own alcohol, have been poorly attended and it is thought that col-



Current and past Halifax CSA Presidents Roberto Powell (left) and Dave Sharp pushed hard for the extension

lege spirit has suffered.

David Sharp, the former President of the HCSA, stated that the alumni fund had given Halifax £20,000 to improve JJ's. He said that the work would hopefully be completed over the Easter holidays, although further consultations with building firms were needed before this could be confirmed. He also stated that Halifax would receive further funds from

the University over the summer vacation to make further changes.

Roberto Powell, the new President of the HCSA, said, "it will be good to improve the ambience of JJ's and make it more accessible to students. It is just part one of a wider plan that has been in motion for a time to redevelop the student services and areas that are provided by the college and are coming to fruition as we can find funding for

them." He, along with other members of the newly-elected HCSA, will have a pivotal role in any further decisions made regarding the development of the common room.

The bar in JJ's was closed last summer after a university review concluded that it was no longer financially viable. There have since been threats to other college bars, with the future of Alcuin's B Henry's still uncertain.

York student stars in confused.com advert

Television viewers are watching York student Phil Lester advertise car insurance comparison website Confused.com. A series of adverts were filmed in his Wentworth bedroom and Lester's video blog on YouTube is currently the 30th most popular on the site with 27,000 viewers, making him one of the most recognised faces in the video blogging community. Lester graduated from York last year with a degree in English Language and Linguistics and is now studying for a postgraduate degree with the new Theatre, Film and Television Department. He has also won a place in a MySpace competition for the film Faintheart.

Student action launches new 'Babylon Project'

YUSU Student Action has embarked on a new volunteering scheme that will see York students being used to provide useful foreign languages skills to young children in the local area. Coming from project coordinators Sinead Flaherty and Jen Chester's desire to "teach language that is used on a day-to-day basis", the project has quickly gathered momentum, with the first classes set to begin from January 19th onwards when the volunteers head to the five schools initially involved. Babylon aims to replicate the early introductions to second languages which are mostly absent in the United Kingdom.

Student groups plan walk for Gaza aid

Students from groups all across campus are to take part in a walk to raise money for the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The event, a walk from Harrogate to York, has received the support of Jewish and Islamic societies. The idea originally came from Chris Etheridge, Treasurer of York Tories, who wanted to hold an apolitical fundraiser. While the University refused to back the project outright, they supported the initiative shown. "It is always rewarding that our students are so supportive of humanitarian causes. Whether individuals take part in this event is up to them, and we wish it well."

Reporting by Chris Northwood, Ben Gascoyne and Peter Campbell

Home students stereotyped in induction lecture

<< Continued from front

Pancee Shoukry, a first-year Media Technology student from Kuwait, was "made to feel uncomfortable" by the speeches, which gave her the impression that British people wouldn't want to speak to her.

Other international students stated that they were told that "British people loved to drink" and warned that people "might try to pressure [them] into drinking".

One student was told; "don't expect [home students] to be friendly towards you" although they may "eventually warm up towards you".

The ISA stated that giving this sort of information to new students is not only irresponsible but also "has the adverse affect of isolating students from each other. It's not helpful at all."

For many international students orientation week will be

their first experience of Britain. According to Malik the University is creating preconceptions that are "unfair to home students".

One first-year international student said "many international students don't know what to expect at first" and for many the speeches "could have been interpreted to be racist."

In response to students' accounts, Page stated: "I am saddened to be told that a number of

students have said that they felt uncomfortable and in some cases scared of talking to home students because of this material."

Students who require support regarding this issue have been asked to contact acwelf@yusu.org, or to comment or provide feedback on presentations contact international-support@york.ac.uk.

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Alopecia is a relatively unknown disease causing baldness in its sufferers. Nouse talks to student sufferers about the difficult treatments needed and the often embarrassing social situations it provokes

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Mature students miss out on childcare provision as nursery waiting list grows

Sian Turner
DEPUTY EDITOR

GEORGE LOWTHER

CHILDCARE facilities at York are inadequate for the needs of student parents, it has been revealed.

Complaints about long waiting lists and the 'first come first serve' policy has led the small campus nursery to come under fire as students often miss out on places that become dominated by the children of university staff and public customers.

The on-site nursery, which is run by Commercial Services, provides places for 30 children from the ages of eleven months to five years.

Speaking about the facilities at York, YUSU Academic and Welfare Officer Charlie Leyland said: "The last I heard, there were three times the amount of people on the waiting list as places. There is no strict allocation of staff/student/member of the public ratio, though currently this is approximately 60% staff and 40% students, although I know that the nursery tries to balance this."

With mature students making up the majority of student parents in York, the GSA has responded to complaints, and began acting on the issue last year with the previous YUSU sabbatical team.

"This situation is absolutely something we are aware of," commented acting GSA President Daniel Carr. "In fact, our representative on University Teaching

Committee, Tom Flynn, has raised this issue. This has been necessary as many graduate students, who often finish their days later than undergraduates, are struggling to find adequate provision of childcare on campus," Carr said.

The GSA provides subsidies to help students afford alternative places at nurseries around York, however some feel that this arrangement denies students an equitable opportunity to become involved in campus life.

The opening hours of the nursery have also been criticised that timetabling does not allow students to drop off or collect their children easily.

Presently, the nursery operates from 8.30am to 6.00pm. "They neither open sufficiently early, nor remain open late enough to allow a student with an evening class to place their child in the nursery," commented Carr.

Jon Greenwood, Chair of the Nursery Management Group at York, denied that there was a serious problem.

"We review the requirements continually and as with any business, demand fluctuates up and down. 96% of the places are taken up with staff or students of the University and places are awarded as soon as a vacancy arises," he said.

Jane Grenville, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Students, did however reveal that the University are "looking seriously at this issue." She pinpointed three focal points for



Waiting lists for the on-campus nursery are allegedly three times as long as the places currently available



"How can they seriously put 'internationalisation' at the top of the University agenda if they cannot cater for the whole family?"

YUSU Academic and Welfare Officer
Charlie Leyland

"We currently have a healthy waiting list for places at the Nursery. There are no plans on the table to build a new nursery in the near future."

Chair of Nursery Management Group
Jon Greenwood



the University: the possibility of expansion, a conversion to simpler, crèche facilities, or extended opening hours. 'Shared nursery facilities' were proposed in the original plans for Heslington East, but will not be completed for

several years.

Despite plans to look nursery facilities, Leyland and Carr remain sceptical about the University's priorities for the future.

"The University of York is an international commu-

nity where we are constantly extending both staff and student membership from overseas with 'internationalisation' being top of the agenda. How can they seriously do this if they cannot cater for the whole family?" stated

Leyland.

Any students in need of advice of financial support should contact the University Support Services or acwelfare@yusu.org.

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Courtyard 'detrimental' to future of college events

Tom Hobohm
NEWS REPORTER

SAM NEWSOME



Vanbrugh Chair Dani Fill fears for college-run events

Tension between YUSU and college JCRCs looks set to rise after news that the social calendar of the union's new bar, The Courtyard, is already saturated with planned YUSU events.

Speculators say that the level of competition the new bar will provide against campus bars will negatively impact college events in the future.

The new venue, which opened last weekend is the only Union run bar on campus, and will be open every Friday and Saturday until 2am, competing directly with college events which are normally held at a similar

time. The Courtyard will also be serving three meals a day and doubling up as a coffee bar. This puts it in direct competition with not only other college cafeterias and

bars, but also the smaller coffee bars throughout the campus.

Dani Fill, Vanbrugh JCRC Chair believes that "we would be silly not to be wor-

ried. Obviously it's great for students in general to have more of a nightlife on campus, but for Vanbrugh events it's going to be detrimental"

Other JCRC Chairs believe that YUSU is being too ambitious with the number of events it wants to hold, and that the sheer quantity could, in itself, reduce the popularity of The Courtyard.

"They're going to be asking students to consistently return to their venue, pay to get in and have similar Fridays and Saturdays, if their events are to be a success. I'm not sure this can be done," stated Derwent JCRC Chair Joe Rankin.

The near-closure of the Alcuin bar before Christmas shows just how much pres-

sure campus bars are already under, and the introduction of a new source of competition could well create even more problems for the university.

YUSU is adamant that it's doing everything it can to relieve pressure on college bars. YUSU Societies and Communications Officer Rory Shanks says that the colleges were a top priority throughout the development process. He went on to say, "The Courtyard will encourage college bars to be more competitive. Furthermore, it will keep students on campus, an aspect of the development which will clearly aid the other bars. We see it as a joint-venture."

Already, the union has agreed to hold full capacity

events no more than once every two weeks to give college events like Club D a chance to survive. Ents Tech, which provides technical campus events, should fall in price too. This too could give a boost to suffering events.

Sam Asfahani, Langwith JCRC Chair, doesn't think that the new bar will be a problem; he believes that, in the event of a problem, YUSU will take "positive steps" to ensure a responsible solution will be found.

Regardless of these facts, Rankin is still very concerned that "there is a chance that the large number of YUSU events will somewhat detract from the novelty and interest of certain campus/college events."

National assessment honours York

Sian Turner
DEPUTY EDITOR

STATISTICS HAVE revealed the University of York to be one of the top institutions for academic research in the UK.

The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which takes place every seven years, assesses the quality of research conducted by academics at universities across the country. The results of the 2008 review, released in December, awarded several departments at York national honours. The departments of English Literature, Sociology and Health Services Research were all deemed best in the country, with Biology, Chemistry, Educational Studies, History of Art, Music, Nursing, Psychology, Social Policy and Social Work also within the top 10 for their subject rankings nationally.

In assessing the research quality of each department, the RAE takes into account three different elements to a department; output, research environment and esteem. In output, academics submit four pieces of work completed in the seven years since the last RAE in 2001. These vary from journal articles, published books to musical compositions. Each discipline is judged by its own panel of 'peer judges' - well-respected academics from across the sector. A number of York academics were involved as panel members, making judgement on the work of other universities.

Looking at research environment, the judges take into account the strength of research strategies and a review of departmental achievements prepared especially for the assessment. They take into account provision for younger students undertaking research, and at



The University of York scored highly in the recent RAE, with departments such as Health Services Research named top in the country

the funding available.

With esteem, it is the national and international reputation of the department that is considered. Here, indicators such as invitations to speak at international conferences, editorship of journals and positions on national and international bodies are provided for the judges.

The relative weight of each these three elements varies between disciplines. However in each case they are awarded a score

on a scale from 1* to 4*, with the higher grade signifying a level of work that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour. All but one of the 25 departments at York who submitted to the RAE in 2008 achieved a 4* in at least part of their assessment. The scores for each element are combined to produce one overall average, known as the GPA (gross point average.) The department of English Literature achieved the highest GPA at York, with a score of

3.15.

It is the results of the RAE that most of the university league tables are based on, including *The Times*, the *Guardian* and the *Independent* tables. Most are written on the GPA outcome, however each differs slightly in their manipulation of the figures, with some looking solely at the number of 4* rating achieved, and other taking into account both 4* and 3* rating. Across the board though, York has done well, occupying a place in the top 10 of some

of the most prestigious league tables in the country. *The Times*, the *Independent* and the *Guardian* tables positioned York in eighth place, whilst in the *Times Higher Education* table, the university rose from 14th to 10th.

York's success was highly praised by University Vice Chancellor, Brian Cantor in a press release in December, where he expressed pride in York's results.

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York top of 1994 Group in RAE results

Sian Turner
DEPUTY EDITOR

THE PRESTIGIOUS Russell Group of UK universities have come away with the highest ratings in the recent Research Assessment Exercise.

The group of twenty British institutions, widely regarded as the Ivy League of UK universities, came away with eight out of the top ten positions the *Guardian*, *Times* and *Independent* league tables, and achieved the best results almost across the board, leaving their counterparts in the smaller 1994 Group with lower ratings and rankings.

Formed in 1994, the Russell Group consists of 20 British universities that have become known as some of the best in the English-speaking world for their academic achievements. It includes institutions such as Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh and several of the college of the University of London. York is not part of the Russell Group, aligning instead with the 1994 Group of universities. This alliance was established to protect the interest of smaller



Prof. Steve Smith, chair of the 1994 Group

institutions following the creation of the Russell Group. Alongside York, the universities of Durham, East Anglia and Reading are also involved in the partnership.

Fairing worse than their counterparts, members of the 1994 Group received, on average, poorer results than the Russell Group universities. Only 18% of research

from 1994 Group institutions was awarded the top merit of 4* and 39% graded with 3*. In comparison 21% of research from Russell universities was considered at the internationally acclaimed 4* standard, and 41% at 3*.

Such grading resulted in Russell Group universities achieving, on average, a GPA of 2.75, scoring higher than their counterparts, whose average stood at just 2.65. Consequently, the average 1994 institution sits 13 places behind the average Russell university in league tables ranked by GPA. This can easily be seen in the *Times*, *Independent* and *Guardian* tables, where in the top ten places, there are just two 1994 Group institutions; York in 8th place, with a GPA of 2.78, and Essex in 9th with a score of 2.77.

The *Times* Higher Education subject tables reveal a similar pattern, with 67% of 1994 Group members achieving the status of world leaders in at least 1 field, compared to 75% in of Russell Group institutions. York, however, was one of the 1994 Group members who achieved this acclaim, with its departments for English Literature, Health Services Research and Sociology graded as best in the country.

THE TIMES TOP 10 BY GROUPING

Institution

- University of Cambridge (Russell)
- London School of Economics and Political Science (Russell)
- University of Oxford (Russell)
- Imperial College London (Russell)
- University College London (Russell)
- University of Manchester (Russell)
- University of Warwick (Russell)
- University of York (1994)
- University of Essex (1994)
- University of Edinburgh (Russell)

Source: RAE Results Tables 2008

departmental research excellence

THE TIMES TOP 10 UNIVERSITIES

Institution
University of Cambridge
London School of Economics and Political Science
University of Oxford
Imperial College London
University College London
University of Manchester
University of Warwick
University of York
University of Essex
University of Edinburgh

YORK DEPARTMENTS IN TOP 20

Institution	
Social Policy and Social Work	Linguistics
Educational Studies	Biology
Health Services Research	
Nursing and Midwifery	
History of Art	
Psychology	
Sociology	
Biology	
Chemistry	
Music	



Source: RAE Results Tables 2008

Funding allocations for research universities threatened by cuts

Laura Connor
 DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

RESULTS FROM the recent Research Assessment Exercise that confirm York's position as one of the top British universities could have considerable influence over the research grants awarded to the university in the coming year.

The RAE, which assesses the quality of research at higher education institutions throughout the country, saw York achieve great success across the board. The highest placed university in the league tables from the 1994 Group, the departments of English Literature, Sociology and Health Services Research at York were also awarded the best in the country. This data gathered by the RAE is used to allocate more than £1.5 billion in funding to universities for the academic year 2009-10.

Conducted every seven years, the last RAE in 2001 saw much funding being awarded to those universities achieving the highest-quality research at the most 4* awards. Although this year's results cannot be directly compared to those in 2001, it is thought that there has been an overall increase in quality across the board. This has led to concerns amongst some university officials that future funding could be spread more widely throughout institutions, reducing the amount given to leading research estab-

lishments such as York. As more departments also continue to achieve top-level scores, there are also fears that the money available will be spread more thinly across departments.

Prof. Steve Smith, Chair of the 1994 Group of universities, of which York is a member, commented on the situation, saying that it was essential that funding was "directed towards excellence wherever it is found, not just to those institutions with the great-

"This exercise only happens every six or seven years, so the results could not be more important. They determine both reputation and large chunks of funding for the foreseeable future."

Jane Grenville
 Pro-Vice Chancellor for Students

est capacity." The RAE results were released in December but universities will have to wait until March to find out how much of the annual £1.5 billion in research funding they will receive. The allocation process is based on the quality of an institution's research and the number of staff they submit for assessment, however the exact formula is yet to be determined.

The RAE has come under recent criticism that it encourages an undue focus on research, thereby sacrificing the quality of teaching provided to students. With

York scoring highly in the research league tables, it too has had to face such criticisms. Anna Grey, University Policy Manager, was keen to comment on the situation, "York should be proud that nearly all of the academic staff teach and are also research active. I'm nervous of the suggestion that our staff have spent all their time doing research and don't care about students, as that simply isn't true."

Pro-Vice Chancellor for Students, Jane Grenville, was also keen to enforce the importance of the RAE results for York as a popular destination for students and a research investment opportunity.

"This exercise [the RAE] only happens every six or seven years, so the results could not be more important. They determine both reputation and large chunks of funding for the foreseeable future," she said.

Grenville was also praised the number of academics submitted for review at York. Contention grew after it was revealed that several key universities had a policy of submitting only their best researchers, excluding those that may have pulled down their average.

"At York we had a policy to submit everyone except those that really didn't have sufficient material - so we submitted 93% of all staff, far higher than some other places - but we still beat them!" she said.

Full results of the 2008 RAE and further analysis can be found at www.rae.co.uk.

JOHN HOULIHAN



At a good university, teaching and research are indivisible

Prof. Alistair Fitter
 Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research

Just before Christmas, we got the first results of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), and the news was excellent for York. Averaged across all departments, York was ranked 8th out of around 150 Universities in the UK for the quality of its research. That probably underestimates our real performance, since universities were allowed to exclude anyone they didn't feel had contributed sufficiently to their research record and some universities were selective about who they declared. York wasn't: we declared over 90 per cent of all staff.

The RAE is a curious thing. Devised by academics, it is a very complex way of assessing the quality of the research in UK universities to enable the government's funding bodies to distribute the

cash that underpins research - it helps pay for staff salaries, buildings, equipment and so on - and allows us to bid successfully for grants and contracts to do the actual work.

This funding stream is known as QR - quality of research. At present York gets nearly £25m per year in QR, to add to the £50m that we win competitively in grants and contracts. We won't know how the RAE 2008 scores will be converted into cash until later this year but York's results will help us secure our research base and continue to build our reputation as one of the world's leading research universities.

Individual departments across the University received good results; several did exceptionally well. In all, 12 departments at York

were ranked in the top ten in the country with almost all found in the top 20.

One of the remarkable things about York as a university is that when we say we give equal weight to research and teaching we mean it. Most of the people whose research gave us such a strong showing in this RAE also teach and the results confirm that students in every department are being taught by leaders in their field.

In a really successful university, teaching and research are indivisible, and this RAE will help us to ensure that continues to be the case at York. Our major investment in new facilities, allied to a strong research base will help to ensure that the experience at York continues to be of the highest possible standard.



York's first Student Union venue launched

ALL PHOTOS MATT GRUM

Adrian Choa
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

THE UNIVERSITY of York's Student Union bar has been opened this week.

After eight months of work, The Courtyard has been finished, premiering at a guest-listed celebratory opening last Saturday. The refit of the Langwith College bar has cost an estimated £500,000, making it a large investment for YUSU.

Matt Burton, YUSU Services and Finance Officer whose original idea sparked the conversion project, commented: "We can now focus on running a successful venue that we're confident both students and staff alike will thoroughly enjoy."

The Courtyard will be open night and day, seven days a week, with extended opening hours on Saturday. The bar will offer a range of events, varying from comedy nights, to pre-nights with clubs in town.

YUSU President Tom Scott stated "the amount of work that has gone into the project is incredible, and I'm really proud of all the officers and staff that have worked so tirelessly over the past months."

Jane Grenville, Pro-Vice Chancellor for Students, commented, "the Students' Union has lobbied for forty years to have a central student venue and the opening of the Courtyard represents a major step towards the realisation of this dream."



Clockwise from top left: Students enjoy the champagne and canapés; project leader Matt Burton with inaugural YUSU President John Randall, who officially opened the bar; the interior of the new venue; YUSU President Tom Scott thanking many of the project's supporters

LEADER >> Page 12

Contestants prepare for 'York Come Dancing'

Holly Hyde
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

INTENSE REHEARSALS have taken place over the past week as campus 'celebrities' begin to prepare for the eagerly anticipated 'York Come Dancing.'

York Dancesport will host the charity fundraiser, which is to take place on Sunday 8th February, in conjunction with YUSU and RAG. Jamie Tyler, YUSU Student Development and Charities Officer commented: "Dancesport is a really great society which has been fantastic in helping us organise the event."

There are set to be eleven couples competing, each comprised of one campus 'celebrity' paired with a Dancesport team member. Confirmed 'celebrities' include YUSU chair Tom Scott, Nouse Editor Henry James Foy and political activist Dan Taylor.

Jamie Tyler, who will himself be performing a jive to 'Don't Stop Me Now' by Queen, has comment-



Campus 'celebrities' practice for the upcoming 'York Come Dancing'

ed: "I'm really excited to see Dan Taylor in action doing his Samba."

Taylor, who has been paired with Emily Sargeant, will be performing to 'Lollipop' by Mika, and it has even been reported that he has, "promised a special outfit for the night."

The contestants will receive

the guidance of dance instructors Joel and Sarah Chapman, from the Rock Academy of Dance.

The Chapmans will also be responsible for judging fifty percent of the competition on the final evening along with audience votes which will make up the other fifty percent.

Careers Service warns against recession panic for students

Sian Turner
DEPUTY EDITOR

THE UNIVERSITY Careers Service has warned students not to panic in light of the current economic recession, accusing media coverage of "painting a glooming picture of prospects for the graduates of 2009."

The recession, which has seen the fall of major corporations such as Lehman Brothers and Woolworths, has been a focal point for global media for many months. However, Richard Partridge, Registrar and Secretary of the Careers Service, believes the news is not as bad as it has been made out.

"Employers that we've spoken to and from the analysis of the literature suggest that whilst budgets are being reduced, I don't think there will be, in the short term, the really serious situations that we've seen in the past," he commented. "There might be scaling down, but

it's going to be a modest scaling down."

Partridge was also keen to stress that the recession is not adversely affecting all sectors of the market; that in fact, some areas are growing successfully.

"It's not as simple as saying that this sector is a place to avoid right now, it's about thinking about which parts of a sector will be growing and which will be declining," he said.

However, third-year student Nicholas Woolf did not agree with Partridge's words. "From my experience, the graduate job market has dried up dramatically, and it's not just the financial sector, it's lots of industries. I think the careers service is trying to stop people from panicking, but that's just not true. And I think the situation for current second years will be even worse as the crunch goes deeper" Woolf said.

Anyone needing advice should visit www.york.ac.uk/careers/

MATT CORNOCK

Further assessment delays lead to Economics criticism

GEORGE LOWTHER

Laura Connor
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

THE ECONOMICS department is facing further student criticism this term, after third-year students were told during the Christmas break that their exam scripts had been held up by external examiners. Students were informed that the assessments they sat at the beginning of the autumn term wouldn't be marked in time for the beginning of the spring term. The problem is attributed to delays in communication between the department and the external examiners over the Christmas period.

Although the exam scripts have now been returned with only a one-day delay, John Bone, an Economics department representative, acknowledged "any delay, however small, will have been a source of frustration and inconvenience for the students concerned."

The problem emerges after anger was aroused last year when students had to wait an unprecedented nineteen weeks for exam results. Department policy outlines that examination results should be released within thirteen weeks. Bone said: "If you really have to wait 19 weeks then we are not following our own policy." Since the emergence of these events last year, Economics students have worked to improve any faults in the depart-

ment, with third-year Economic student and student representative Alex Fink urging "students who have issues to go to their board of study reps, who this year are really trying to work hard with the department to improve things."

Despite efforts to improve department policy, it is clear that student dissatisfaction still prevails, with the issue of overcrowding becoming a big problem. "It all started when they let in too many students. They need more staff, and they need to be able to work better," said a second-year Economics student. Last term, first-year students were being forced to sit on the stairs in lecture rooms; some students were missing lectures for fear of not finding a place to sit.

Concern has been aroused not just in areas of assessment punctuality, but assessment quality. Charlie Leyland, YUSU's Academic and Welfare Officer said: "I know how hard the Economics department are working to improve the student experience which includes the quality and timeliness of assessment and feedback. This is a generally below average area of the institution." A second-year economics student further commented: "My main complaint is that the marking tends to be superficial. The procedural essays use a marking system that is based around numbers and really is not very informative." There are fears that weakness in



The Economics department has been criticised by third-year students for failing to mark work on time

these areas will hinder student academic progress, although the issue appears to be relatively isolated, with other departments seeming punctual with their feedback.

Results from an independent survey of student satisfaction conducted in 2007 revealed particular dissatisfaction amongst students studying economics. This was regarding departmental feedback; almost 25% of student participants described feedback from their departments - which were mainly

PEP - as "poor" or appalling."

Bone commented; "We are aware that students want shorter turnaround times in marking" The department recently shortened the deadline in respect of spring term assessments, and Bone says "we are looking for ways of doing likewise for Autumn term." Peter Simmons, Head of the Economics department, said that the department "takes the issue of speedy communication of feedback to students on assessed work seriously."

Leyland encourages any students with problems to ask module organisers and tutors to help ensure that they are on the right lines with current assessments. However, she admits that "this is difficult without feedback" She continued: "If they are dissatisfied with elements of the course they should contact their course reps who are able to bring these issues to the forefront at the highest level within the department, and work with myself to combat these issues."



Cantor salary jumps £16,000 as University income rises

Jim Bulley
NEWS EDITOR

RECENTLY RELEASED financial statements for the year ending July 2008 report a 16% rise in the University's total income, while Vice-Chancellor Brian Cantor saw his salary increase by almost 8% - twice the rate of inflation.

Cantor, who saw his pay increase to over £205,000 in the financial year 2006-07, received a further increase of 8% over the past year, bringing his 2007-08 salary to £221,242.

Defending the pay rise, University Press Officer David Garner stated that most staff in the University received a minimum 3% pay rise in May under a national agreement.

According to Garner, "the VCs of the top 22 research intensive universities, of which York is a member, have a median total remuneration of £214,000 per annum".

Garner also stated that the decision to increase the salary was taken by the University's remuneration committee, which "based [its] decision on as assessment of individual performance and on data from comparable universities."

Dr Simon Parker, acting President of the University and Colleges Union points out that the University is a World Top 100 university "thanks not only to the efforts of the Vice-Chancellor, but to the talent and dedication of our academic and

related staff."

He went on to comment that the UCU "expects that the ACAS-brokered talks with the University Employers' Association will lead to a pay agreement that reflects our members' contribution."

Total income, excluding donations, has increased 11%, leaving an operating surplus of £12.3 million, £10 million more than last year's surplus of £2.7 million. The University's core activities also recorded an overall surplus, with the increased total income of £217 million showing a £30 million increase on last year. The operating cash flow, which last year was the highest ever at £13.3 million, dropped by 8.13% to £12.3 million.

The University's net assets dropped by nearly £1 million this year, but are still considerably higher than any recorded before 2007. Similarly the net cash inflow from operating activities has dropped by just under £1 million.

The University also spent £696,000 on grants for YUSU, and a further £143,000 on grants for the GSA. These figures are not greatly changed from last year but have both risen with inflation.

The land needed for the new project at Heslington East cost the University £6.1 million, an amount which was doubled by grants from the HEFCE specifically for the land purchase.

The Heslington East expansion is estimated to cost £500 million.



GEORGI MABEE

Prof. Brian Cantor's pay rise was twice the rate of inflation

REPORT FACTS

Income

Total income: £217 million
Council grants: £46.5 million
Research grants: £50.5 million
Tuition fees: £46.5 million
Donations: £6.1 million

- Increase of almost £30 million on previous year
- Third-highest research income per academic in England

Expenditure

Total expenditure: £204.6 million
Staff costs: £117.5 million
Depreciation: £14.3 million
Interest payable: £3.7 million

- Increase of almost £20 million on previous year
- Over £75 million invested in research facilities over past five years

Assets

Fixed assets: £203.2 million
Endowment assets: £9.4 million



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“If York doesn’t make a success of the next 10-15 years, it will be down to itself”

Henry James Foy talks to newly-retired Registrar and Secretary Sally Neocosmos about five years at the heart of Heslington Hall

“You have to know a little about everything, and a lot about relatively few things,” says Sally Neocosmos of her job as University Registrar and Secretary.

Described by former YUSU President Anne-Marie Canning as the ‘real decision-maker’ in Heslington Hall, Neocosmos retired in December after five years in the role.

Sitting in her large office overlooking the northern lawn of Heslington Hall, Neocosmos rebuffs my suggestion of a disconnect between the executive staff and students. “When you have the Senior Management team in one building, people may talk of [a bunker mentality], but the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Relationships between Heslington Hall and students and staff are pretty good,” she says.

“I like to think my approach to dealing with students has been open and transparent,” she continues. “I’ve never had any difficulty working with [YUSU], whether day to day requests for information, or demonstrations!”

There is a wry smile as she recalls the protests last June against the Langwith Bar project delay, which involved over 100 students with drums and loudhailers: “I think there might have been more straightforward ways of making the

point, but I thought it was quite fun really, all out on the lawn.”

“But I hope [the bar] is a success,” she says. “The Union here at York is relatively undeveloped in terms of its ability to run commercial activities, so I think the ‘venue’ is a way for the union to show they can take on that responsibility, especially with Heslington East opportunities in the future.”

When I broach the subject of the University’s investment in the arms trade, as reported by *Nouse* in December, Neocosmos becomes defensive.

“It’s very useful that students prompted us to adopt [an ethical investment] policy”

“It’s not invested in the arms trade. We invest in BAE Systems,” she counters. I argue that BAE sells to the governments of Saudi Arabia and Indonesia, where they have been used in oppressive campaigns against citizens.

“If that is the case, I would agree [that it’s wrong to sell arms to Saudi Arabia]... I can’t comment. I don’t know enough about it,” claims Neocosmos, who was Chair of the committee set up to draft an ethical investment policy.

The drafting of the policy

has taken two years, a delay due to “pressure of work”, according to Neocosmos, who says it was “very useful that students prompted us to adopt a policy.”

Neocosmos, who “reads both student papers cover to cover” and “get[s] very irritated by the worst excesses of tabloid journalism at times” laughs off the *Nouse* investigation last May that found evidence of cocaine use in Heslington Hall. “Oh yes, I loved that one. We just thought it was really funny,” she laughs, “It didn’t send us into a panic.”

Upon publication, *Nouse* were warned of potential libel action from the University, and the local police and press investigated the claims. “I’m not trivialising it,” Neocosmos states. “If there is cocaine use on campus, then it’s a serious issue.”

Our conversation moves to the issue of scrapping the tuition fee cap, allowing universities to set their own fees, which has been mooted by some University Vice-Chancellors, and is believed by the National Union of Students to be supported, in principle, by York Vice-Chancellor Brian Cantor.

“We haven’t discussed raising the cap further. We are not completely ambivalent, but we certainly aren’t spending any time worrying about the debate at this stage. We will enter the fray when there is something to debate,” she says.

She does, however, strong-



Sally Neocosmos, Registrar and Secretary, retired in December

ly support the Heslington East expansion project as a way to advance York’s position internationally, a drive she describes as the University’s “number one priority”: “Heslington East is not a gamble. It’s a bold decision, but not a gamble. This campus is full, and has already expanded beyond its capacity.”

Neocosmos dismisses allegations that the expansion will damage York’s high teaching and research reputation, and the expenditure will harm departmental funding; claiming that there are “no cuts, that I know of” planned. “I can’t see any rea-

son to anticipate a slide [in York’s ranking]. The money for Heslington East is very long-term borrowing. It’s all planned, with detailed projections.”

Neocosmos is positive about the future. “The University is more confident, better managed, and its sense of strategic direction is sharper and clearer than when I came, which gives me confidence in the steps it is taking,” she says.

“I think York has everything going for it. It has fantastic opportunities, and if it doesn’t make a success of the next 10-15 years, it will be down to itself.”

Students to face heightened fines over new fire safety regulations

Holly Hyde
NEWS CORRESPONDENT

UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS have warned students that they will face increased fines if they are shown to have caused any unnecessary fire alarms.

Academic Registrar Sue Hardman commented: “A charge of up to £476 should be levied on a student who intentionally and unnecessarily activates a fire alarm.”

The University’s decision to update the policy was prompted by numerous cases of false alarms: in 2007 North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Service’s (NYFRS) reported over 400 false alarms at the university alone. NYFRS has warned that each false alarm costs the fire service valuable time and money and that “the fire service expects the university to deal with these incidents robustly.”

University bosses have used the figures outlined in the NYFRS 2007 report for approximate cost of sending two appliances and fire crews to the University. The bill accumulated to £476.

The implementation of the £476 fine follows the release of statistics that suggest that, since 2004, twenty students have faced fines ranging from £25 to £100 for smoking in forbidden areas.

The report suggests that students in Halifax College have been behind the most fire-related offences; five students were fined £50 and two were fined £100 for smoking, whilst an additional two students were fined £30 for the misuse of fire extinguishers.

In total, the University has received £1,860 in disciplinary fines over the past five years. The University insists that all disciplinary fines are reinvested back into the colleges from which they were taken.

Professor and ex-student honoured

Camilla Jenkins
NEWS REPORTER

THIS YEAR saw Professor Ottoline Leyser and Professor Martin Barstow added to the list of influential people connected with the University of York.

Professor Leyser was named as a member of the New Year’s Honours List. She received a CBE for services to Plant Science after being instrumental in the breakthrough discovery of a major hormone receptor in plants. She said: “Plant science has a central role to play in successfully meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century... I am thrilled plant sciences are being recognised in this way.”

This honour follows her being elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society in 2007, when she achieved the Rosalind Franklin Award for an outstanding contribution to natural science engineering or technology.

Leyser became a lecturer at



GEORGE LOWTHER

Professor Leyser received a CBE

York in 1994 and was appointed as a professor eight years later. “It’s a true pleasure and a privilege to be able to contribute to this endeavour,” she said.

Following on from this, Professor Barstow, a former physics student of York and the current Head of Department of Physics and

Astronomy at the University of Leicester, will appear in the 2009 edition of *The Who’s Who Directory*.

Barstow stated on the University of Leicester website: “I was very pleasantly surprised to be invited to have an entry in *Who’s Who*. It is certainly nice to feel that the some of the work I have been doing has become recognised more widely beyond my usual scientific peers.”

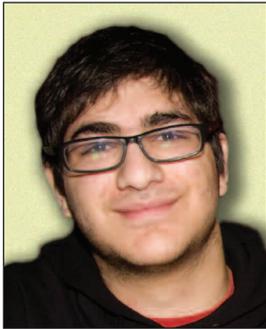
The Directory, which has been published since 1849, lists influential people such as US President-elect Barack Obama and actor Daniel Craig.

Rory Shanks, YUSU Societies and Communications Officer, commented: “YUSU is always pleased to hear of any civil awards or honours being bestowed upon our academic staff. It reflects the high calibre of personnel that I know our departments are keen to attract and is proof that this is indeed being successful.”

Votes of confidence

Profiles and Analyses of the 2008-2009 JCRC Chairs

Profiles and pictures by
Jim Bulley and Sam Newsome



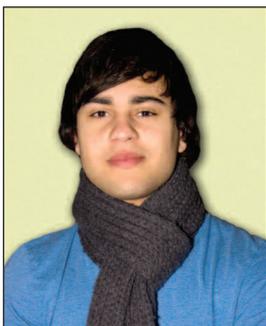
SAM ASFAHANI- LANGWITH

FORMER WELFARE Rep Sam Asfahani was victorious in an election that saw the highest turnout in Langwith history. Asfahani believes the high turnout and highly contested elections is a sign of a strengthening of the Langwith spirit. He is looking forward to working with YUSU to utilise the new bar with college interests in mind. Langwith also intend to improve the quality of its college sports and to introduce a lower common room within the next year. Asfahani is confident that more communal space will increase college spirit.



OLIVER HUTCHINGS- ALCUIN

ENERGETIC COLLEGE politician Oliver Hutchings was victorious after a particularly well-planned campaign. Hutchings, placing personality ahead of policies in his priorities, is preparing to continue defending B Henrys in the next year. He intends to use the experiences that he gained as an Ordinary Rep to help unite Alcuin and overcome its spacious layout and lack of strong college spirit. The future of B Henry's remains his main concern and he is glad to see that the college is still united behind the bar.



ROBERTO POWELL- HALIFAX

POPULAR FAVOURITE Roberto Powell was uncontested in the Halifax elections this year. Powell, whose friendship with former president David Sharp only strengthened his candidacy, is a former bar rep and well-known figure in the college. Powell is looking forward to the new extensions on the common room, and is also planning to rebrand Halifax college merchandise. Halifax will also be introducing a rugby team this year, which Powell hopes will be able to compete with other, more sporting, colleges.

JAMES - AMBER BRITTAİN

A CONTROVERSIAL but uncontested election saw second year Amber Brittain elected as JCR Chair. Eager to move away from the difficult election process, Brittain is looking to encourage a better spirit within the college and believes that the JCR needs to encourage more political interest in James. Brittain believes that the future of James lies in increased participation. Brittain, who was one of the three vice-chairs who became acting chairs in last years JCR, is looking forward to James' planned move to Goodricke this year.



DERWENT - JOE RANKIN

POLITICS STUDENT Joe Rankin was victorious in the highly contested Derwent elections, defeating joke candidate McLovin' despite a high RON vote. Rankin, who was a Bar Rep in last years JCR, is keen to stay involved in the events aspect of the college, which he believes is its strongest asset. He intends to push for a refurbishment of Derwent's bar, effectively making it more bar-like and less like a cafeteria. As captain of Derwent's rugby team Rankin is hoping to continue Derwent's sporting success.



VANBRUGH - DANI FILL

SOCIOLOGY STUDENT Dani Fill, a former Ents Rep, became the second woman elected to a JCRC position this year. Fill is particularly worried about the impact that 'The Courtyard' will have on V-Bar, and she promises that the Vanbrugh JCR will continue to provide a full program of events despite fierce competition from the Students Union. Fill has already been active in providing the common room with a new table tennis table, and she hopes to introduce a surround sound system throughout the JCR.



GOODRICKE - DAN WALKER

GOODRICKE HELD an incredibly tightly contested election this year, and new chair Dan Walker only won by a small margin. Not fazed by this, Walker is looking forward to working with his competitors, who he believes can only be assets to the college. Walker believes a large amount of the JCR's work this year will involve maintaining college spirit and unity after the long awaited move to Heslington East, which takes place later this year. He hopes to provide more regular Goodricke college events this year.



TOM SCOTT'S BLACKBERRY as seen by Henry James Foy

15.01.09 14:12
To: president@yusu.org
From: communications@yusu.org
Subject: Courtyard Opening

Listen up President-boy. Matt and I have had a little chat, and we've decided you can do the opening speech for the new bar. It's the boring thank you crap, and Randall's going to steal the show with yarns about meeting The Who, but we thought, as you're technically the Union's figurehead and all that, you should probably do it. Just don't forget the sodding great eulogy to me and Corporal Burton. Everyone knows we did all the work anyway.

Sounds good? Thought so.

Shanks

P.S No pirate hat. It might have got you elected, but it makes us look like a bunch of tards. And Jane Grenville will be there.

16.01.09 02:47
To: president@yusu.org
From: r.croker@lidl.com
Subject: HEY!!!!!!!!!!

TOM!!

how are you doing??!?!? just a quick message to say jolly good on the bar (though i did give you the idea :P) and could you stick me on the guest list? old skool YUSU and that?

Rich xoxoxo

16.01.09 09:31
To: president@yusu.org
From: ellisj52@yahoo.com
Subject: RE: HEY!!!!!!!!!!

Not so much. J x

16.01.09 15:01
To: president@yusu.org
From: news@theyorker.co.uk
Subject: Scoop

Hi Anne-Marie,

I'm trying to put together our news section - I know I don't email in very often, but we've gotten wind of a fantastic story - apparently something about a bar that's going to be opening? I was wondering if you could confirm or deny these rumours, and also maybe lend us some money too?

Yours in utter desperation,

The Yorker

16.01.09 10:38
To: president@yusu.org
From: communications@yusu.org
Subject: RE: Scoop

Yeah - I get them occasionally. Turn on the spam filter: my one stops this kind of stuff coming through pretty well.

Rory



Comment & Analysis

Charlotte Hogarth-Jones

Deputy Comment Editor



Crumpets and queues: overseas students need to hear the truth

The comments made about British students to those from overseas fail to convey our unique charms

I was told that the British were a lot less friendly than the Americans, and that “quite often you can be sort of stand-offish and rude” by my housemate Nate from the US, who comfortingly added “but it’s just your way” into the bargain when he sees my jaw drop into my rice crispies. My other American housemate Andrew is also quick to jump on the bandwagon, admitting not only that he had braced himself for an icy-cold welcome from the other 13 Brits in our house, but also that he was frightened to enter our supposed den of sin without a bottle of Vodkat, being led to believe that all we’d be doing is “trying to drag [him] round the bars all the time.”

Struggling at nine in the morning to look unbelievably friendly and 100% wholesome, I ask them if that’s still what they think – thankfully for us all its not, and I can resume my normal facial expressions. In fact, many of the international students I talked to had gained similar impressions from their orientation talks, growing increasingly alarmed at the portrayal of the British – by day a mass of cold hearted Victorian ice-queens, making conversation (if any) similar to the dad in Mary Poppins, by night a sea of midriff-exposing binge drinkers, decorating the pretty town of York with our student vomit and forcing jaegerbombs down the throats of trembling jet-lagged foreigners.

Thankfully, everyone I talked to was intelligent enough to have dismissed these talks, preferring to wait and see for themselves whether students were “lazy and

unhelpful” as the Student Support Office suggests those before them have found, or whether actually we were just about bearable. Yet regardless of how seriously the information from these sessions is taken by students, it is perhaps more than a little distressing to think this is the first impression of the British that foreigners coming to York might take on board.

Whilst it remains almost impossible to narrow down guidance for overseas students to just a few power-point bullets, its almost certainly possible to offer a bit more positive advice to people who’ve flown half way round the world to get here. What about

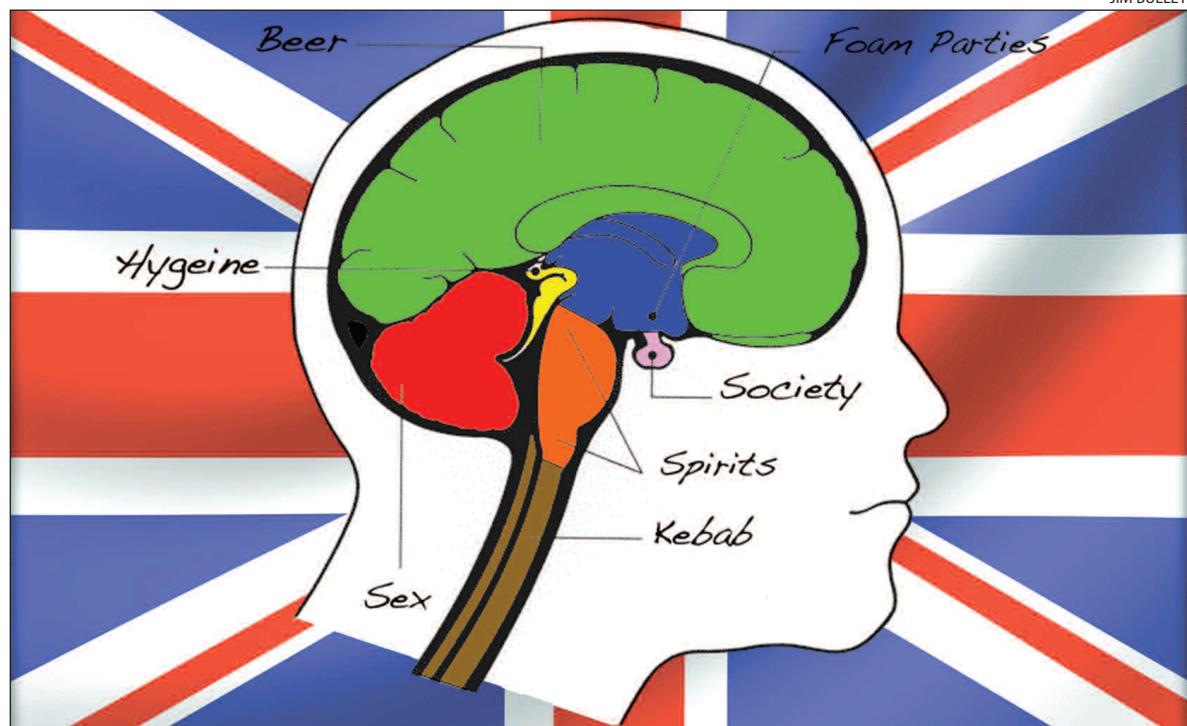
where you can buy crumpets, the rules of cricket and how to learn the art of the good British queue?

Admittedly, I’m not expecting the Student Support Office to switch to this kind of jolly-hockey sticks approach any time soon, but if they did, at least students might not emerge nervous and cursing the day they got on the plane – they might even think York sounds like fun. In reality, the guidelines given on social integration are insulting to staff, home, and foreign students. To suggest that home students “might make no effort to speak” to international ones is frankly irresponsible and unhelpful. Of all the foreign stu-

dents I met, they were all highly motivated, capable and active people – they don’t need advice on how to meet and greet, and even if they did, the Student Support Office guidelines would be woefully inadequate.

I’ve always thought that meeting people from new places and embracing new cultures is part of what University life is all about, and so far in my time at York, I am pleased not to have discovered any integration problems whatsoever. All students here seem to get along fine, but surely if anything would be likely to cause a rift between nationalities, being called “lazy and unhelpful” would do it.

JIM BULLEY



Jane Grenville

Pro Vice-Chancellor for Students



Surviving the recession, eighties style

It’s all gloom and doom in the national media these days. It’s aeons since they’ve had a full-blown recession to report and the feeding frenzy is amazing to behold. I had half an ear to the Today programme as I munched my muesli the other day – another tale of woe about how truly dreadful this is for new graduates: ‘the worst economic situation to graduate into since 1980’.

Hey, wait! That was the year I graduated! My morning-befuddled brain whirred into action (oldies love to reminisce). Was our 1980 generation terminally blighted by being spewed out of the education system at the precise moment that

the newly elected Mrs Thatcher was dismantling the post-war political consensus and plunging us into economic darkness? Things were certainly tight, and contrary to modern myth, student debt was not unheard of. The Welfare State was under pressure – signing on and sitting it out not the option it had once been. So what did we do?

To jog my memory, I rang my old friend, Mary, a planning consultant in the City, who has sharper recall than me and we mulled it over. The first thing we thought was that we, like you, had degrees recognisable to the outside world as ‘class’. That’s a big advantage – remember, when the media talk of

‘graduates’ they are thinking of all of them, not just those from the top ten universities. Being in the elite doesn’t make you immune to

“What goes down does eventually come back up again”

unemployment, but it helps (if you’re prepared to take your chances – or amuse your unemployed selves in a way that adds

value to your York degree).

Lots of our generation stayed on and did a second degree while the economic storm raged outside. Others wrote carefully worded application letters that backed up the first degree with a literate, well-expressed statement and got the graduate trainee posts that were going. One friend, notably, took a job as a level crossing keeper and sat in his little shed reading philosophy to keep his degree bright and shiny until the situation eased – alas, Mrs T. abolished lovely little jobs like that, but you see what I’m getting at.

So my advice to third years is to pitch for the jobs that are going,

think about that masters degree or do some volunteering/placement work. Mary says they’re still taking people on for traineeships and placements, but you have to stand out from the crowd with an honest, engaging and well-written letter. Remember to tell them about your extra-curricular and transferable skills. And don’t despair – what goes down does eventually come back up again and you need to be optimistic and positive so that you’ll look good to employers both in and out of recession.

First and second years, meanwhile, can sit back and enjoy all the price slashing – you never thought your money would go so far.

Nouse Archives

Page missing - this is all that could be located on the server:



It could have been removed on purpose by a previous editorial team because of a copyright dispute for example. A paper copy is held in the University Archive

MUSE.



"I gained 500g. I was like, fuck"

Anorexia **M6**



Content

There was beaucoup de drama this issue darlings mais here we are: I wrote this poem:

J'étais pris

Par l'anorexie

Deep stuff starting on **P6**. Is he old? No, he's got **alopecia p.10**.

Phew - some light **travel relief p.12**.

Richard Littlejohn got ate by **Johann Hari p.14**. What will you be wearing next summer?

There really is no excuse to be without **des vêtements qui se trouvent on p.16**, **Steve McQueen in Edinburgh p.18**, I near pissed, shit, and vomited all at once

quand je lisais **Caspa and Rusko p.20**, conversely the **Oscars** get up the crack of Duncan's arse

p.22, et **Alleycats** - how clean is it and what's the food like **p.23**?

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Art and Leeds Grand

Theatre

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Will Heaven Kids are suffering and dying: life in the country

The north versus south debate is over. The southerners got bored of it and northerners - well, the northerners are for the most part clinically obese. So they waddled home to eat troughs of black pudding and discuss coalmining and beat up their ballet-dancing brothers.

Fine, you got me. I'm a southern fairy or, as I was once described by a colleague, "a toffee-nosed ponce from the home counties". But let's not get bogged down by class warfare or a most unpleasant regional accent competition. In 2009 there's room for a new debate: city versus country. Over the Christmas break, I experienced both - and have conclusively decided which I prefer.

First, a glimpse of life in the country. It's 4 am on boxing day and I am in bed wearing a hoodie and pyjamas and thick woollen socks. The house is about minus ten at this time of night and I am awake, for the fourth day in a row, because the cockerel is crowing outside my window.

Now cockerels, you are immediately thinking, are supposed to crow at dawn. Surely, at 4 am on Boxing Day, it was not yet dawn? Spot on. But this is no normal cockerel. It should be with the other chickens. Safely tucked up in their stinky little coop with lots of hay and places to sleep. But it's not. It's roosting in the tree opposite my bedroom window. I consider putting on my coat and boots to go outside and find the fucker. What, you might ask, would I do if I caught it? Vegetarians please

look away: I would most definitely kill it. A cockerel, you see, doesn't lay eggs. So to me it has no purpose.

I've slept a bit more, got up, had breakfast, walked the dogs and the rest. It's nearly getting dark and it's time to feed the pigs. Yup, you're right: in the countryside, days are divided into neat little animal-centred slots.

"The pigs need one and a half scoops of the nuts which are in the bin outside," I am told. Right. "But watch

"The fat sheep in front slams into me at waist height. 'No', I shout, 'fuck off'."

out for the sheep - they'll try to get through the gate as you go through." Not too difficult - watch out for the sheep. I get my one and half scoopfuls - generous scoopfuls, I feel, for three medium-sized pigs - and march up the slope towards the pen. First, the gate.

Two white mountains bound towards me. They are skidding on the wet ground and can't stop. Sheep are not clever, but they recognise a bucket with food in it. The fat sheep in front slams into me at waist height, at the same time stuffing its nose into the bucket. "No", I shout, "fuck off". I heave its solid neck - huge muscles covered in wool - out of the bucket. I firmly, but

not so hard that you have to inform the RSPCA, tap the end of its nose. It prances off.

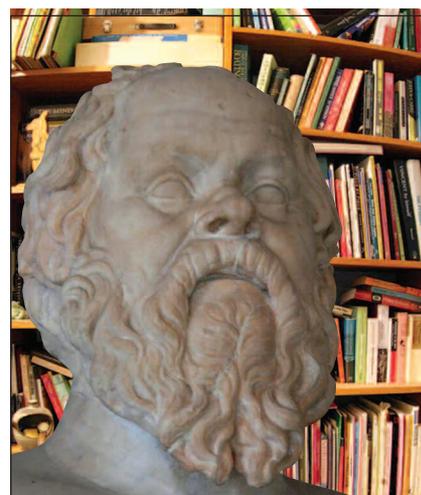
Eventually, I make it to the pigpen. Lots of squeals and mud, a few electric shocks - their fault for getting too close to the wire - and I'm in filling the trough with nuts and getting trodden on. Pigs really are as greedy as you imagine. And you can see why Muslims think they're unclean - forget cute, they look satanic.

"Hey Will", someone calls, "can you make sure the chickens are in their coop?" This is really shit news, for two reasons. One: the chicken coop is inside the bit where the sheep are. Two: the chickens are outside the gate - I have to get them through it (no they can't fly) without letting the sheep out.

I open the gate and pretend to cluck loudly as if I am the big mother bird. They run towards it and I'm hopeful they'll get through. Bang. One of the sheep crashes passed me. Out of nowhere it has charged passed me and onto glorious freedom in the garden.

A week later, it's 7am and I am sitting on the tube. I am wearing a pin-striped suit which is too small and holding a copy of Metro. This really is a shit paper, I think. Why don't I ever bring a book or something better to read? I look around, everyone is sitting or standing in glum, recession-type silence. The tunnel whistles noisily. I think of home. Right now, someone in my family is probably wondering whether to go and find the cockerel. It's good to be in London.

The XY chromosome seminar Socrates



Jesus, it can't have been a week already. Just as I have purged myself of all trace of these plebs I am obliged to squander another 120 irretrievable minutes amongst them in the futile pursuit of enlightenment. Laura takes notes in a 'Tinkerbelle' notebook for Christ's sake; a perfect illustration of the dichotomy between the intelligible and perceptual. As I was telling Theo only this morning, my skin crawls at the thought that in all

likelihood, 90% of my colleagues will enter the world furnished with qualifications not dissimilar to my own, thereby masking the gaping chasm of understanding which divides us. Then again, is it any wonder when instead of studying anything of academic clout our modules consist of themes such as 'popular culture', 'the role of women' and 'childhood'? Herodotus must be turning in his grave.

Alice is late again. I wonder that a 60 year old academic with a doctorate and countless publications under her belt should be content to be addressed by her Christian name. Perhaps the idea is to put us at our ease; I find it rather awkward. As if this were a mere 'chat' amongst peers which might, with luck, touch upon something related to the substance of the course, but out of pure serendipity, as opposed to premeditated design. However if I were to use her official title my colleagues would probably consider me pedantic. That said, some have in all likelihood already formed this opinion; I find myself having to explain the Roman origins of feudalism almost every week for the benefit of those unfamiliar with history pre-

dating 1939.

I try not to dominate the discussion too conspicuously, despite the other's frankly laughable attempts. In all honesty, I don't have the heart; why waste one's energy on such trivial subject matter?

I recall one week attempting to explain the insensibility of focusing on popular culture at the expense of political development and philosophy; why on earth should we care about superstition and localised ritual traditions when it is ultimately the decisions made by those in power, and constitutional change which antecede the evolution of society? Of course such suggestions are met with blank stares; it is as if their mental faculties have rusted over for want of cerebral stimulation.

It seems next week we are to divide into groups to 'act out' a scene of our own composition to illustrate a 'theme'. I am hereby obliged to converge with my assigned battery of dolts, and probably have to 'thought shower' ideas with them, only to come up with something barely discernable from the other groups' efforts. I bet they want to do 'gender'. Heaven help me.

Such a tourist

16.01.09 - Self-harm Support Group



Take off your jumper when you come in. Remove the barriers, the physical coverings that hide a body mutilated. An outside that reflects an inside torn apart but still forced to remain whole. Cling tightly, don't let it go. Rub your hands nervously up and down your forearms, wring your hands so that the marks are blurred, then no one will see. It's like a ball inside of me. Stare at the floor. "It's like a giant ball of fire burning inside my chest, it won't go away and it only grows stronger and there's only one way I can get away from it." Her arms look like the hide of a zebra, like one of those tops you buy aged 13, the thin, chiffon ones with the army print that you cast away three months later for a tamogotchi. But it's not. It's a surface like the moon, ripped with red ravines that masquerade as human skin. Where are you problem areas? Eyes my arms up and down. Look to the floor, copy the zebra girl. "You hide it?" "Yes." "It's ok." It's not meant to be seen if you could be seen it could be articulated it could be expressed, it could be talked about in a 'safe, secure environment where there are no barriers no judgements.' When words lose their meaning, become mere sounds, floating meaningless on the airwaves of non-existence, it's the physical signs that confirm a reality. Soft, calming voice: "It's all about anger management. Take each other's hands." You can

feel the calluses, the softness of fresh new skin the rough surface of new scabs. The Dove dermatology department would have a field day. Squeeze tight, let your friends take away your anger. But here it's different, there's no community in this pain. With cancer you don't have a choice, you share in the cruelty of fate, hold each other tight and tell each other that your still a woman, even if you don't have hair, you don't have a womb, you don't have a left breast. This is a dark, guilty secret and the only community here is the warm rush of relief with the first cut. Spiral down, fall down, tumble into obscurity where the single escape route is the only pinpoint of community. The deep red rush of relief, gratification. Self-worth is restored. "It hurts but it feels good": inarticulate emo boy with fringe over his eyes. Homework, when you feel the knot building up, go for a run, work it out of your system. You're already running, you've been running for years and if you stop you'll fall off the edge of the world. Put back on your jumper, hide away the marks. Shuffle out, it's secret again now, you're safe and no one will know. Put on your normal face, live a normal life, pretend it was the cat until next week, come back once more with a positive story to tell, a false smile to parade, and a voice to mumble incoherencies. For a week I won't be there to see through the jumper and see the



Lily Eastwood social pariah

I patted Alicia's back as she pawed her way through her chips in pitta. It was a miracle she didn't have any sick in her hair. "I like garlic mayo." "I know you do." "I like it so much." "Yup." "Do you want some garlic mayo?" "No." Mainly because the only place I could take it from would be off of her face. Sigh. Looking across the road and through the drizzle in which we sat I saw a couple of boys crossing. Alicia raised one finger very slowly in their direction. "Pat Willis," she boomed. Pat, who we hadn't seen since we were 13, looked a little confused. "Hi," he said. "I'm so sorry she's pretty fu—" "Didn't you go out with Andy?" interrupted one of Pat's friends. "Uh yes." "And you dumped him for being thick?" "Uh no—" "Yeah she did," piped up Alicia, "Thick and boring." I stared at her. "What?" said Alicia, "That's what you said." All eyes on me.

"He's calling, he's calling! Shit, he's calling!" I threw the phone down. "Who is it?" Lesley asked, from her pyjama clad position on the other sofa. "The boy, you know, the one from last night." "The short one?" "The fit one." "He was short." "He was fit..." The phone stopped. "But weird...he kept showing me pictures of kitchen installations he'd



done." "Hot," mused Lesley. "Who rings though? Seriously. This is the 21st century; direct communication was made unnecessary five years ago. Just text you fucking weirdo." Text tone. "u made my nite babe. ne chance of gettin 2geva?" Silence as we stared down at the message. Gettin 2geva seemed unlikely. "Shit! He's calling again!"

The toilet attendant's voice drifted out from the gents. (to the tune of London bridge is

falling down) "Freshen up for punani, punani, punani, freshen up for punani..." It was a classy joint. Somehow through the din, the sad voice of a lovelorn student drifted through. "But it's really bad," he said. "Why?" said the friend. "Because I actually like her." "So that's good right?" "No, like I like her," he said. "No splaaaash no gaaaaash!" came his musical accompaniment. The boy continued: "Like so I'm going to have to tell her I love her." The boys paused at the gravity of the situation. "No

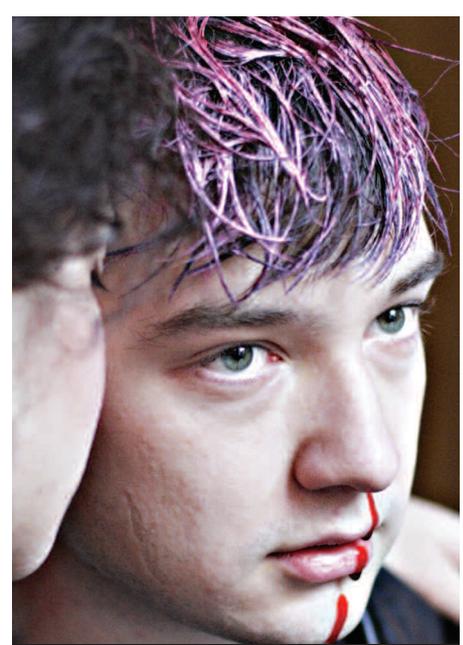
Armani no punani!" The friend coughed and said: "That's nice I guess." "Wash your fingers for the mingers!" Not long after that the two boys walked out. Lovesick had a strawberry lollipop in his hand: she was one lucky lady.

I was alone at the bar, squinting over the crowd of sweaty students looking for my sweaty housemates. "Why are you wearing a tiara?" slurred a stranger. He slurred heavily, mostly, and right in my neck. "Um, it's just a hair band," I replied. Why are you standing so close? Why are you over forty and at The Duchess? Why are you over forty and alone at The Duchess? He continued to stare at me until I coughed, touching my hair a little nervously. "Are you an artist?" "No." "Are you French?" "No." "Why are you wearing a tiara?" "It's still a hair band." "It's a bit random isn't it?" "I like it." He looked deeply into my eyes/breasts and touched my hair band; clearly no one had ever discussed the issue of personal space with him. Taking a small step backwards I said: "I'm going to go and find my friends now." "But I was trying to make a connection with you." His fat clammy hands grasped at the air in front of him. "I see." Run.

DESTRUCTORS.



How can you choose between kids and coke?



It's just impossible



The birth was difficult. I didn't know which bits of it to discard



All children are disappointments to their parents. We wanted ours to be a model



If you look at yourself long enough, you can convince yourself that you're pretty



A brave new hairdo though and we love it again



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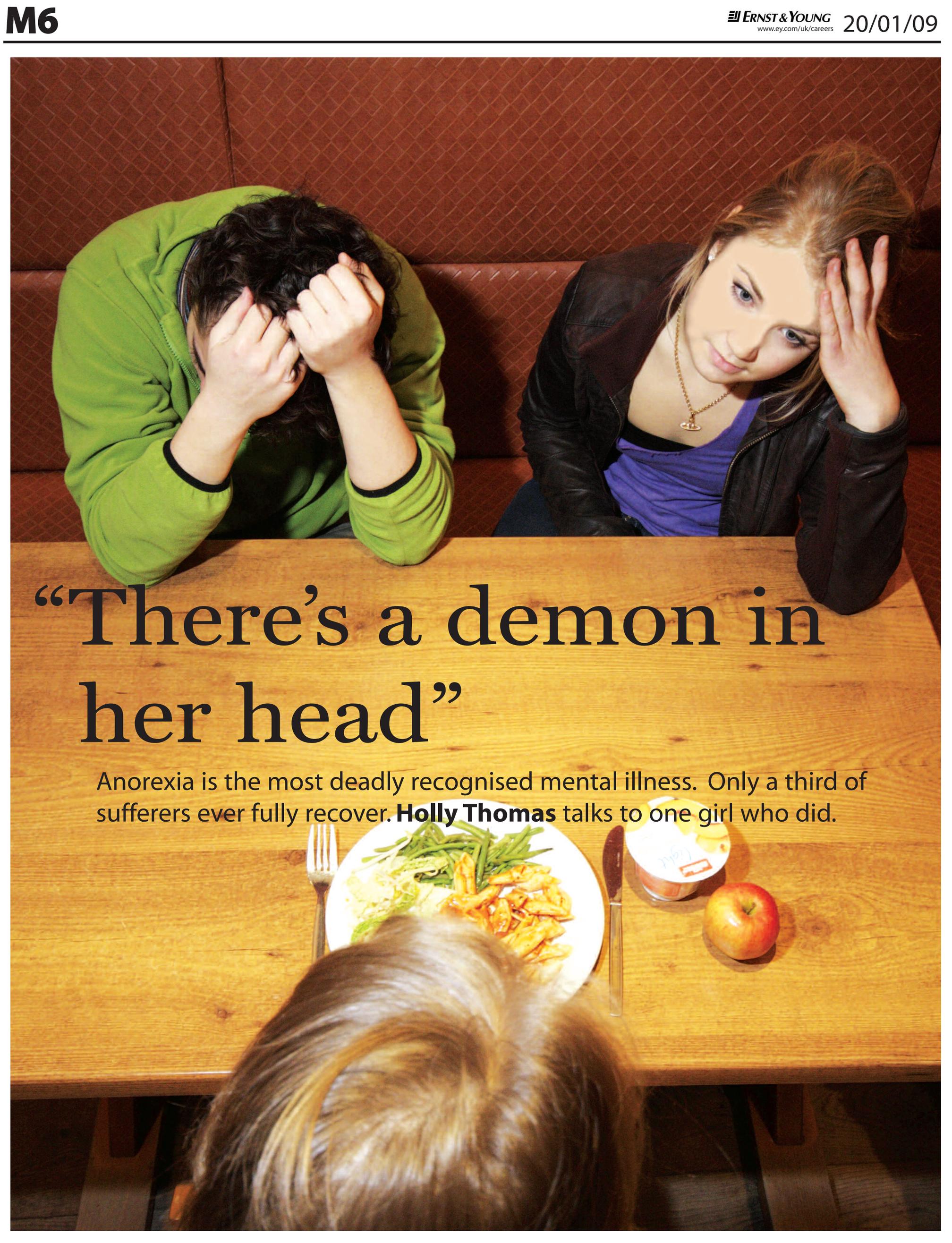
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“There’s a demon in her head”

Anorexia is the most deadly recognised mental illness. Only a third of sufferers ever fully recover. **Holly Thomas** talks to one girl who did.

A thirteen year old girl is crying. Her mother and father, sitting opposite, are crying as well. Between them on the table is a plate of food. It is untouched. That plate is destroying this family.

Of all mental illnesses, anorexia is the most fatal. Five to ten percent of anorexics die within ten years of developing the disease. Around twenty percent die prematurely due to complications resulting from their illness, such as heart failure. Twenty percent of anorexics die within twenty years. Thirty percent of those who recover will relapse and battle the illness their whole lives. Only a third will recover fully. Roughly one in ten anorexics are male, though this number is growing. There is no certain cause, and no fail-safe cure. This disease is malevolent, powerful, and it attacks both body and mind with terrifying force. And it is not just the lives of those who suffer from it that it destroys. As the disease takes its grip, family, friends, everyone who cares for the person suffering becomes inexorably involved, trying to fight the invisible enemy which has taken over their daughter, sister, brother, friend.

There are countless heartbreaking stories to be heard, if one cares to listen. I spoke to James*, twenty eight, whose sister has suffered from anorexia from the age of ten. Most affecting about his account is the stark contrast of the flat, empty feeling experienced by his sister, who has throughout been deeply depressed, against the roar of conflicting emotion felt by everyone around her:

"I hate the anorexia so much it hurts, but at the same time I'm so aware of how much I love her; it's absolutely terrifying to think that I could lose her. You feel angry, sad, frustrated, despair... and every time it looks like there may be some improvement you hope as well, but then it's just more disappointing in the end."

There is however no substitute for first-hand knowledge. I spoke to Felicity, now nineteen. She suffered from anorexia from the age of twelve, and at thirteen she entered Rhodes Farm, the leading care facility in England for children with eating disorders. Her immediate physical recovery took five months, although some aspects took longer. She did not have a period until she was eighteen. Though having long had the disease under control, she still struggles with the mental burden at times. On the surface however, one would never suspect that the bright, healthy girl sitting opposite me could ever have had a traumatic past, particularly an illness which brought her near death. Neither remotely fat, nor 'suspiciously' thin, she looks every inch the confident young woman she has become. Over the course of half an evening, she offered me a rare window into the mind of anorexic, bravely sharing aspects of a past more comfortably forgotten:

"The utter powerlessness of your family to do anything to help you when you're being so stubborn and you're basically killing yourself must be the most horrendous thing to watch. It's retrospect that gives you that horrible inlook on what you did, how you behaved."

So what drives a popular, clever girl to this distorted way of thinking? What possible incentive could there be to starve a healthy body to the point when a heart attack could occur at any moment, when it hurts to sit down because there is nothing but skin to cushion the bone? Anorexics can sometimes identify a 'trigger'; a point at which they believe they began to exhibit disordered thoughts and behaviour. But just as frequently there appears to be no specific point, no obvious event or thing which could have set the disorder in motion. This was the case for Felicity:

"No-one ever really found out the reason why I had it. I don't know the reason I had it."

Two major characteristics are uni-

"I ate much less....it was little stages. There isn't a moment where I could say there I was on a diet, there I had anorexia"

versal throughout all cases; control and desperate fear. The control over their food and bodies is the most powerful device the anorexic feels they possess; the crippling fear is that of losing control. Felicity remembering a family holiday, says:

"I gained 500g. I was like, fuck."

The development of anorexia is usually fairly gradual. What begins as a slight reduction in food intake, such as not snacking between meals, escalates. Felicity describes the process, which took several months:

"At the beginning it was very simple, I just only ate at meals, I ate much less....it was little stages. There isn't a moment where I could say, there I was on a diet, there I had anorexia."

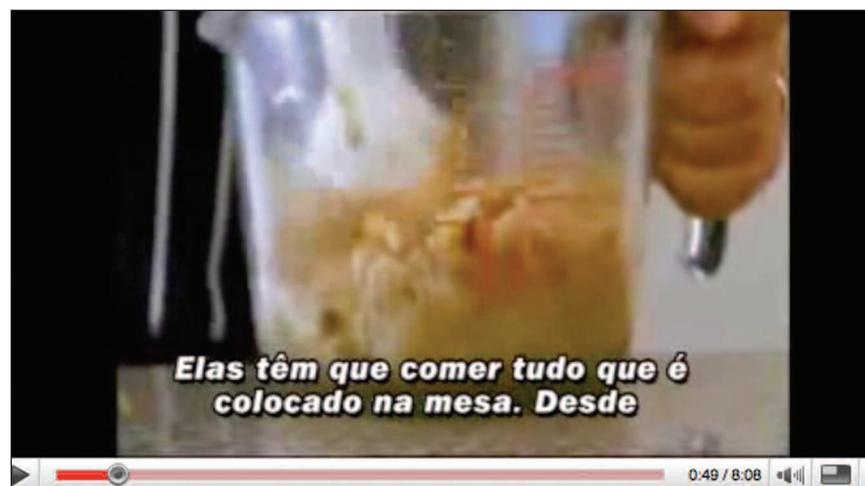
And so three meals become only meals that the anorexic cannot avoid eating; be it out of social or parental pressure. Those meals become fat free, carb free, or free of whatever it is the anorexic believes to be most damaging, most dangerous to them. These occasions are fraught with anxiety, eating a series of calculations, hunger a factor in none of them:

"My Mum sent me to school with a lunch, but of course I didn't eat it. You learn to build up a wall between yourself and hunger. I can still go without food for a whole day if I need to."

As the disease strengthens its grip, its influence over the lives of everyone surrounding that person correspondingly increases. Family meals become arguments, battles; the 'wall' separating the anorexic from their hunger also separates them from friends, family, even feelings and emotions; ties to the world where starving is bad and food a pleasure. Felicity remembers:

"I came home in the evening, and I'd just cry, I'd kick up a massive fuss until my parents stopped trying to make me eat. They gave up on having family meals."

Felicity's parent reacted differently: "My Dad was never the kind of person to get emotionally involved....he came up with all sorts of schemes, like



Youtube image series taken from BBC documentary "I'm a child anorexic"; on the Rhodes Farm clinic for children with eating disorders, from top: A young patient before she started treatment at Rhodes Farm; girl crying after her mother caught her secretly exercising; food being puréed to be 'tubed' into a patient refusing to eat; patients eating lunch at the clinic

*Certain names have been changed to protect identities.



writing to my Grandmother to tell her how much I ate, like that would be the incentive to eat something. My Mother is a very controlling person, and the way that she shows her role as a mother is defined by feeding her children. So she found it very difficult because she wasn't able to fulfil what she saw as her primary role as a mother."

The evening meal became the focal point of this stress.

"My parents would sit down with me in the kitchen. Mum used to try to gently persuade me to have a bit, and I just used to cry and refuse. Eventually my Mum would just get angry and start threatening, saying you will be going to hospital, you will be doing this... I just used to cry and scream until at last they both got exhausted."

At this point Felicity momentarily has difficulty continuing her story. This is a cruel lasting side product of anorexia. In the midst of their illness an anorexic, blinded and confused, is often unaware of the extent to which their actions are hurting to their loved ones, or too fearful to stop if they are. When recovered, and their thoughts are not twisted by the parasite occupying their minds, they can see more clearly the awful repercussions of what has passed, and the guilt this arouses remains a pressing reminder.

"The difficult thing is it's such a selfish illness. I had no idea what I was doing to my family. It wasn't until two years later when my sister sat me down and just said 'you cannot do this anymore, you've fucked up our family for almost two years.' I was so wrapped up in myself and so depressed that I didn't realise what I was doing. That is the thing that really still upsets me, that I messed up my family for a long time."

Gradually, the 'wall' grows taller, stronger; reinforced by the rituals and habits the anorexic develops which make them feel 'safe'. These can range from rigidly portioning and arranging the food on their plate, to stretching the simple act of eating an apple into a two-hour procedure; dividing the apple

into scrupulously even pieces which must be eaten in precisely the right order. A common disorder which can develop alongside anorexia is OCD; as the anorexic's world becomes consumed by a complex system of self-imposed rules, which for them are essential to everyday function:

"My things were light switches and checking - I had to make sure everything was switched off several times. I was obsessed with washing my hands."

Anorexia is a completely illogical, unreasonable disease. What makes it so dangerous is the fact that anorexics nevertheless find 'reasonable' and 'logical' explanations for their behaviour. But their 'logic' is perverted by their illness; an anorexic's perception of reality is a twisted reflection of the truth. This is how James, whose sister has anorexia, described the condition:

"It's like there's a demon in her head. The demon tells her she's stupid when she's clever, lazy when she's hard-working, fat when she's thin. When she's beautiful it tells her that's ugly, and as she becomes ugly, it tells her that's beautiful. It tells her she's full when she's starving."

Felicity describes this lack of a clear perspective:

"I don't know why, but I had an inherent belief that my Mum wanted to make me fat. I didn't believe there was anything wrong with me, I didn't think I was anorexic, if anything I was overweight. I didn't believe I was ill."

Even sitting with a psychologist, confronted with the stark figures illustrating how far she had already pushed her body, Felicity couldn't see the danger she was in:

"When you're shown it on a chart, you can blatantly see you're underweight... but that's great. You don't want to be *there*, you want to be *here*. You don't want to be 'normal'."

But this distorted perception doesn't seem to have been as simple as merely seeing fat where it didn't exist; on some level it appears that Felicity had been more aware of her condition

than this would suggest. Asked what she saw when she looked in the mirror, she ponders.

"I didn't see the rolls of fat some people see. I knew I was slim, but I also knew I was ugly. But I was ugly

"I had an inherent belief my mum wanted to make me fat. I didn't believe I was anorexic, if anything I was overweight"

because I was so thin. I think I just thought that if I kept losing weight, I'd look nice eventually."

Describing a meeting with a dietician, Felicity says: "I wrote down what I ate in a day, and then she wrote what I should be eating. I told her honestly, it's almost like a thrill. Like, yeah, I eat three hundred calories a day."

By May 2003 Felicity was close to death, weighing thirty three kilos (five stone and two pounds) at nearly five foot four. It was then that her parents, having tried everything in their power to help their daughter themselves, finally took her to London, to be admitted to Rhodes Farm. "Those were horrible, horrible days. By then my mood was...I didn't speak unless I had to speak, I felt so awful, all the time."

Upon arrival at Rhodes Farm, Felicity was weighed and asked some general questions regarding past treatment. They asked about current behaviour.

"Whether you're depressed, do you self harm, do you throw up... I just told them the absolute truth, I didn't see any point in lying about it. I never threw up - I'd tried to, but the thing is with that is the more you do it, the easier it gets, and I never broke that barrier. It's really painful and it just makes you feel disgusting."

By identifying these behaviours the carers can prepare for what a new patient might do to disrupt their recov-

ery. This is organised to the nth degree, each patient's calorie requirement worked out individually, in order that they gain exactly a kilo per week. Rhodes Farm is so confident in their ability to achieve this, that they waive their (substantial) fee if they fail. The centre also provides individual, group, and family therapy, all compulsory. But the primary aim of the treatment is weight gain.

"Rhodes Farm works out the percentage of your healthy minimum weight for your height that you weigh when you arrive- you have to weight ninety five percent of that before you can leave. I was sixty two percent of my minimum weight when I got there. So I had to get to seven stone four pounds before I could leave."

A crucial aspect of the 're-feeding' program is peer pressure.

"We'd all eat together at a long table, and no one was allowed to leave until everyone had finished- to the point of wiping your plate clean with your finger. That's what made you eat, because otherwise you'd be keeping everyone waiting"

It is also important that all 'anti-social' eating habits and rituals are eliminated. Children at Rhodes Farm are fed a varied diet, including foods such as pizza, burgers, chocolate and chips- the idea being that they wouldn't leave too scared to sleepover with friends in case they ordered a take-away. Patients are allowed three food 'dislikes', but these may not include chocolate, cheese or crisps. By taking away their patient's choice, the treatment can help to eliminate patient's feelings of guilt when they eat. And there are measures in place for those who still refuse to cooperate.

"You either have to drink a milkshake, full of cream, ice cream, peanut butter, to get the calories you'd have had from the food, or if you don't do that they put a tube up your nose and down into your stomach. Once you've had the drip or the milkshake you see that eating's just the best option, at



least it's not just drinking fat".

Felicity's description of her time in care sounds intense, even oppressive, the sense being of a massive task undertaken, a struggle, imbued as well with a deep sadness.

"They have something called twenty four hour supervision. You're on that for the first two weeks after you arrive, if you're a major suicide risk, or if you're below seventy percent of your minimum weight. It's also used as a punishment if you do something bad, like tanking, which is filling yourself up with water before weigh-ins so that you weigh more. All the twenty four hour supervision people just sit in the downstairs lounge, all day. You sleep in a dormitory - they called it 'the flat', and someone sits up all night. They are there when you shower, when you go to the toilet..."

Social behaviour is sidelined:

"No one came over to talk to me because everyone on supervision is morbidly depressed. I just remember sitting on the edge of the sofa, trying not to cry."

There is a strange sense of competition as well; Felicity says that she felt "superior" to the other girls (and one boy) when she arrived, because as the newest, she was also the thinnest.

"But then another girl arrived about a week after I came in, who was at fifty six percent. She was lying on the sofa because she was too weak to sit up. I went over, and it must have shown on my face how shocked I was. It was just horrific, the bones, the hollow cheeks... I looked at myself and thought I was pathetic, *that's* a real anorexic."

At fifty six percent of a minimum weight for five foot six, the girl Felicity described would have weighed an appalling sixty-four pounds, just over four and a half stone.

It was not just the patients' appearance which was horrifying. Bizarre behaviour, such as 'skanking'-stuffing food into their pockets at mealtimes to avoid eating it - "I did it with tuna once" - pretending to lie in

bed when they were in fact holding their whole bodies off the mattress to burn a few more calories, and perhaps oddest of all, stealing and hoarding food, was commonplace. All highlight the primacy of control in their minds,

"Another girl arrived. She lay on the sofa because she was too weak to sit up. It was horrific, the bones, the hollow cheeks"

the need to maintain some sense of power.

There are other stories, each more gruesome than the last, yet morbidly fascinating in their extremes:

"There was a girl there called Lisa who'd been in and out since she was ten, and the last time she came in she was given twenty four hours to live. They had to put her on a drip, because if they'd given her food immediately her stomach would have exploded. Her first meal was a teaspoon of beans."

Felicity can't remember what happened to either of these girls eventually. Rhodes Farm is renowned for its astonishing success rate, so they may have had a shot. But the sad truth is that most anorexics battle their illness largely alone, well meaning parents or friends not qualified or experienced to give them the support they need. Restrictive and dictatorial though the regime at Rhodes Farm is, its privations are doubtless worth it in the end.

The limits placed on ones activities could also bear surprising fruit. At Rhodes Farm exercise is strictly monitored; only those strong enough who are gaining weight are allowed to participate, and for no longer than is deemed appropriate for each patient. So outside of school hours, there is much time to be filled.

"You become really creative, me and my friend would sit and make and sew things for hours just to keep our

minds occupied. There are some really amazing people."

The sheer force of will it takes in order to take possession of one-self again when recovering from anorexia can become a profound journey of self discovery. Once the barrier between 'anorexic' and eating has been broken, the mental (and physical) energy hitherto consumed by self-starvation can be applied to other things. As a generalisation, people susceptible to anorexia also tend to be clever, inventive, and possess terrific attention to detail. 'Beating' their illness means unlocking this vast potential; once one door has been opened, many follow. But the experience leaves a permanent mark:

"I don't think I'd be the person I am if I hadn't gone through what I went through then. It almost forced me into the real world. All of a sudden there was this jolt, and it forced me to grow up".

Felicity is quick to emphasise the positive effects of this 'jolt':

"It made me creative in ways I'd never been before. It taught me to make friends and to talk to people... but also the importance of listening to people talk about themselves. You learn how wonderful it is to have friends and to sit down and just talk."

Felicity was discharged from Rhodes Farm in September 2003. This was not the end of her treatment, ex-patients are monitored closely after they leave to ensure that they maintain a healthy weight. If they lose more than a kilo, they are given one week to regain the weight at home. Failing this, Rhodes Farm will readmit a patient free of charge over a weekend.

"But you don't want to go back. I don't think anyone ever goes back more than once or twice, they'd rather get on with their lives at home."

Felicity started at a new school, made new friends, and put the past behind her. She never told anyone what had happened, that past is completely detached from her present. Her mother continued to weigh her until she was seventeen, but that was private.

"I didn't want anyone to look at me differently. That is not a part of who I am anymore."

Felicity no longer weighs herself at all, and relies on the fit of her clothes to judge any changes. Her body, like her mind, is healthy and strong, and she listens to what it says.

"If I'm tired, I don't go running. If I'm hungry, I eat. I've accepted that my body isn't meant to be thin, and I'm never going to be a size eight again."

Felicity's story, although tragic, ends happily. But this is not always the case. Anorexia can attack with devastating force, and without the support Felicity received, she may not have been here to talk to me. She evidently finds describing what happened acutely painful; the shadow of places and events grows visibly darker over her the longer that she speaks. But it is vital that she does, vital that people understand that 'anorexic' is not a vain girl trying to fit a size zero skirt, but someone hopelessly lonely and sad, to be ignored at their grave peril.

Victory is possible. There is no erasing those months, years, when one mind became two, and the world that mind inhabited was upturned. Wounds, though healed, leave a scar. But, slowly, the self that was lost can return. It is not the same self, but none the worse for that. Felicity's bravery in reliving her experience is testimony to the incredible character built as bit by bit, brick by brick, the wall which had imprisoned her broke down, the strength it once possessed now hers to wield as she chooses. The effort of recollection must not be wasted; only by listening can we come closer to understanding this deadly illness, to recognise where it strikes and eliminate it when it does. For every Felicity, there is another thirteen year old girl, lonely and afraid, and her story can give them hope:

"It's not just wanting to be thin. It's something I hate talking about, but I feel like I should because I know how it feels when you're in the middle of it, and I know you can get better." **M**

Losing it

Balding is usually associated with ageing men. But how does a student react when hair starts falling out in chunks? **Lily Eastwood** explores a misunderstood disease

Anna* is a 21 year-old student from London who happens to be bald. Practically speaking that means she probably owns more hats than you and this Christmas she got a wig. She likes the hats because, at first at least, wearing a wig feels like admitting that your hair isn't growing back.

"My mum came up when it first happened and we have a family friend who works at a wig company so she borrowed a load from him and brought them up. She was like, 'try them on', but right at the beginning that seemed like admitting that it was going to a permanent thing. It's admitting that it isn't going to come back next week."

Anna suffers from a condition called Alopecia Areata which, according to the National Alopecia Areata Foundation (NAAF), around 2% of the population can expect to be affected by in their life time. Alopecia is any hair loss and Alopecia Areata is hair loss as a condition itself, not a symptom of something else. It is most commonly developed in young adulthood and under 1% of all cases develop into Alopecia Areata Totalis (total scalp hair loss) or Alopecia Areata Universalis (total body hair loss). Anna initially lost all of her body hair.

"It started just after getting back for second year, so a year and a half ago. And it was just very, very quick," recalls Anna. "Bits of thinning sort of got a bit extreme and then it got to the point where I was going, 'is it just me or is there less at the front?' And you have to check with someone because you don't want to sound like a massive hypochondriac and everyone's like 'it's fine'. But it wasn't."

Within two weeks Anna had "massive chunks and holes" in her hair and by the time the doctor referred her to a dermatologist there was no real questioning the diagnosis. "It was pretty much half gone," says Anna, "It just was what it was. They took blood tests and stuff but it was pretty obvious. I didn't even know you went to a dermatologist for a hair thing. And they keep looking at your nails, which is weird."

A big part of the difficulty of the disease is its unpredictability and the lack of real medical understanding of it. In around a fifth of cases a family history of Alopecia is present and some doctors have suggested stress may be linked as well. Alopecia areata is an auto-immune skin disease. In simple



terms it occurs when the skin's immune system treats the hair like something that should be attacked. Anna has no family history of alopecia and has not had big stress problems. She does suffer from another auto-immune disorder, to do with digestion, which may have made her more vulnerable to the disease. Full regrowth is fairly common but a prognosis is difficult and Anna has yet to receive a clear one.

Alopecia has received a fair amount of media coverage over the past few years due to the sudden hair loss of Gail Porter, previously most famous for being projected naked onto the House of Commons. Porter, having dealt with anorexia, severe bouts of depression including a suicide attempt, and a very public divorce, is quoted to have said she thought her hair falling out "must be a joke".

Porter's celebrity status has allowed her to make her baldness a statement and she has refused to wear a wig at all. She has no doubt struggled

"Drunk people are twats. At first going out I was so scared someone would remove my hat. Which would be distressing"

***Names have been changed to protect identities.**

with the disease and her strength and sense of humour about it in the public eye are admirable. However, you can't read an interview with her without comment being made on how beautiful she is anyway and how wonderful what she's doing is. Life as a student suffering from the same condition obviously lacks the same glamour.

"It got up until Christmas and I don't think I left my room without a hat. Even round the house. It just felt weird. Even now I've not really [not worn a hat] in public much, only round my house. It still feels weird. And yeah really cold!"

Anna only recently started wearing a wig and why she decided to do so is a difficult question to answer. "I just got bored of hats (laughs). I should have got it over with earlier."

The movement 'bald is beautiful' has created in parts a bizarre reverse prejudice against wanting to have hair in the alopecia community. To most of us though, it seems excessive to accuse those who choose a wig of vanity. "It's sort of like if you still wear lipstick and mascara then what's different about a wig?" Clearly neither wig nor no wig should have a stigma associated with it. Anna prefers to avoid defining herself by her condition and this is currently the way she feels most comfortable doing so.

Discussing the online community Anna says: "There's this Facebook group called 'Bald is Beautiful' which I joined early on and I still get people adding me. You know when someone adds you and you've got no friends in common? I see that they're bald and you think this is the connection but should we really be friends because we share a disease?"

"It depends what helps you I suppose. I have looked at some online support groups and it does seem that people define themselves by their diseases. How much medication, how many pills they take a day; it's a competitive thing. I find it a bit odd."

Odd and weird seem to come up a lot with Anna. She's quiet by nature but it's difficult to miss her disappointment in having to deal with all this. At an age when her peers are totally carefree she just wants to sideline her condition and get on with things.

"The good thing with being young is you can still have the hope that it will be fixed or over soon so hopefully by the time you're twenty-five, thirty, you'll be able to get on with the rest of your life. But then again you don't want to seem like you're putting your life on hold until you're 'fixed'."

When you consider young people putting their life on hold it's easy to get stuck on the big things: degree, relationships; but in reality Anna finds it's the small things that feel important.

"Clubbing and stuff is difficult because... drunk people are twats. The first few times I was just so scared that a drunk person would remove my hat. Which would be quite a distressing experience," laughs Anna, "And there



was this one time, I was at a Christmas party last year and they were playing the chocolate game where you put on a hat and scarf and cut it up with a knife and fork, and I suddenly realised - it sounds trivial - if I rolled a six I would have to put this other hat on. Would I do it on top of mine? Would I take mine off? It was the most stressful dice roll I've ever made!"

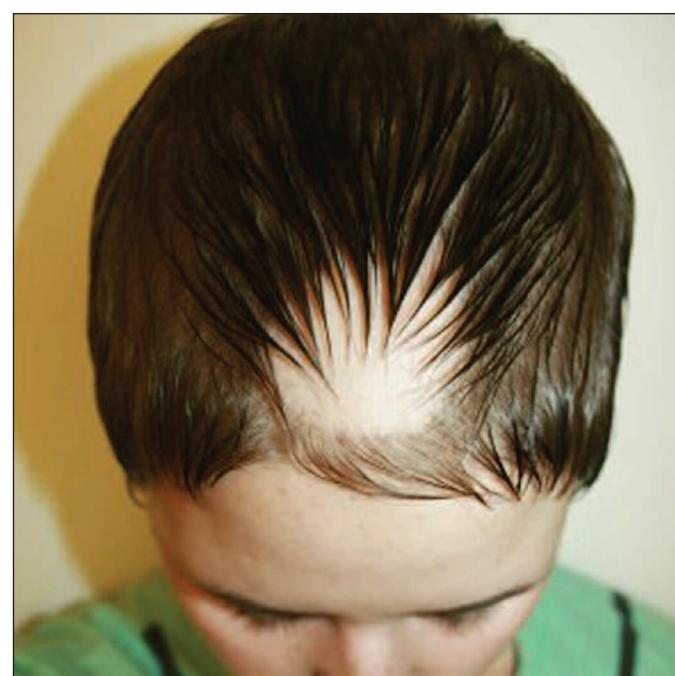
Laughing a lot, Anna assures me that no hat issues ensued. She seems to approve of laughing at her disease, laughter and being allowed to be angry about it seem to be her main coping strategies.

"I have been down about it over time. Some days you're like yeah this is fine, I can be a strong person bla bla. But...sometimes it's pretty pants. And that's the thing about people saying 'I really respect you, you're dealing with it so well...' It sort of takes away permission not to be dealing with it well."

Pressures to be ok have been greater than Anna thought they would. "Especially right at the beginning there were some people who'd be supportive and would send you texts saying 'ooh I'm so sorry I'm thinking of you', which is sort of fine, but then a couple of people who got upset because I wasn't responding and being like thank you so much. It was like they needed confirmation of how supportive they were being. Its interesting, people's versions of being supportive."

In the beginning Anna was on steroids, before she was switched to immuno-suppressants. Drugs trials are tiring and may have adverse affects. Medical journals report the psychosocial side affects of alopecia to be difficult to handle. Depression, anxiety and social phobia are all listed as common problems. Stories on help4alopecia.com, an online support network, talk about agoraphobia and emotional behaviour: in short it's a time when you need genuine support, something Anna found difficult to identify. "You sort of feel like you're someone else's project. They're going to make you feel better, and that's their way to make them feel better about how good they are as a person."

"And they'll lie to make you feel better. I made some off hand comment like 'oh who's going to fancy a baldy' and laughed, ready to move on, and the other person was like 'oh no no, it wouldn't really matter,'" Anna laughs,



"People saying 'I really respect you, you're dealing really well'... It takes away permission not to be dealing with it well"

"You just think shush. You liar."

Anna seems to make much allowance for the fact that people don't know what to say or do.

"With one of my friends I didn't really explain properly what was happening and when I did finally talk to him about it he was like 'oh thank god because I thought you had cancer'. I was quite sad because I thought: 'do you not think that if I had cancer I would have told you maybe?' But it was nice that he was concerned," laughs, "And how do you bring it up? Do you just say 'oh hi guys, you know I've been wearing hats all the time? Well...'"

Anna has had the total support of her family and has only had one direct negative reaction. "I was working at this kids' club and this boy was like 'I know why you wear a hat all the time, it's because you haven't got any hair!' He was this whingey bastard but this other kid instantly talked about Kylie and Gail Porter, stunning people like that, which instantly made it positive. So basically the only proper negative

Above: Gail Porter and other alopecia sufferers; Left: How might you look without your hair? Tim Ngwena, Fusion President, poses

response has been from some ten-year-old. Which is all right!"

In reality it's not the negativity that is most difficult to deal with. "I've been going to church and stuff," says Anna, who is Christian, "And a lot of the responses from people who I'm close to have been phrases like 'God doesn't give us more than we can handle' and 'this has happened to you so you need to keep praying' and also 'you can use it to show other people things'...that's caused me quite a lot of issues with re-evaluating stuff."

Anna is refreshing in her outlook. She doesn't seem to be looking for any enlightenment from alopecia. "Even if there's one part of you that's like oh I've got a new feeling about life there's still going to be this

other part that's just pissed off," Anna pauses, "It's shit, just let it be shit for a bit. The problem is with some people not letting it be a bad time, because they think if you believe in God you can't have bad times."

So Anna is still bald; a bald woman, which makes it difficult. And a bald student, which makes it very difficult. But she tells me her hair is slowly growing and is bright white, "which is cool." Her healthy attitude is probably best reflected in her amusement and bemusement when I first approached her about this feature

"It's not the most fun thing ever. I was speaking to somebody and they were like I can't believe you stayed at uni but what alternative is there? I go home and what - just be bald and at home? You can't just stop your life." **M**

WEBSITES FOR HELP AND SUPPORT

www.naaf.org: Centre for research, with support and advice for alopecia sufferers

www.heralopecia.com: advice and support for women with alopecia

www.help4alopecia.com: alopecia support network

www.alopeciaonline.org.uk: the most comprehensive UK support and information website



Looking for a cheaper way to travel the globe,
Gina Heslington tries Couchsurfing in Japan and at home

“I realised nearly everybody at the party was, in fact, staying, looking around the modest two bedroom apartment.”

advertise your spare sofa or you can freeload off others by selling the best parts of your personality, advertising why you'd make the perfect guest. Although it may sound like a horror movie in the making, personal experience has taught me that putting a little faith in the kindness of strangers can pay off dividends. There's even a rating system enabling you to leave comments about your experience to help filter out the psychos. With 895,719 couchsurfers in action, the world's your oyster.

My first experience of hosting rather than being hosted involved a young, good-looking Turkish man who introduced himself as "Farty". Trying to suppress a smile I welcomed him inside and offered him a cup of English tea. We sat down for a chat and any fears that I had of inviting some sort of oddball into my home evaporated

when he told me that he was au-pairing a six-year-old in the South. Farty was intelligent, courteous, and had a great sense of humor. His first act of goodwill was to walk down to Somerfield, buy some ingredients and then whip up a tasty Turkish cake. Within an hour we were chatting like old friends, and I felt genuinely excited about showing him around. As I was just about to tell him there'd be some additions to our party there was a knock at the door, and two blonde, blue eyed Austrian girls beamed at me with bright smiles and big rucksacks. Farty looked delighted. I figured if I was going to host I might as well throw myself in at the deep end.

Soon I was walking them around campus, feeding the ducks and feeling fantastic, my ego inflated by their compliments and appreciative attitudes. I was brought free drinks at the local, and they even paid for my meal at Totos. Best of all I had the opportunity to have a laugh and make friends with some genuinely interesting people; anyone up for dining and sleeping in the house of a perfect stranger won't be your usual plain Jane.

After hosting a myriad of delightful travellers and earning a good store of karmic goodwill I decided it was my

turn to become an international bum and escape the sky-rocketing hotel prices of Japan. The Couchsurfing website provided me with a wide range of potential hosts; you simply type in your city of choice and then pick whichever host looks least threatening. Yuji intrigued me due to the sheer number of travellers that he had allowed to stay. An enquiry email was answered by a speedy confirmation that he had room, and so we found ourselves welcomed within the throes of a local Japanese party on our first ever night in Japan.

The fun and games, however, were cut short at 11pm when Yuji pulled the plug on the music and told us to clean up and quiet down. Obviously there had been some trouble with noise and the neighbours

in the past. It was then that I realised nearly everybody at the party was in fact staying, and looking around the modest two bedroom apartment I began to wonder where Andy and I would kip. The "Couchsurfers room" was full of top to tail sleeping bags and the most available room seemed to be beneath the kitchen table. We decided that the prospect would look a lot more inviting after some ritual intoxication, so we hit a local bar for a spot of sake and karaoke. We returned in good spirits in the small hours, settling into alcohol induced oblivion. Although not the most luxurious of facilities, it was pleasant enough to endure for a few more nights.

After recovering in the traditional ryokans of Kyoto, the cultural epicentre of Japan, we decided to blag a free night's rest in Nara, home to the biggest indoor Buddha in the world. We were

accepted by Mayumi, a 30-year-old local cafe owner who exuded a wonderfully calming temperament. She invited us to join her family for some ramen noodles and tempura. New to chopsticks, we fought a losing battle to uphold a sense of decorum, yet gained a valuable insight into Japanese culture that includes a nationwide love and obsession with jelly. She performed a basic tea ceremony for us, then we passed a comfortable night on tatami mats in the room above her cafe, indulging in a traditional onsen (hot tub) before bed. We left, calmed and refreshed a contrasting experience to the party atmosphere of Tokyo.

Heading South we experienced the futuristic cities of Japan oddly dotted with hidden temples, bright lights and casinos. With money running low again we searched for hosts but found many homes already full. Eventually Eri, a stylish Japanese girl with little English, agreed to put us up in Fukuoka. Sweaty, tired, and with a heightened awareness of our own body odours we arrived desperate for a shower but were led straight to a party burdened with rucksacks. This turned out to be a highlight of the trip and we left with an array of new friends. Of all the hosts, this experience had been the

“We discovered that some of the travellers had been staying for months, explaining the pots of money for ‘donations.’”

most intimate and enjoyable; we were spoilt with attention and good humour and I realised the benefits of picking less seasoned hosts who may welcome you as a curious novelty.

Staying with hosts in Nara and Fukuoka taught us that Yuji's home was unusual even in the bizarre world of Couchsurfing. His guests have free run of his house when he's at work. They arrive day or night thanks to the spare keys by the front door and invite friends around without request. Returning to Yuji's before leaving Tokyo we discovered that some of the travellers had been staying for months, paying a recommended fee of 1000 yen (about £7 per night). This explained the pots of money lying around for willing "donations". Although still extremely good value the thought struck me that perhaps Yuji was running a small tax-evading guest house,

not quite in keeping with the Couchsurfing philosophy. Either a money making scam or a shockingly trusting faith in the goodness of travellers in need I cannot quite decide, but my judgment leans towards the latter. Considering that any one of the guests could clandestinely leave with the money pots and laptops stuffed in their rucksacks without raising an eyebrow I have to think that it is in fact a bewildering act of charity that strikes one as close to madness in the age of caution and suspicion by which most conduct their daily affairs.

Couchsurfing can be an amazing facility with which to see the world, network, and promote cultural understanding - if used wisely. Prudence and care must be exercised when it comes to choosing a host or allowing guests to stay. It is wise to only Couchsurf with hosts who have had a large amount of positive feedback, and the same caution must be observed for those that may seek a nights rest in your home. You are never obligated to allow anyone to stay. Like everything in life it involves a degree of risk and uncertainty, and no doubt if abused it could lead to some dangerous situations. I wouldn't recommend it for lone female travellers but every experience that I've had has been wholly pleasant and rewarding, reaffirming my belief in the inherent goodness of people. We can make an informed choice to invite travellers into our home for friendship and know we can benefit from the same hospitality in return. As the Couchsurfing mission goes; "Participate in Creating a Better World, One Couch at a Time." M

“Richard Littlejohn is mentally ill”

Will Heaven talks to Johann Hari, the firebrand left-wing columnist who won last year's Orwell Prize

For Johann Hari, 2008 was a good year. He became the youngest ever winner of the Orwell Prize for political journalism, aged just 28. But for many of his fans his finest moment came four years earlier, when he appeared on Richard Littlejohn's Sky News show to speak about the BNP. Hari didn't take any prisoners.

He pounced on the Daily Mail columnist, strafing him with well-chosen statistics. “In your novel *To Hell in a Handcart*”, he began, “which was accurately described as a 400 page recruiting pamphlet for the BNP, you described a single asylum seeker receiving £117 pounds a week. In reality they receive £33.” Raising his voice to the right-winger – who by now was sweating profusely – he accused him of propagating “anti-asylum seeker lies.”

I asked him whether it had been a planned ambush. He shook his head, saying that although the BNP are “obviously disgusting”, it's journalists like Littlejohn that “pump out the sewage the these rats feed on.” But is Littlejohn really that evil? Hari answered adamantly: “I feel very sorry for Richard Littlejohn. He is mentally ill. He's absolutely obsessed with homosexuality... I mean, he thinks about gay sex more than I do. He actually thinks gay people are going to come and try to convert him. He writes most of his Mail columns from a gated mansion in Florida. He hates this country and knows nothing about it.”

Johann Hari has made a name for himself as a firebrand left-wing columnist. He writes polemically for *The Independent*, the *Huffington Post* and *Attitude*, Britain's best-selling gay mag-

azine. He was born in Glasgow but was raised in North London by his father – a Swiss-German bus driver – and his mother, a Glaswegian social worker who specialises in working with victims of domestic violence (“battered wives”).

We meet up in the East End, near Brick Lane. Johann appears slightly dishevelled. He apologises, but tells me that he's been looking after his nephew. “My family seem to think”, he laughs, “that I'm available to babysit because I work from home.”

We go into a hotel bar, and Johann asks me what I would like to drink. “A Coke please,” I say, still eager to impress – I'm sure he wrote a column about how much he likes Coke. Johann orders apple juice. Fuck. I suddenly remember that his column was about giving up Coke because of the evil practices of the Coca-cola company in Colombia. It's too late, we sit down and begin.

One of Hari's earliest political influences was George Orwell. Aged just 13, he had been dispatched by his father to Switzerland to live with his grandparents and learn German. A Londoner through and through, he was not looking forward to it, and took a stack of books. One of them was *Down and Out in Paris and London*, which, he said, “I must have read about 15 times while I was there.”

How much does he identify with Orwell, I ask him, who wrote that a writer must be “vain, selfish and lazy”? He laughs, “I love Orwell but I am always nervous about people who claim Orwell as a mentor. I think it's hubristic.” He continues: “There's been a generational shift with Orwell. People in their fifties and sixties tend to revere the Orwell of *Animal Farm* and ‘1984’ –



“I feel very sorry for Richard Littlejohn. He thinks about gay sex more than I do; he is obsessed with homosexuality”



that tends to be what brought them to his work. But they touch me least because when I was born the Soviet Union was almost gone. Those novels were written to make important points which have since become obvious.”

Clarifying this, he adds that “being a left-winger after communism is a bit like being born into a family where you had a granddad who everyone says they loved. But when you learn about

him it turns out that he beat the shit out of granny, murdered the other grandchildren and buried them under the patio. You think, what the hell was it that everyone saw in this nutter?”

He might not claim Orwell as a mentor, but Hari's prose is fluent and – in argument – he's convincing. Unlike it was in Orwell's time, the world of newspaper journalism is less assured now. Given the choice between buying a newspaper or reading its content online for free, the reading public doesn't shun gut instinct. Now the credit crunch is losing newspapers advertising revenue fast – as someone who is primarily a newspaper columnist, does Hari ever feel like he is on a sinking ship?

“You're right”, he starts quickly, “being a print journalist in 2009 can sometimes feel like being a coal miner in 1976. But I believe people want to understand what is happening in the world and I think there will be some sort of mechanism for delivering that which will be financially viable.”

I ask him to elaborate, so he adds: “There are structural forces at work that an individual journalist will find very hard to deal with. But if you want more people to read a newspaper you've got to produce the best damn product you can. You've got to make sure your writing is accessible. I'm amazed at how much journalism is just

unclear. Or is written in a cliquish way that is only interesting to a tiny number of people." He begins to get more animated: "the whole way that we cover politics in this gossipy Westminster way is totally uninteresting to the vast majority of people. What you write has got to be comprehensible to the average reader - it's got to matter to them."

Johann begins to explain some of the issues that are affecting modern journalism and complains, "There's very little that I can do to change those tectonic shifts. It's a bit like becoming one of those monks who were paid to write out the bible, then the Gutenberg press comes out. Well, you can't really do much. Improving your handwriting isn't going to help."

Sitting up, he moves on to the international press: "One of the reasons American newspapers are going bust is partly because of all these structural changes, but also because they are so fucking boring. If you compare them to British newspapers or French newspapers, they are just a lousy product - they are badly written, bland, horribly presented... and they have shit columnists."

This comes as a surprise. Hari writes for *The Independent*, which is criticised by many journalists for similar reasons. It's doing so badly - with huge losses and a flagging readership - that it recently was forced to move into the same building as the *Daily Mail*, politically speaking its arch-enemy. Does the Indie really come close to his version of the ideal newspaper?

He replies confidently: "I think it's one of the best. I'm really proud and privileged to work for it. There are people like Patrick Cockburn who I think is one of the most extraordinary journalists in the world. The paper is really is good to me - very few editors would let a writer go off for a month to Congo or Bangladesh to cover what seems to be an obscure, off-the-agenda story. I'm very lucky like that."

Hari has covered a lot of obscure stories in his time: he won the Orwell Prize for pieces about a 'pleasure' cruise with American Republicans, multiculturalism and women, and another on France's "secret war" in the Central African Republic. But as a part-time foreign correspondent, he also covers stories which are very much on the agenda. A week before the interview, when I rang him to confirm the meeting place, he told me there might be a problem. "It looks like I might be sent to Gaza," he said, "you better ring back on Sunday to check I'm still in the country." The Israeli army, however, wasn't letting journalists into the war zone, so he was ordered to stay put.

His column recently declared that Israel was "self-harming". Sensing an oncoming tirade, I ask him to explain. "What's going on there is a tragedy for both sides," he starts. "Primarily, it's a tragedy for people in Gaza, because they are the ones who are being killed in huge numbers. But it's condemning more Israeli civilians to die horribly as well." He pauses, before adding: "Basically at the end of this there's going to have to be a two state solution along the 1967 borders. Someday, somehow that has to happen." Johann's tone has become quietly emotional. But he remains focused, moving onto why this solution hasn't taken place. One reason is the return of Palestinian refugees. He declares: "There's polling that shows that the vast majority of refugees don't want to turn to Israel proper. They want to return to a free, independent Palestine."

Hari has visited Gaza before, and attempts to explain the difficulties of living there: "It's hard for people to imagine. It's this tiny little place with one and a half million people living in it who've never left. You stand on a tower block and you can see the borders of their world. You can see the Mediterranean Sea and the Israeli barbed wire. If you live in that situation, cut off from the world and blockaded, with 60% unemployment, real hunger kicking in and suddenly you start getting bombed..."

Moving back to the political, Hari says: "At the moment there is a majority on both sides for a two state solution. I don't see how this bombing gets us closer to that. This is a lot of dead and injured people, a lot of people made angrier, more hateful, and it's not going to stop the rockets. It may cause a brief cessation to the bombing of Ashkelon and Sderot, but the long-term solution has to be two states."

When I bring up Hamas, Hari is quick to define his position: "Look. I hate Hamas. They are an Islamist fundamentalist organisation... But this conflict has crippled all the Palestinian moderates, emboldened the most extreme end of Hamas and Islamic Jihad. And if even we break Hamas completely, this idea that you'll get a return to Fatah is ludicrous. You'll actually end up with a complete implosion of Gaza and the rise of other, really crazy, Islamist groups. I've met representatives from those groups and they are not the people we want in control of Gaza."

Shortly before the interview, Barack Obama - then president-elect - gave his first statement on the crisis in Gaza. Although stating his concern for the political situation, Obama claimed that until he was president he would not be able to speak out. I ask whether Johann thought the statement had been weak.

He replies: "I think Obama was right. There's not a lot he can do until he is president. There is this convention that you only have one president at a time." Hari has been a supporter of Obama from early one, and he is not

"If there is a hell Mother Teresa is in it. She was a disgusting fraud and a hypocrite who converted the dying to catholicism."

one for criticising the first African-American president. But I'm interested to know how he thinks, as president, Obama will approach the problems in the middle east.

"We have to be depressingly realistic about Obama," he says slowly. "It's still ambiguous as to what he'll do about the Israel Palestine situation." He continues, talking about "hawkish" Jewish lobbies in America who claim to speak for American Jews but actually don't. "After African-Americans American Jews are the group who are most in favour of the two state solution." He adds: "It's actually these nutcase Christian evangelicals who are most pro this fanatical view of Israel."

Hari is an outspoken critic of religion. One of his favourite writers was Christopher Hitchens, author of *God is not Great* and the critique of Mother Teresa's practices, *The Missionary Position*. Hari's publicly listed Facebook profile states: "Sometimes I chide Richard Dawkins for being too soft on religion", so I ask him if he



Images clockwise from left: Press in Gaza; Johann Hari in the field; Hari and Richard Littlejohn arguing on Sky News; destruction in Gaza

thinks some religions are less offensive than others.

He agrees: "Of course. Not everyone is Osama bin Laden. I don't think all religious believers are evil - if you believe in an imaginary sphere, sometimes that imaginary sphere will tell you to do good things as well as bad things. And I don't agree with some of the militant atheists who say that moderate religion is like a gateway drug and that actually it provides cover for extremism." He adds, laughing: "I have lots of friends who are moderate religious believers and we can have civilised, intelligent arguments- they are not going to try to kill me."

Like Hitchens, Hari despises Mother Teresa. They both accuse the 'saint of Calcutta' of being a religious fundamentalist who converted the dying to Catholicism. I ask him who he would rather send to hell - Mother Teresa or the King of Saudi Arabia? "The King of Saudi Arabia just here because if there is a hell Mother Teresa is already there...oh no, that's too nasty. Er...the King of Saudi Arabia because although Mother Teresa was a disgusting fraud and a hypocrite she didn't kill or torture people. The King of Saudi Arabia is in a whole other league."

Johann clearly isn't fond of monarchies. He has written a book, *God Save the Queen?*, about how the British should abandon the Royal

Family. He claims that Prince Charles has been victim of child abuse and is a fierce critic of his badly informed science, calling him a "strikingly stupid man" who, every time he has been judged academically, "has been a disaster."

Surely he sees eye to eye with Prince Charles on global warming? "He is personally one of the worst polluters in Britain", Hari shoots. "His reasons for being opposed to global warming are gibberish. Global warming it not a spiritual crisis. It's a problem because we've got too many greenhouse gases in the atmosphere...The things Prince Charles says about global warming are used to discredit the rest of us who are genuinely worried about it."

There's time for one more question. Is global warming the biggest crisis facing the world in 2009? "Yes. People think this is a long-term problem. It's not. I'm worried about myself and people who are alive now. This is imminent: if the planet warms by two degrees we've lost Bangladesh. We are quickly heading towards the point of no return."

Johann Hari has proved two things: his intelligence, and his ability to form polemical positions on any subject. We stand, and he asks me if I am stressed about exams. We walk outside. "God it's like the arctic", he says, shivering. "I'll walk you to the tube." **M**

FASHION.

Nouse Trend Report Sofia Redgrave & Hannah Smith

ASYMMETRIC



GUCCI

These goddess-like dresses are light and airy with lots of flowy Grecian drapery. Jewels at the shoulder highlight the beautiful asymmetric theme. An elegant alternative to sporty body-con.

PRINT



ALEXANDER MCCOQUEEN

This trend isn't going anywhere. Choose bold florals, geometric graphic patterns or whimsical illustrative design. Prints have a striking contemporary feel, but often take retro inspiration from the 80s.

DENIM



TOPSHOP UNIQUE

Acid wash, skinny or short, pale or indigo, ripped and shredded, this year's jeans come in various forms. Clearly 'double-denim' is no longer a fashion faux-pas.

COLOUR



JOSH GOOT

Turquoise, tangerine, acid yellow and neon pink: these pick-n-mix colour combinations break up the silhouette, highlighting the divided body parts.

ALL-IN-ONE



STELLA MCCARTNEY

First popularised last summer, this trend has endured beyond a single season. SS/09 saw designers experimenting with loose, casual tailoring in a monotone palette, with luxurious fabrics such as silk and satin. Wear with killer heels and attitude.

Sofia Redgrave



fashion diary blogs. My inspiration used to come from runway photographs and magazine clippings of celebrities, resulting in frantic morning panics as I tried to make my High Street look like their High End.

These blogs are changing the way we dress; the men and women in the snapshots are regular people who dress well and look great. They will not have a millionaire's budget, nor are they celebrities, so we can see ourselves in their shoes, styling ourselves,

"We can make our own informed decisions on what will work for us."

and looking as fabulous as they do. It's refreshing to know that their image has not been sculpted by a professional stylist; they are caught in everyday circumstances, off-hand and unposed.

The independent, honest reviews on

beauty products are also a godsend. No longer do we have to listen to the hard sell from the girl at the beauty counter in Selfridges, we can make our own informed decisions about what works, and what doesn't. Our computer facilitates a visual link between us and people that can be anywhere in the world at any time of day. This lifts us out of the style monotony of our own city and encourages us to explore broader international inspiration. Bloggers update their pages 24 hours a day, satisfying our constant need for fast paced and forward looking fashion. Given the highly attractive price point, it's a nice alternative to an annual Vogue subscription. Here are a few of my favourites:

The Sartorialist.com: A picture-rich blog with photographs taken by cult blogger Scott Schman. He snaps the most stylish men and women in fashionable cities around the world. From Paris to New York to Milan his reportage type shots have made a considerable splash in the fashion world. He is soon to hit London, so get camera-ready.

Facehunter.blogspot.com: Eye candy for the style hungry. Again, capturing street style at its best with new pictures added on an almost daily basis. Facehunter picks up on new trends at embryonic stages.

Gofugyourself.com: Anti-fashion blog, Go Fug Yourself antagonises today's culture of celebrity imitation with scathing reviews of their latest outfits.

Myfashionlife.com: Written by British fashion blogging veteran Michelle Obi. My Fashion Life provides high-level industry analysis and is packed with news and interviews from top names in fashion, from designer William Tempest to editor of Vogue.com, Dolly Jones.

Cult-beauty.blogspot.com: One of the most widely read beauty blogs in the UK, delivering news, previews, expert tips and backstage beauty. Vogue recently gave the blog a glowing review, proclaiming it to be "The news-led blog beauty editors swear by".

It was only late last year that I first delved into the compelling world of fashion blogs. For years I have been devoted to all the monthly magazines and a regular habitué on their websites, but only in September did I start finding the more personal, day to day,

Trends Spring/Summer 09

AFRICA



LOUIS VUITTON

This exotic look is bursting with character. Laden with chunky beads, tassels and ikat prints, the catwalks came alive. Accessorise sparingly with quality pieces for an immediate but striking ethnic update. There's no room for compromise with this trend: use an assortment of different prints and references to bring together your look.

SILK TROUSERS



CHLOE

These trousers take you from the day into the night with effortless glamour. They are both appealingly comfortable and a sleek, smart alternative to the traditional dress on formal occasions.

SHEER



NINA RICCI

Neutral tones and sheer fabrics allow designers to play with fun shapes and silhouettes. Wear with fluorescent neons or layer translucent fabrics to demurely conceal the flesh beneath.

GOLD



PRADA

Metallic tones of gold and bronze shimmered down the catwalk in real statement pieces; look to Westwood's golden trench or Ralph Lauren's glistening gold harem pants. Tone down heavy embellishment with complimentary nude shades.

RUFFLES



CHRISTOPHER KANE

Indulge in your feminine side with layers of neutrals and pink chiffons - our favourite hue is coral. The new addition to this trend is scalloped edging and disc shaped detail as evidenced in the lauded Chris Kane collection shown above. He adds an interesting dimension to this romantic but ultra-modern trend.

Ones to watch Hannah Smith

MODEL: NATASHA POLY

Singled out by *Vogue* for her "versatility and jaw-dropping beauty", Natasha Poly is almost alarmingly beautiful.

The 23 year-old Russian has graced the covers of *Vogue* (ten times) and *Marie Claire*, and has shot campaigns for Mara and Rykiel. In 2004 (her debut year on the catwalk) she featured in 54 shows. This January she placed number 2 in models.com's list of the top working models, earning \$70,000 a day per advertisement.

SHOP: YUMI

One of the newest retailers on York's high street, Yumi is an offshoot from older sister Uttam, which has enjoyed a decade of success. The clothes at Yumi are for those unafraid of individualism. An array of kitsch prints give attention to feminine detail. This almost vintage quality is complimented by shapes inspired by simple 60s shift and bubble dresses that have withstood the test of time. Garments are in light-weight wool and cotton, and have a trans-seasonal essence that screams out for layering on those chilly early spring days. Available direct from their Uttam website, from concessions at Ark, Oli.co.uk or ASOS.



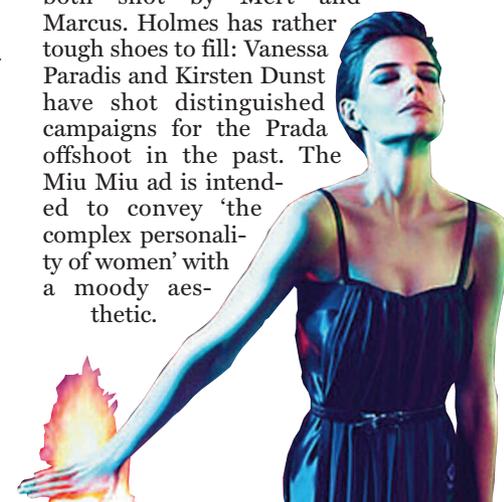
DESIGNER: EJ HONG

Winner of the prestigious Fashion Fringe competition last September, committee member Donatella Versace recognised a bright new talent in this Central St Martin's graduate, originally from Korea. Her *Go By a Secret Path* designs emanate beautiful high-end quality. The collection was purely white, but far from appearing monotonous, this effectively drew one's gaze to the finer detail of its exquisite craftsmanship, with elegant cuts in delicate lace and silk. Models sashayed down the catwalk in grecian draped dresses with huge bejewelled brooches and ruffled tops with an almost tissue-like quality. Clearly there is the potential for mass commercial success: next season her collection will be sold via Net-a-Porter.



CAMPAIGN: MIU MIU

Katie Holmes and Victoria Beckham recently posed for Miu Miu and Armani respectively. The chums recently fronted these ad campaigns for Spring/Summer '09 collections, both shot by Mert and Marcus. Holmes has rather tough shoes to fill: Vanessa Paradis and Kirsten Dunst have shot distinguished campaigns for the Prada offshoot in the past. The Miu Miu ad is intended to convey 'the complex personality of women' with a moody aesthetic.



ARTS.

Antonia Shaw engages with the work of Steve McQueen, award-winning artist of the Iraq war

The role of the war artist of the divisive Iraq conflict is no small challenge. Steve McQueen, winner of the 1999 Turner Prize, took on this battle, describing it as "the hardest thing he has ever done". He has departed from his typical medium of film and has opted instead for an installation. *Queen and Country* is the fruit of his labour. Commissioned by the Imperial War Museum, his work is touring the country, with the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art currently playing host.

McQueen's work commemorates 136 British servicemen and women who have been killed in Iraq. The piece consists of a large oak cabinet with 120 vertical drawers, which the audience must pull out. Each drawer contains a large facsimile sheet of stamps, each showing a portrait image of a fallen member of the armed forces. Each drawer can hold two sheets of stamps, thus the cabinet can hold a maximum of 240 individuals. If the number exceeds this, another cabinet will be made.

David Barrie, Director of The Art Fund, believes *Queen and Country* is a "beautiful and deceptively simple work of art that poignantly reminds us of the enormous sacrifices made by British men and women serving in the armed forces in Iraq." Indeed, McQueen has treated their images with nobility and respect, concealing them within the sleek cabinet rather than brashly plastering them across gallery walls. Whilst the latter would have an instantaneous impact of the human cost of war, McQueen has cleverly enforced this message in other ways; the time it takes to unveil each set of images, and the seemingly endless repetition of this

action makes the viewer keenly aware of the death toll of British soldiers.

The images, chosen by the relatives of the deceased, portray these young individuals, many wearing their uniform with pride, while others smile broadly. Along the edge of the facsimile stamp sheet is typed the name, age or death, and platoon of each person.

However, the work is not complete until the Royal Mail issues these stamps. He explains, "The idea of the artwork was always to have the stamps in circulation throughout the UK, so that people

"It is neither pro war nor anti-war, it merely commemorates the soldiers"

could go to the post office and be involved, to pick up an envelope with the stamp on it, to meditate and reflect on the sacrifice - not just to have something gathering dust in a museum. I think putting the stamps into circulation is the most fitting way to honour the troops who died."

Mrs Carol Paterson, mother of Private Scott 'Casper' Kennedy, who died in Iraq aged 20, stated, "The images of Scott and these brave men and women on stamps would be a great way to honour the sacrifice they have made for Queen and country. They should never be forgotten."

The Art Fund, the UK's leading independent art charity, is encouraging Royal Mail to officially issue the stamps. Over 15,000

people have already signed the Art Fund's appeal. Royal Mail, however, has not yet conceded to McQueen's request. Although memorial stamps have long been issued, Royal Mail has been very conservative in its choice of images. Perhaps this British institution would rather stay away from the controversial matter of the Iraq war.

Yet, McQueen declares that *Queen and Country* is neither pro war nor anti-war, rather it merely commemorates soldiers who lost their lives. "It seems for those who are against the war my project is regarded as a good thing. For people who support the war, it is regarded as a good thing too... This work is like a sphere; roll it this way, roll it that way. In the end it is an art work."

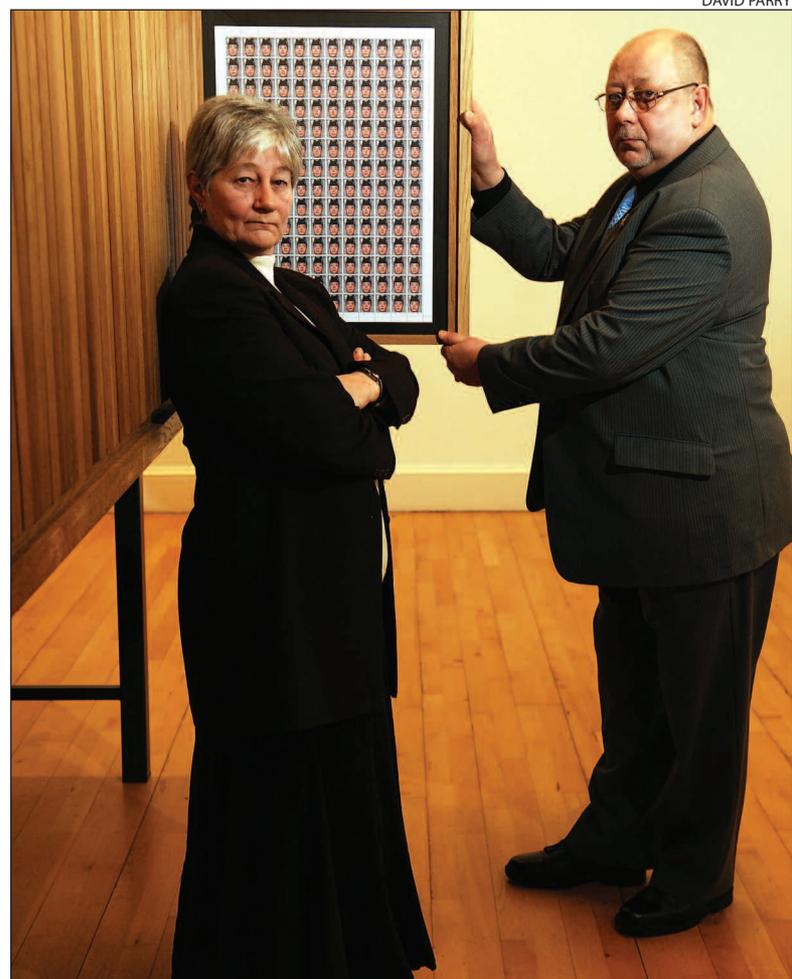
What's more, the work is said to be dedicated to all victims of the war in Iraq. Here I take umbrage. The work may, from a British military perspective, take no stance on the war, yet completely absent is any reference to Iraqi civilians who have died, or indeed troops from other nations. Although there is no agency that keeps track of accurate numbers of Iraqis killed, deaths from violence have been estimated at a figure between 90,329 and 98,605.

If you believe that Steve McQueen's commemorative work should be completed and stamps produced, sign the petition at: www.artfund.org/queenandcountry

Queen and Country is showing at the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, until 15th February 2009. Entrance is free. For details of the tour and extra information please see the website listed above.



DAVID PARRY



DAVID PARRY

Antonia Shaw



One hundred million pounds is a vast amount of money by anyone's standards. This figure is the amount the National Galleries of Scotland (the NGS) wish to raise in order to retain two of Titian's masterpieces in their collection.

Widely acknowledged as one of the greatest colourists of all time, Titian pioneered the use of oil paints and inspired generations of artists. The pieces in question, *Diana and Actaeon* and *Diana and Callisto*, originally created as part of a cycle of works for King Philip II of Spain from 1556 to 1559, have been displayed in the UK for over two hundred years and have enriched our cultural heritage.

Since 1945, The Duke of Sutherland has loaned these celebrated paintings to the

"Should we spend such sums of public and private money on great works of art?"

NGS, as part of the historic Bridgewater Collection. It is one of the most important anthologies of Old Master paintings on loan to an institution in the UK, and forms the core of the NGS' world-famous displays of

European art.

The Duke has offered the works to the NGS and the National Gallery in London for £50m each. If the galleries raise the funds to buy *Diana and Actaeon*, then the second painting, *Diana and Callisto* will be offered for sale in four years. His offer comes with the added incentive that, should the two galleries manage to raise the necessary funds; the entire collection will remain on long-term loan to the NGS.

Whilst the cost of the paintings appears daunting, this figure actually only represents one third of their estimated open-market value. These galleries are seizing a £100 million bargain. As a result, they began frantically campaigning for funds in August 2008.

This immense expenditure has produced divergent reactions. Should we spend such significant sums of public and private money on great works of art? Particularly in the global age we live in, must the works remain in Great Britain?

Glasgow MP, Ian Davidson, speaking on BBC Radio Scotland's *Good Morning*

Scotland, claimed "It is difficult to argue that this is part of Britain's cultural heritage when it's a picture by a long dead Venetian. I don't believe it is worthwhile spending this obscene amount of money, particularly when the National Gallery already has around 20 Titians."

However, the loss of these works has been likened to removing the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre. Is culture not of equal importance to the defence, health and education that we invest in so heavily? Without art, what do we have?

Furthermore, this early intervention would be paid off by the inspiration and education of future generations. Countless artists have gleaned inspiration from these works and many are active in the campaign including Tracey Emin, Lucian Freud and David Hockney

The price seems heavy, but this investment is essential.

If you wish to support the campaign, donate online at:

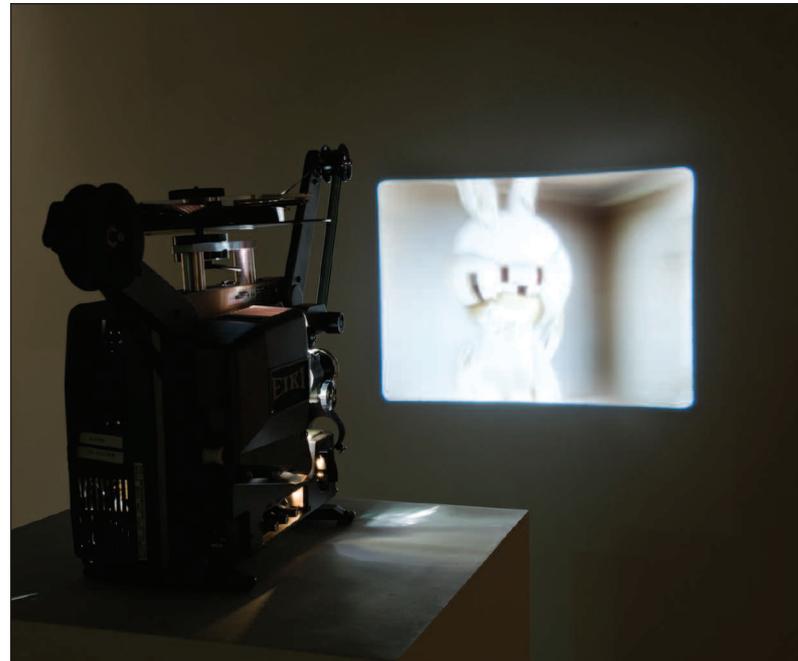
www.nationalgalleries.org

The Turner Prize

Stephen Deuchar, Director of the Tate Britain gallery and Chair of the Turner Prize Jury, talks to **Laura Connor** about its gender-bias controversy and judging criteria

SAM DRAKE

SAM DRAKE



Subjectivity has no boundaries, no rules and no formats. That is precisely what underlies the controversy surrounding the Turner Prize, awarded annually by The Tate. This year's winner was Mark Leckey, the unmistakably dishevelled, down-to-earth Scouser who was "chuffed to bits" to win.

Humble he may be, but his work is not. It is more complex than simply manipulating images from popular culture. It explores the limits of reality: what appears to be seen and what is actually known. It is Leckey's combination of the humble and the abstract that creates his distinctive style. In works such as *Parade and Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore*, Leckey's fascination with images from fashion and youth culture are made apparent. Leckey acknowledges his working-class roots as an influential aspect of

his work; he drew inspiration from the 'Casual' movement, a fad amongst young male troublemakers using fashion as a means of "seduction and guile".

It is precisely this quirky, non-elitist and opportunistic availability of the Turner Prize that establishes its famous reputation. Stephen Deuchar, Director of Tate Britain and Chair of the Jury, believes that contemporary art, before the Turner Prize in 1984, was seen as "alien" and "threatening". Critics viewed the opening of Tate Modern in 2000 as an inevitable failure: "A lot of cynics said 'this is never going to work.' British people don't like contemporary art; they are too traditional." However, Deuchar maintains that the Turner Prize has been a principle vehicle for allowing the public to form their own views about art, and debate its credibility.

Despite Deuchar's opti-

mism, the views of the public still tend to verge on the negative. This is made glaringly obvious in the Turner Prize comment room, where members of the public are encouraged to pen a response to the show; many felt that this year's nominees' work was "preten-

"hones in on changes." Deuchar attributes these innovations, and the subsequent sensationalism stirred up by the media, to the shock value associated with the prize. In this case, what are the criteria for winning the prize? Are there no boundaries to quality, style or presentation?

There is an area, however, in which the Turner Prize remains in the past; there have only ever been three female winners in its 26-year history. In 2008, when Leckey was up against three female contenders, the male still championed. Deuchar explains that the prize still embraces "old ways of thinking" and is not embroiled in the petty political-correctness, which saturates every area of employment. For Deuchar, "gender and race do not enter into the conversation."

Yet, just looking at the female artists nominated for the

prize instantly brings gender to the forefront. Could it have been Wilkes' characteristic focus on femininity and sexuality that undermined her chances of winning? With works entitled *We Are Pro-Choice*, using female mannequins and objects of everyday domestic normality, such as cookers, Wilkes' own position as a mother and domesticated woman finds significance. Hours before the announcement of the prize, *The Guardian* posted an article detailing each of the artists' odds at winning according to the bookies; spokesman Rupert Adams revealed that Wilkes was the least popular nominee ever to be shortlisted for the prize, apparently with the "worst odds in history."

Deuchar may see the prize as transcending the realms of gender and race politics, but in some ways they are already a priori to the choice of winner.

"Deuchar explains that the prize still embraces 'old ways of thinking', but not political correctness."

Left: Wilkes, *I give you all my money 2008*
Right: Leckey, *Made in 'Eaven 2004*

entious, boring, obvious, humourless, self regarding".

This is where the flexibility of subjectivity becomes problematic. Deuchar argues that the Turner Prize is not art's equivalent to the Booker Prize, where a search is made to find the best British book, but it

Arts Reviews

PRODUCTION: SKIN DEEP

VENUE: LEEDS GRAND THEATRE

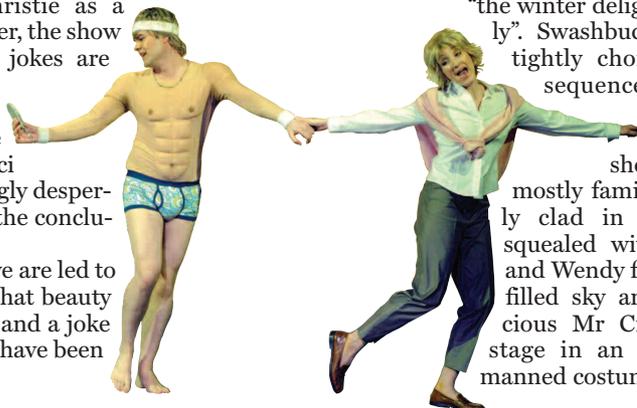
REVIEW: RAF SANCHEZ

☆☆☆☆☆

Skin Deep is an operetta written by British comedy-heavyweight Arnando Iannucci (*The Day Today, In the Thick of It*). His target is the (arguably already over-satirised) world of Hollywood and plastic surgery. It tells the story of the famed clinic of Dr. Needlemeier, who is busy "putting right what nature got wrong", cuckolding his wife with his scarred assistant, and creating an elixir of youth out of the chopped-off bits of famous people. After plucking a bullock from aptly named Hollywood star Luke Pollock and swapping his wife's and lover's faces, Needlemeier is forced to flee to California. Not quite hilarity ensues.

It's clear from the start that for Iannucci, the operetta is not a liberating format, and the characters seem to trudge through the treacle of undulating notes to get to their punchlines. A musical, giving him more scope to drop in dialogue and for sharper, more incisive singing, would have been a much better choice. While there are some notable individual performances, especially Gwendoline Christie as a ditzy Hollywood reporter, the show overall drags and the jokes are rarely worth waiting for. The few moments of tittering were at the knob jokes that Iannucci includes with increasingly desperate frequency towards the conclusion.

By the play's end we are led to conclude, guess what, that beauty is only skin deep. That and a joke every now and again would have been no bad thing.



PRODUCTION: PETER PAN

VENUE: WEST YORKSHIRE PLAYHOUSE

REVIEW: SARAH-JANE SILVESTER

☆☆☆☆☆

Rachel Kavanaugh's musical adaptation of Barrie's *Peter Pan* is billed as "the winter delight for all the family". Swashbuckling swordfights, tightly choreographed dance sequences and acrobatic displays pepper this charming show. The audience, mostly families enthusiastically clad in full fancy dress, squealed with delight as Pan and Wendy flew through a star-filled sky and when the ferocious Mr Croc waddled onto stage in an impressive three-manned costume.

The set, resembling a half-pipe at a skate park, was perfect for the fight scenes and cleverly rotated upon change of scene. A small pit orchestra delightfully lead the Disney-style voices of the cast of the Birmingham Repertory Theatre Company smoothly through the score.

Interestingly, Tinkerbell was not cast with a live actor but instead a series of laser lights was used to show her dipping and swooping across the stage.

Unfortunately James Gillan, with his strong Scottish accent was more annoying than charming, playing a decidedly arrogant Peter most strongly felt in his solo 'The Cleverness of Me'.

Aimed at a family audience, perhaps this is not the student choice, but should you fancy escaping into a land where you never have to grow up, take advantage of the half price tickets for mid-week performances for bookings of more than five people.

Music.

Caius Slater talks to Caspa & Rusko about dubstep, unity and meeting naked

Having seen Benga, one of dubstep's biggest names, attend a tiny night at The Junction in York two years ago, it is a strange but welcome experience to see Caspa and Rusko, the breakthrough artists of 2008, headline a night at the famous Fabric. The explosion of the scene in the last year has propelled dubstep into the consciousness of mainstream audiences and made artists like Burial internationally recognised. The interview gets off to an inauspicious start when I mistake Caspa (Gary McCann) for a steward. We are soon joined by Rusko (Chris Mercer), who finds the mix-up hilarious. "See?" he laughs, "no one knows who we are."

This is not strictly true. The duo have become the standout names in the scene, and their brand of dubstep, known as 'jump up', is characterised by heavy bass lines, simple chord progressions and quite frankly ridiculous noises. Why have they become popular so quickly? "People like to dance, and we make dance music. It's pretty simple really," says McCann.

However, when I suggested that a scene whose influences range from dub reggae to jungle contains musical divisions, there was a hint of annoyance in his reply. "Let's not call it a division", McCann insists: "You've just got people doing their own thing, whether it's jump up or 2-step or whatever, there's no division."

Still, how can a scene with a global reach possibly stay united? Dubstep Allstars Vol. 6, part of an important series of compilation CDs, notes the discrepancy between what it terms "the Bristol sound", a more traditional dubstep with firm roots in reggae and garage, and the "Berlin sound", which draws inspiration from techno and house. Perhaps most significantly, neither McCann nor Mercer use the word "dubstep" at any point throughout the interview, and I was left thinking that McCann is trying to promote a fraudulent image of solidarity.

Mercer is equally revealing of the more fractious elements of the dubstep community. "I was born in York, grew up in Leeds and then went down to London to make tunes," he says, but this does not quite tell the whole story: he attended Leeds University, gaining a degree in music production, and is a classically trained pianist.

The overwhelming impression is that his background is very firmly rooted in middle-class North Yorkshire, yet

"He is rooted in middle-class Yorkshire but talks in an unmistakably mockney accent"

he speaks in an unmistakably mockney accent, using a lexicon so colloquial it would be more suited to a grime rapper. Even his music frequently centres on the idea of the cockney: "Cockney Thug", and "Cockney Violin" are obvious examples, whereas "Hammertime" contains an unintelligible vocal track by a patois DJ.

It seems strange to me that Mercer is so enamoured with working class London. It's impossible to escape the hypocrisy of a university graduate masquerading as a "cockney thug".

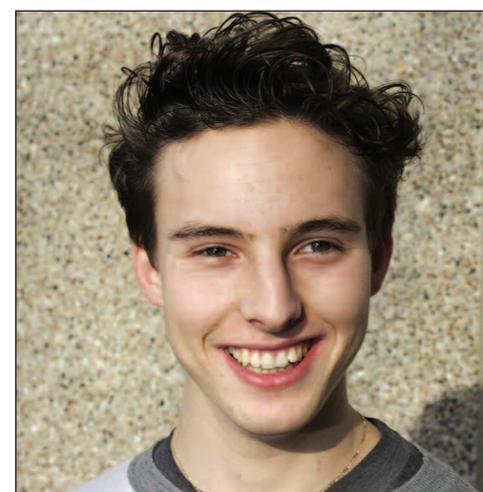
When I asked him how he and Mercer met, he joked that he "found him wandering around London with no clothes on". Yet despite the light-hearted tone of this statement, I sense

a truth to it. Mercer is three years McCann's junior, and it is obvious that he greatly admires his cohort. McCann is a steady, responsible figure, whereas Mercer has an infectious juvenile exuberance to his character, a contrast which is as evident in their music as it is in their company. There is a big brother-little brother dynamic to their relationship, which explains Mercer's attempts to integrate himself into cockney culture, emulating the older, wiser London native.

Both men clearly love what they do and when I asked what their plans are for the rest of the evening, Mercer's reply is simple: "We're gonna get mashed." The future seems bright for these two upwardly mobile DJs.



Isaac Hewlings



rageous amounts of food and alcohol - the richer the better. The pleasures of this gout-inducing festival are glorious but, being an atheist, the festivities feel a little phoney - the season and its subsequent turgidity is more or less unjustified. The crucial aspect being celebrated just doesn't wash: it's a bit like being at someone's twenty-first and harbouring suspicions that they're actually twelve. So whilst pondering this problem by the fire, in some kind of port and Stilton induced haze, I

"Let's celebrate the funkismanship that was James Brown"

think I discovered a solution.

Enter: "The Don", "Soul-Brother Number One", "The Hardest-Working Man In Show Business", James Brown himself. As some of you may know, James Brown died on none other than Christmas Day, 2006.

Perhaps this event could give some meaning to my otherwise dangerously circumspect rejoicing. Whilst he could have timed it better (with Easter perhaps?), James didn't do badly. Instead of celebrating the birth of Jesus, I suggest we celebrate the ending of the extraordinary funkismanship that was James Brown's life. My proposition is thus: for those of us who don't believe in the crucial aspects of Jesus Christ that warrant celebrating his birth, how about celebrating the death of quite possibly the funkier man ever born? This is a man whose song names include: 'Hot Pants', 'Get Up', 'I Feel Good' and 'Papa's Got A Brand New Bag'. This was a man who could command as impressive an array of suggestive nonsense as has ever been seen before. In response to the question (whilst on Fox News, about to his imminent divorce), "What will you say to your fans about this?" "I feel good...papa's got a brand new bag, it's a man's world!" Indeed.

His final years were much like his first, turbulent and complicated. His rise was as unlikely as it was extraordinary. He never

knew his father and was raised by his aunt, who ran a bordello house (father never around, socialised with prostitutes... Remind you of anyone?). He later joined a gospel choir, the first step towards his subsequent rise to fame. Whilst off-stage his life was always unconventional, his contribution to the black power movement and to the soul and funk genres are worthy of praise. Modern hip-hop and R'n'B owe as great a debt to James Brown as any other musician in history. So much so that Michael Jackson cited him as his foremost influence in both music and dance repertoires.

In addition, funk, much like Christmas, is extremely good for alleviating the winter blues. Go watch a video of one of his performances on Youtube and try not to be invigorated. I'm fairly sure it's impossible. What then, could be more apt to dispel the midwinter gloom? In the words of the great man himself, "When I'm on stage, I'm trying to do one thing: bring people joy. Just like church does. People don't go to church to find trouble, they go there to lose it."

The Sound Of Things To Come

Laura Hulley peers into 2009: will it be all girls, glitter and the end of indentikit indie?

One is the year of the reformation: 2008 was The Sex Pistols; Take That; Boyzone; dull, dull, and duller. It was the year of dredging up the past and trying to spin a few extra quid out of it – flogging a long deceased horse. Not any more: 2009 is to be the year of female dominated, super-sparkly electro pop, like it or not. And no, this is not regression, and nor is it 1984 part II: the electro ladies of '09 promise to push pop music further forward than it has dared to go for years. Here are our top tips for 2009:

If you haven't heard of Blackpool's **Little Boots** yet, then go find her. She's gone from relative obscurity to being top of the coveted BBC Sound of 2009 list in a matter of months. As one third of so-nearly-famous Leeds band Dead Disco, Little Boots cut her musical teeth whilst still at University; and judging from her recent performances on Jools Holland and the ethereal covers she's posted on YouTube, it won't be the last we'll hear from her.

The singer-songwriter has died and been reborn in the form of **Florence and the Machine**. No boyish guitars or folksy whining here and 22 year old Florence Welch certainly isn't a 'beans-on-toast' Kate Nash type. Florence's songs are a fantastical mix of David Bowie, Bjork and P J Harvey. What could possibly be any better?

There is still room for those who aren't all mad hair, beeps, blips and basslines. folksy songstress **Emmy The**

Great has been gathering a following on the live circuit for some time, and with her blunt, magical lyrics brimming with innovative angst, she's bound to take 'anti-folk' in a new direction this year: perfect for a break from the boisterous electronica girls.

Bringing it all back home are York band **The Federals**. With a sound that is as garage-guitar as it gets, they deserve a mention not only for carrying the fading flame of floppy haired, skinny-boy indie but for having the potential to break out of the (almost non-existent) York 'scene', having recently featured in *The Times* as one of their Top 5 'gigs to watch out for'.

Despite all the wonderful new music being touted as 'The Sound' of 2009, the hangover from '08 will continue with a steady stream of tearful reconciliations; at least the members of Blur have been musically active since their split, and aren't too old for it to be embarrassing. For The Darkness, this may not be the case. Obviously excited by the news that lycra and hairspray are back, they're rumoured to be planning a new tour and album. I wonder who they think will care.

If glitter, costume, drama, and extravagance are your thing or you have a penchant for the 80s, the coming twelve months will be a visual/aural treat. They promise to break away from the banality of identikit indie and usher in a new age, ruled by electro-pop queens and their faithful laptops.



Right:
Florence Welch
of Florence and
the Machine

Nouse Playlist

Laura Hulley *Bloc Party* - 'One Month Off': Yet another standard Bloc Party single: danceable, likeable, but unnervingly 'safe'. Bloc Party have managed to acquire such a reputation for re-invention that they're in danger of becoming dull by being so consistently good. What makes this release so interesting is its video - a twisted, animated romp through a Snow White style fairytale. It's refreshing, it's terrifying, and it's brilliant.

Isaac Hewlings *Chase & Status ft. Kano* - 'Against All Odds' has all the credentials to be a hip-hop smash hit. Chase & Status seem to be trying their hand at grime, and it's quite frankly a resounding success. Kano is on fine form, his emceeing is solid and his well-defined flow is a perfect accompaniment to the funky break in the background. Using The Incredible Bongo Band's Apache is a fun nod back to the early days of hip-hop and more than welcome in

this era of bastardised soul fronting as R'n'B.

Tom Killingbeck *Morrissey* - 'I'm Throwing My Arms Around Paris': This, the first single from the soon to be released *Years of Refusal* is a reassuring sign that he's on fine form. The cheery melody and uplifting chorus belie the emptiness at the core of the song; the result is classic Morrissey tuneage.

The focus shift from his beloved Manchester to Paris is odd, but if you rank in his devoted legion of fans, consider this a must-buy.

Estella Adeyeri *Tommy Sparks* - 'I'm A Rope' goes down like a hearty slice of electro-clash pie, guaranteed to satisfy those hungry for more music along the lines of Shitdisco and Goose. Simple, catchy lyrics and a dirty electro-fuzz bass line combine to make an instant indie disco hit. 'I'm A Rope' transforms Mr Sparks from a background bassist to an electrifying solo artist



Album and gig reviews



ARTIST: ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
ALBUM: MERRIWEATHER POST PAVILLION
REVIEW: TOM KILLINGBECK
★★★★☆

Here, in the depths of winter, it's invigorating and refreshing to hear a record as warm, sunny, and interstellar as Animal Collective's new offering. This band has, in the last decade, reshaped many fans' - and indeed bands' - ideas of what indie, pop, and psychedelia can sound like.

It seems like every Animal Collective record since 2004's *Sung Tongs* has been heralded as their mainstream pop record, but none have ever really been welcomed by the record buying public. *Merriweather Post Pavilion*, which was named after a psychedelic 60s gig venue, again takes steps toward a poppier future for the band, but its obvious lack of singles and resolutely experimental nature (while now mostly restricted to the pop spectrum) make sure that this future is again thwarted.

This is a record of exuberance, and it includes all the strange song structures and pillaging of various genres (tribal rhythms, electronic bleeps and gospel chants populate the album) that we have come to expect from this band.

'My Girls' is easily one of the best songs they've ever written, and the added structure to the piece is a testament to the evolution of the band - the messy jams and noodling they used to be known for have now gone out of the window, resulting in focused, bizarre, and what's more, truly original pop music.

In the current musical landscape, only a handful of bands are really trying to escape past influences and make music that sounds shiny and new - and with this latest album, Animal Collective are rushing to the front of the pack.



ARTIST: BON IVER
ALBUM: BLOOD BANK
REVIEW: ESTELLA ADEYERI
★★★★☆

Bon Iver kick-started the new year with their EP *Blood Bank*, which provides a flawless follow up to their widely acclaimed 2008 album *For Emma, Forever Ago*, which received 5/5 reviews in MOJO and Uncut. This four-track release sees a continuation of the indie-folk melodies that form Bon Iver's delicate sound, with soulful vocal harmonies used over light guitar arrangements.

The EP opens with title track 'Blood Bank,' easily the strongest song of the bunch, in which blood donation begins to sound oddly sensual within singer Justin Vernon's gently layered vocals and poetic lyrics. An instantly touching and mesmerising tune, it is sure to be a new contender besides last year's notable single 'Skinny Love' as the fan favourite.

The next track is the brief 'Beach Baby,' a soft

acoustic song with tender vocals. The outro utilises slide guitar technique, gradually fading away and leading you into the keyboard-led track 'Babys,' which has a light and choral air to it.

The final song 'Woods' is a beautiful a cappella piece with an almost ethereal edge to it. It bears a definite stylistic resemblance to Imogen Heap's 'Hide and Seek,' and provides a perfect close to an exceptional record.

This EP is definitely recommended for fans of similar indie-folk as Laura Marling, Noah and The Whale and Iron & Wine. It would also appeal to those who enjoy the lighter side of the Arcade Fire. 'Blood Bank' is a remarkable and multifaceted release, which provides a wholesome stop-gap between his previous album and the next Bon Iver full-length release.

FILM.

Duncan Pelham

Self congratulation, rigid tradition and dirty tactics: another night at the Oscars



It's approaching that time in the filmgoer's calendar: the 81st Academy Awards - an occasion for blubbing stars, embarrassing speeches and garish outfits. On 22 February, the Who's Who of Tinseltown will assemble for their annual headline-grabbing opportunity to dress up like peacocks and collect their awards. With the Golden Globes finished, there's an excited buzz over possible nominees.

National treasure Danny Boyle scooped up enough Golden Globes to forge his own Boyle-sized statuette. Snubbed in 1996 - without even a nomination for masterpiece *Trainspotting* - it's about time Boyle brought home one of those shiny figurines. Boyle's usual style doesn't exactly cater to the Academy's fastidious taste. You know the type: tasteful, traditional and, above all, conventional. Let's not forget, *Trainspotting* defined not only that year, but perhaps an era. *Pulp Fiction* had a similar impact on cinema - like *Trainspotting* it was much imitated and rarely bettered - and yet also lost out, this time to the wishy-washy sentiments of *Forrest Gump*. And seven years before, we had the clamorous politics of Spike Lee's angry polemicising in *Do The Right Thing* defeated by the feel-good *Driving Miss Daisy*. *Do The Right Thing*, *Trainspotting* and *Pulp Fiction* were obviously lacking in the inoffensive, old fashioned qualities the Academy so admire. However, Boyle's latest might just fit this description: *Slumdog Millionaire* is a heart-warming tale of an Indian boy's struggle through the poverty-ridden slums of Mumbai. Here is an old-fashioned love story, beautifully directed.

But the traditional lack of auteur and avant-garde Academy-winners (Stanley Kubrick, Mike Leigh, Spike Lee, etc) only highlights the flawed voting system. Why is it that the award was stolen from *Saving Private Ryan* by *Shakespeare in Love*? Or *Raging Bulls* by *Ordinary People*? Well, of the Academy's 5,500 members, 1,311 are actors. With a whopping 23% of the vote going to actors, it's hardly a surprise that performance-driven films are so frequently awarded. The Coens' brilliantly bizarre *Fargo*, with its abstract storytelling and unknown cast, lost out to *The English Patient*, a blatant actor's film. It also means actors-turned-directors often scoop the Best Director gong - explaining how Costner (*Dances With Wolves*) criminally pilfered Scorsese's (*Goodfellas*) award. The Oscars is really just a sparkly pageant of Beverly Hills' peer groups patting one another on the back.

But the Oscars isn't just flowery entertainment. It's business as usual, and a dirty business at that. Studios see Oscars as a valuable currency, resulting in nasty smear campaigns. In 2002, the character on whom *A Beautiful Mind* is based, John Nash, was forced to rebut allegation from the rival studios of anti-Semitism. Similarly, the same year, Denzel Washington (Best Actor for his blistering performance in *Training Day*) was harshly accused of playing the 'race card'.

FILM: THE WRESTLER

DIRECTOR: DARREN ARONOFSKY

STARRING: MICKEY ROURKE, MARISA TOMEI

REVIEW: AMELIA MCPHERSON

RUNTIME: 115 MINS



Bold claims that Mickey Rourke has produced "the greatest cinematic comeback ever" may have been shrugged off with amused scepticism. Yet if at first the decision to cast Rourke, fallen heart-throb and puffy-faced has-been, seems bizarre, it ultimately proves to be a catalyst for the film's brilliance. From the moment we meet fading WWE wrestling champion Randy "The Ram" Robinson, a tired shadow of his former self, professionally reliant on drugs and heavy strapping and reduced to sleeping in the back of his clapped-out car, the parallels between Rourke's life and that of his character are blindingly clear.

Maryse Alberti shoots relentlessly in greys and stark, cold light, lending a bleak and hopeless quality to Randy's surroundings. Image quality is often grainy, permitting us a depressing intimacy with Randy's lonely life. There are stunning shots, too, glaring spotlights catch Randy's blood-stained silhouette, torn apart by barbed wire and staple guns and glistening with sweat as he stands in the ring; Randy is persistently shot

from behind as the audience unwittingly becomes the weight on his shoulders, and we are regularly given shaky close-ups of Randy's weathered, tired body: a technique which highlights the impenetrable private truth of physical exhaustion and emotional turmoil behind Randy's invincible public persona.

The American flag is everywhere and America's performance culture is questioned. True to form, Aronofsky explores the problems that occur when your body is your fortune. That Randy is a wrestler and Cassidy is a stripper is no coincidence; these professions explore the respective societal pressures facing men and women and the exploitation and destruction that can result from a life of performance. As the camera pans a room of ex-wrestlers, their physical scars from the ring show the price paid for what America calls entertainment; one is in a wheelchair, another has a colostomy bag pathetically hanging from his trouser leg.

Politically, too, the film packs a punch. The symbolism of Randy's final fight with "The

FILM: SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

DIRECTOR: DANNY BOYLE

STARRING: DEV PATEL, ANIL KAPOOR

REVIEW: LILY EASTWOOD



Misleadingly, *Slumdog Millionaire* is billed as the 'feel-good movie of the year'. 'Feel-good' smacks of kooky do-gooders and two-dimensional characters with a displaced sense of reality in search of love and fortune. On the contrary, Danny Boyle's crime-romance-comedy-drama is bursting at the seams with energy, emotion and just the right amount of fairytale good luck. Writer Simon Beaufoy (*The Full Monty*) brings wit and humanity to what could have been a grim and downbeat script, and Boyle, enjoying a renaissance after the non-event that was *Sunshine*, is back on form with all the upbeat edginess of *Trainspotting*, complete with Bollywood shine.

This is clearly a product of Boyle's creative vision, yet while *Trainspotting* was Glasgow grey, *Slumdog Millionaire* comes vibrantly to life with all the colours of India. Sweeping shots of Mumbai, fast-paced chases through claustrophobic slum



alleys and exhilarating sequences of the two brothers riding atop trains across India make overwhelming viewing and put the brothers' scrappy existence in stark contrast to the wonders of the Taj Mahal.

At the heart of the stunning visuals is a familiar underdog story. Dev Patel's sweet and earnest Jamal stands at the centre of a Dickensian storm of fate and circumstance. Born in the slums of Mumbai, we follow him and his brother from a childhood of exploitation and gangster conflict to Jamal's appearance on 'Who Wants to Be a Millionaire'.

Applause is breaking out everywhere as this unlikely underdog deservedly becomes a big Oscar contender.



Ayatollah" (a religious title in Iran and reminiscent of American hate-figure Ayatollah Khomeini) can't be ignored. As he stands victorious, almost frozen as he prepares to crush 'The Ayatollah', American superiority is questioned; Randy is the all-American hero, and 'The Ayatollah' becomes the focus of America's ferocious hatred: he must be defeated. In reality, Randy's heroism is fake, he is a sorry specimen and his fight against 'The Ayatollah' is suicidal, it will ultimately be fatal.

The Wrestler is a marvelously unique creation that can be forgiven for its flaws. Seigel's script, though occasionally clunky, is natural and moving. Wooden acting is overshadowed as Rourke and Tomei produce performances of such rawness and poignancy. A tired narrative is given an interesting twist and is sensitively delivered. What results is a gloriously understated depiction of capitalism, exploitation, desperation and loneliness: issues which, quite rightly, continue to be explored.

FILM: ELECTION (1999)

DIRECTOR: ALEXANDER PAYNE

STARRING: REESE WITHERSPOON

REVIEW: LIAM O'BRIEN



In the same year that she embarrassed future husband (and divorcee) Ryan Phillippe, as well as sometime-popular Sarah Michelle Gellar in *Cruel Intentions*, essentially by acting them off the screen, Reese Witherspoon convinces as Tracy Flick in the satirical indie *Election*.

Campaigning a little too enthusiastically for the position of student body president, Witherspoon excels at that special brand of slime which teacher Mr Mcallister finds justifiably abhorrent. He endeavours to spoil her ascendancy by encouraging popular jock Paul Metzler (a slightly witless Chris Klein) to run as a candidate.

Though comedic, Payne's film manages to distinguish between the various strands of the American middle class: Tracey, having lived largely friendless save for subcommittee staff, finds her ambition rewarded with a high flying career. Mr Mcallister is punished by the education system



he loved, and the rich Metzler finds that his happily oblivious approach to life's realities lands him a place at his desired college.

Only the plot involving Paul's lesbian sister Tammy (Jessica Campbell) feels shovelled-in, constructed purely to exaggerate the comparison between Flick and her sympathetic brother.

Election depicts a society that rewards relentless drive and punishes those that try to halt its progress. Tracy's election-day cupcakes, iced in the early hours of the morning with the slogan 'Pick Flick', wild glare and childish tantrums help form an irresistible watch, considerably more sophisticated than normal high school fare.

FOOD & DRINK.



THE RECIPE

Edward Fisher

BALSAMIC ONION AND PARMESAN SAUSAGE ROLLS (MAKES 20-30)

THREE MEDIUM SIZED RED ONIONS, TWO CLOVES OF GARLIC, BALSAMIC VINEGAR, GREEN OXO CUBE, 200G PARMESAN, BLOCK OF PUFF PASTY.

Preheat oven to 200°C (400°F, Gas Mark 6, Fan-assisted 180°C).

The French generally find our cuisine either bland or shocking. So when my French bar-mates asked me to make a selection of canapés on more than one occasion, I knew I was on to a veggie winner.

Take three medium sized red onions, peel and halve them vertically then finely slice all six halves into thin strips. Next finely chop two cloves of garlic. Heat two tablespoons of olive oil in a pan, adding the garlic once the oil is hot but being careful not to let it burn. Gradually add the onion as well as three tablespoons of balsamic vinegar, and a green oxo cube for flavouring. Bring down the heat a little and allow the onion to caramelise over the course of about quarter of an hour, stirring the mixture occasionally to avoid sticking. The "onion jam" will be ready when it is soft to the touch and glossy. At this point, leave it to cool.

Grate half the parmesan and put the rest to one side for later. Cut a block of puff-pastry down the middle (leave the other half in the fridge for second batch!) On a floured surface use a dusted rolling pin to roll the remaining pastry to the size of an A4 sheet and slice in half lengthways. Leave one section aside.

With the first sheet, layer on a long sausage of onion jam, onto which sprinkle a thin layer of grated parmesan. Fold the pastry over and seal the edges with a dab of milk ensuring the pastry is wrapped tightly around the onion and parmesan mixture. Cut the roll into thumb-sized mini-rolls and place them on a tray covered with a greased and floured sheet of greaseproof paper. Pierce two holes in the top of each mini-roll with the point of a sharp knife, then lightly brush each one with milk and sprinkle with the remainder of the grated parmesan. Repeat the process with the second sheet of pastry.

Place tray of rolls in the oven on middle shelf, leave until pastry has risen, parmesan is golden brown and onion jam is bubbling (approximately 15 minutes). Serve whilst still warm and enjoy!

RESTAURANT: ALLEY CATS
ADDRESS: 3 COFFEE YARD
AVERAGE PLATE: £8-10
REVIEW: GINA KATE HESLINGTON

★☆☆☆☆

Ceramic cats gaze down at you from the fireplace as you sit in this cottage-kitchen style restaurant and muse at the novelty of this side street peculiarity. Buried down one of York's many alley-ways, location has to be this venue's most endearing charm, as food is most definitely not its forte. The glasses are chilled, the napkins come served in little paper bags with a feline stamp, and hearty portions are dished out, yet when it comes to taste you will be more than just a little disappointed.

The menu is varied including steaks, fish and burgers, salads and pastas, yet the combo platter to share betrays the culinary short-comings of this establishment, presenting a meal which has undoubtedly been served straight from Iceland's frozen food bags.

Having frequently gazed from afar in envy at the diners of this day-café cum night-restaurant, when the food arrived I began to regret my decision to finally join them. The burger was cold and undercooked, cradled in the arms of a soggy bun, and the vegetable chilli inedible. Though the 'no pushchair' sign on the door kept us safe from screaming babies it did not protect us from

the wailings of a middle-aged woman in the throes of divorce, lamenting her woes to her sympathetic friend on the table next to us. Normally, attracting a varied clientele from lovers to students, I'm afraid all may leave in equal distress upon dining.

Sitting within the dismal atmosphere, the cats began to take on a demonic look as I pushed the greasy curly fries of the combo around the plate to bad music, until the waitress finally got the message. With a sour grimace she took away our ample leftovers, but the relief of parting from such atrocious food certainly made up for the lack of a smile. Needless to say, we weren't offered a doggy bag.

When it came to the bill we found that it wasn't pocket-friendly but our reluctance to leave a tip brought down the price by a few pounds. Although £8 for a main course may not sound dear, I felt insulted at the mere idea of paying.

As we got up to leave the 'chef' scurried past us to indulge in an outdoor cigarette, his unhygienic appearance didn't agree with our eyes, or our stomachs as we found out a few days later.

Despite its lack of good cuisine Alleycat's one redeeming

RESTAURANT: THE VICTORIA PUB
ADDRESS: 1 HESLINGTON ROAD
AVERAGE PINT: £2.09
REVIEW: BECKY THUMPSTON

★★★★☆

With skyrocketing gas bills preventing you from even attempting to heat your poorly insulated and single-glazed student house, the prospect of a snug, warm pub becomes increasingly alluring.

Boasting two fires and friendly proprietors (service with a smile is guaranteed); it is no wonder that 'The Vic' is popular with both students and the general public alike. Literally on the doorstep for hundreds of University of York students living in the Heslington Road area, 'The Vic' is in an ideal location between campus and town.

Sitting sipping your drink, taking in the amicable atmosphere you can enjoy a pleasant conversation without battling excessively loud music or karaoke. It's not the place to go for a big night out, but for a quiet drink it is perfect. There's a good beer garden to appease the smokers and plenty of comfortable seating inside for the rest. It's not too pricey either. A bottle of Magner's will set you back a fairly standard £3.05, a pint of



Fosters £2.90, and a glass of red wine just £2.50. Owned by the Old Mill Brewery, they serve a great variety of hand-pulled, traditional ales too.

So, whether you are looking for a retreat to plough through your course reading or simply somewhere to warm up, I wholeheartedly recommend the 'The Vic.'

Just make sure you arrive early to nab a seat by the fire.



feature remains its situation, and perhaps one should not bypass the opportunity to have a drink in the courtyard of this three storey, 16th century building. Frequented by groups of tourists led by eccentrically dressed Victorian-style gentlemen on hourly ghost walks, one can appreciate the ambience of this

eerie snickleway. It seems that it's not just the food that's haunting. Facing the magnificent Barley Hall, the medieval town-house, one can raise a glass to the past from the well stocked bar and grow merry to candlelight. Remember to order liquids only. Recommended for cat-loving spinsters and those with no taste.

RESTAURANT: INDOCHINE
ADDRESS: 9 KING STREET
AVERAGE TAPAS PLATE: £2.20-£4.50
REVIEW: ANDY PARKER

★★★★☆

I would pay to privately rent this place, but as it happened I got it all to myself. The lack of clients however, was not a reflection of the quality of the food, but more a reflection of the obscurity of its location.

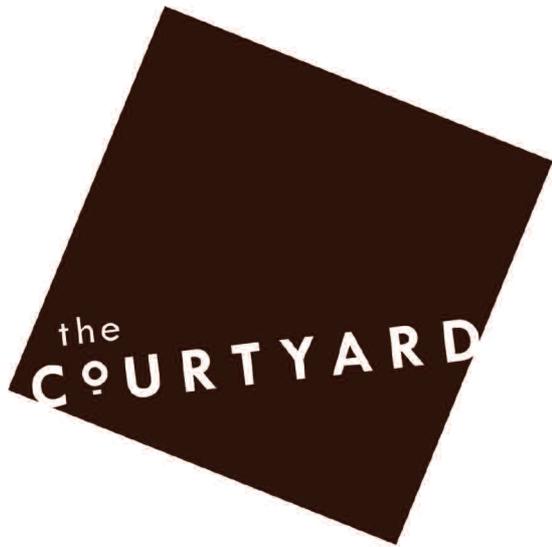
Situated on King Street, (the third left along Clifford street) you may usually associate this turn with late night takeouts and taxis, yet Indochine's chic and simplistic decor makes it the Ying to the Yang of the dodgy kebab shop opposite.

It offers a range of tapas style dishes from across Asia (ranging from £2.20-£4.50), hop-scotching across the countries a mouthful at a time. Although the larger dishes (£6.20-£14.00) will satisfy, the smaller triumph in variety and taste. The prawn toast is delectable. Accompany your choice with a beer from around the world. The staff are friendly and efficient.

Indochine is different from anywhere else in York, offering a fusion of cuisine that beats



Jumbo's hands down. It's excellent value for money and the set lunch and dinner menus can bring the price down even further. Try the Bento boxes which are Japanese packed lunches filled with an assortment of sushi, sashimi and tempura or snack on the skewered meats served with delicious dipping sauces. Either way you will be back like the Spice Girls for another round.



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LANGWITH COLLEGE

<p>Morning</p> <p><i>The Courtyard Breakfast</i></p> <p>Our Breakfast Menu is served Monday - Friday from 10am - 12pm.</p> <p>CLASSIC BAGEL £ 2.75 A classic toasted bagel filled with smoked salmon with a poe of cream cheese on the side.</p> <p>CRISPY BACON & EGG BAGEL £ 2.75 A delicious breakfast bagel stuffed with crispy strips of bacon and fluffy scrambled egg.</p> <p>VEGETARIAN BREAKFAST BAGEL £ 2.95 The perfect way to start the morning - fluffy scrambled egg with sautéed mushrooms and tomatoes.</p> <p>BREAKFAST PANINI £ 2.95 Bacon, eggs, tomatoes, mushrooms and cheese grilled to perfection.</p> <p>JUMBO CROISSANT £ 1.95 Served hot or cold, with butter and a choice of strawberry or raspberry jam.</p> <p>PAIN AU CHOCOLAT £ 1.50 Served to please to share or enjoy on your own, delicious hot or cold.</p> <p>DANISH PASTRY BASKET £ 1.80 A selection of mini Danish pastries.</p>	<p>BAGELS</p> <p>Our delicious toasted bagels are packed with tasty ingredients. Choose from:</p> <p>Manhattan club £ 3.50 Chicken breast, crispy bacon and sweetcorn in a creamy mayonnaise served on crunchy Cias lettuce leaves.</p> <p>SoHo club £ 3.50 Lean turkey, a cheese slice, cucumber, tomato, crispy bacon and mayonnaise.</p> <p>little ITALY club £ 3.50 Smooth cream cheese, pesto, sun-dried tomato, and fresh red pepper to give it some crunch!</p> <p>CAESAR club £ 3.50 Chicken breast and Cias lettuce, drizzled with a classic Caesar dressing and topped with parmesan shavings.</p>	<p>SALADS</p> <p>HOT THAI BEEF SALAD £ 5.95 Slices of prime rump steak on a bed of salad, served with a Thai chili dressing and fresh coriander.</p> <p>CLASSIC CAESAR £ 3.00 Crisp lettuce, parmesan cheese and Caesar dressing. Add a breast of chicken for £1.45 more.</p> <p>ROASTED ORANGE & BABY BEETROOT SALAD £ 3.50 Baby beetroot and orange segments roasted with rosemary and red wine vinegar, served on a bed of herb salad topped with toasted mixed seeds.</p> <p>POACHED SALMON SALAD £ 5.95 A succulent salmon fillet served with fresh rocket, watercress and baby leaf spinach.</p> <p>CHILLI KING PRAWN SALAD £ 4.95 King prawns served on a fresh herb salad drizzled in sweet chili sauce.</p> <p>MINTED FETA SALAD £ 3.50 A taste of the Mediterranean. Black olives, feta cheese and mixed salad, dressed with vinegrette and fresh mint leaves.</p>	<p>PASTA & RISOTTO</p> <p>SPAGHETTI CARBONARA £ 4.80 Classic dish of spaghetti with a creamy sauce, topped with parmesan shavings.</p> <p>PESTO PASTA £ 4.00 Fresh pesto pasta tossed in pesto with fresh baby spinach, served with crumbed pine nuts and shaved parmesan.</p> <p>TOMATO & PEPPER PENNE £ 4.00 Fresh pesto pasta in a rich tomato sauce with mixed peppers, served with fresh basil leaves and a spoon of sour cream.</p> <p>PRIMAVERA RISOTTO £ 5.00 Creamy risotto with spring vegetables and a hint of tarragon. Finished with parmesan and fresh parley.</p> <p>PEPPERONI & MOZZARELLA PANZOTTI £ 4.00 Italian panzotti pasta filled with pepperoni & mozzarella served with crumbed black pepper & lemon butter and topped with parmesan.</p> <p>MEATBALLS £ 5.00 Fresh linguine pasta with meatballs in a tomato & pepper sauce.</p> <p>Why not add a garlic flatbread for an extra 95p?</p>	<p>BURGERS</p> <p>Our signature beef burgers are made from 100% lean ground beef, served fresh, fresh buns and freshly washed tomato sauce. Our patties are gently grilled or grilled to ensure the flavour is sealed in.</p> <p>PLAIN BEEF BURGER £ 4.50 With SAUTÉED MUSHROOMS, SWISS CHEESE, CRISPY BACON or BBQ SAUCE £ 4.75</p> <p>TWO TOPPINGS £ 4.95</p> <p>FOUR TOPPINGS £ 5.25</p> <p>Our signature veggie burgers are 100% made from real produce and are really really impressive to taste! (and yes, same price)</p> <p>PLAIN VEGGIE BURGER £ 3.75 With SAUTÉED MUSHROOMS, SWISS CHEESE or BBQ SAUCE £ 4.00</p> <p>TWO TOPPINGS £ 4.25</p> <p>THREE TOPPINGS £ 4.50</p> <p>Our burgers are served with a toasted bun, salad garnish, our thick chunky chips and a choice of toppings.</p>
<p>PANINIS</p> <p>COURTYARD DELUXE PANINI £ 3.50 Sliced chicken breast with bacon, cheese and BBQ sauce.</p> <p>VEG OUT PANINI £ 3.45 Roasted peppers, red onion, tomato and mature cheddar cheese.</p> <p>CAPRESE PANINI £ 3.45 Fresh basil, tomato and melted mozzarella cheese.</p>	<p>TAPAS</p> <p>SOUP £ 2.95 With a chunky wedge of bread and butter. Ask for today's choice.</p> <p>MARINATED OLIVES £ 1.45 Mixed green and black olives marinated in fresh herbs and olive oil.</p> <p>HUMMUS & FLATBREAD £ 1.95 Turkish flatbread served with a generous helping of hummus to dip.</p> <p>CHIP STACK £ 1.75 A serving of our thick chunky chips with two generous dips of BBQ sauce and sour cream.</p> <p>NACHOS £ 4.80 £ 2.50 Tortilla chips topped with melted cheese, accompanied with salsa and a sour cream dip. Go either solo or to share.</p> <p>BREAD BASKET £ 1.50 Fresh chunky bread served with extra virgin olive oil and balsamic vinegar.</p> <p>KING PRAWNS IN CHILLI SAUCE £ 2.85 King prawns sautéed in a spicy chilli sauce served with a fresh rocket salad.</p>	<p>CAPRESE SALAD £ 2.85 Fresh basil leaves, slice of beef tomato and mozzarella cheese drizzled with basil infused olive oil.</p> <p>FALAFEL £ 2.45 Pan-fried drizzled with fresh yoghurt and mint dressing.</p> <p>GARLIC FLATBREAD £ 1.50 Original Turkish flat bread brushed warm with garlic butter.</p> <p>LAMB KOFTA KEBABS WITH TZATZIKI £ 2.95 Mixed lamb kebabs with a refreshing tzatziki dip.</p> <p>GRILLED HALOUMI CHEESE £ 2.75 Greek Haloumi grilled to perfection.</p>	<p>PLATTERS</p> <p>BOMBAY PLATTER £ 7.50 A feast of Indian delights including vegetable pakora, aloo tikkas, mini onion bhaj, vegetable samosa, masala bread and poppadoms. Served with mango chutney, mini yoghurt and a mixed leaf salad.</p>	

Joe Chapman



A lesson in Cantornomics: where's our slice of the pie?

The Vice-Chancellor's disproportionate pay is unwarranted in the economic climate

The news that University Vice-Chancellor Brian Cantor's salary increased by an inflation-busting 8% last year will no doubt be greeted with derision by many students. This is with some justification. Despite being responsible for the day-to-day running of the University, very little is ever seen or heard of Cantor, and, frankly, there are many students who do not know who he is.

Therefore, such a large salary increase, especially in the midst of a recession and spiralling graduate debt, appears excessive. And while final-year students like myself are faced with a shrinking employment market, there are probably many of us who think we could do a better job of management than our current academic-in-chief.

However, despite his prestigious position and strong academic reputation, Cantor's pay packet in 2006-07 was only slightly above

the national average for university chiefs, which also rose by 8%. Meanwhile, academics have also enjoyed a growing slice of the pie, with recent annual wage increases of 6%.

"Frankly, there are many of us who do not even know who he is"

This seems somewhat at odds with repeated claims made by universities of a lack of funding and resources; political pressure that led to the introduction of top-up fees in 2006. Here at York, despite the wage rises and significant capital investment – noisy construction work, to you and me – total income rose by 16% last year, while the

operating surplus increased four-fold.

Reading these figures, one would think the University, its campus, and even its students were positively glowing with wealth. Yet, although money has been spent on improving facilities like the library, the sports centre and a certain campus bar, the overwhelming sense is of a tired and dreary campus occupied by students lacking cash in their wallets.

Gym and sport-club membership fees have skyrocketed and library fines continue to rise unabated. Meanwhile, essential maintenance and replacement of footpaths and bridges has been painfully slow in coming.

York remains a prestigious university for both teaching and research, and the Heslington East development should ensure the survival of this reputation. Only then will the financial rewards offered to senior management be justified.

Lida Mirzaii



A timely call for improved feedback

The Economics department's policy regarding assessment feedback isn't too lofty, in fact it should be perfectly attainable. Their stated aim is to "provide timely and useful feedback to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students on their progress in relation to both formative assessments and summative assessments". It reads encouragingly enough. However, meanings of both 'timely' and 'useful' seem to have been lost in translation.

A timely and useful response to the product of hour's worth of stress-inducing labour would be a prompt and comprehensive feedback to examinations; not a 13-week wait followed by a number on a sparse piece of A4.

Students, who took assessments at the start of the autumn term, received the result on the 12th of January. That definitely does not qualify as timely. And this tardy response did not qualify all the way back in March when a staggering 19 week wait was whittled down to 13 weeks through students doing what they do best: vocalising their discontent.

Mass pressure seems to be the only method to induce the department to have a quicker turnaround in assessment feedback. And it's not good enough. In rhetoric at least, the department appear to be taking student concerns on board, but idle e-mails purporting

to claim that they are "looking for ways" to achieve shorter turnarounds are futile if they do not materialise.

Student satisfaction is becoming more than a form hurriedly given to students at the end of a module, it's a prominent factor in assessing a department's capabilities and performance in national league tables and therefore affects the University's prestige.

Fundamental to this issue is the progress of the student's performance: how can you be expected to improve if you are given late and laconic responses to an examination you can't even remember taking? Of course, marking quality should not be sacrificed in favour of a quicker assessment response, but if the English department can provide a relatively detailed feedback form in what now appears to be a FedEx delivery, surely the Economics department can rise to the challenge?

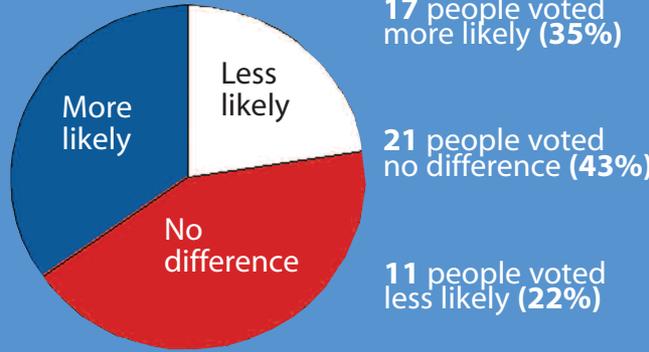
Economics students, and students as a whole, are not paying an escalating tuition fee to receive inefficient responses from their department. What we need is concrete and efficient feedback on essays. E-mails encouraging students to approach the departments on such issues from John Bone are all well and good, but at the rate students are paying they shouldn't need to complain in the first place.

The Burning Question

This week, *Nouse* asked:

Has the state of the economy changed the likelihood of you entering postgraduate study?

49 people voted, with the majority stating **No Difference**



To be a part of the debate and for exclusive web content go to www.nouse.co.uk/comment

Ben Martin

Ben Martin, 3rd year History student from Alcuin College, died at home on January 1st 2009 at the age of 23.

Ben was one of the most intelligent, talented, witty and passionate people that you could ever hope to meet.

Overwhelming attendance at his funeral, which took place on Wednesday 14th January near his home in North London, was the truest testament to the impact Ben had on so many of our lives.

Ben touched all those he came across. As a dedicated member of Alcuin JCRC, and as a friend he gave so much. A person who truly valued all that York had to offer and the people it held, his smile and laugh will never be forgotten.

Once quoting Gandhi, 'My life is my message', Ben's message will be unique and resonate in all of those whose paths he crossed. It is not possible to convey all of the happy memories we have of Ben; he was the perfect friend to so many. He was loved and will be missed more than he could ever imagine. Our thoughts are with his family and those close to him at this difficult time.

Letters

Arms investment anger

Dear *Nouse*,

I'd like to thank you for drawing my attention to York's investment in the arms trade. I had no idea that the university was so deeply involved with companies such as BAE Systems or Rolls Royce and if it wasn't for the last issue of *Nouse* I probably would have never found out.

I would also like to express how shocked I was by the comments that fellow students have left in response to the article online. I had automatically assumed that everyone at York would be intelligent enough to see the hypocrisy in an educational establishment promoting violence, but this is clearly not the case. BAE systems indirectly cause so many deaths, I'm ashamed that York is a part of that.

Hannah Carreg
Second-year History student

Getting our five a day?

Dear *Nouse*,

According to an article published in *Nouse* a few months ago, York students spend £4m more per annum on alcohol than groceries. I think this might be a good angle from which to examine your claim that "the average student" cannot afford a £5 Subway meal.

Perhaps if students spent a little less time drinking themselves to death they might consider their health and the way they blow the loans the government give them a little more. As a teetotal vegan, I am consistently appalled by the way in which students try to justify their behaviour with claims that it is "banter" or just "part of the student lifestyle". Why aren't green tea and lentil soup enough for these people?

Mr James MacDougald
Fulford

Wet Wet Wet

Dear *Nouse*,

I write to request some assistance. Your newspaper, I hear has had much success in the past with campus-wide campaigns. I propose a new drive - let's keep students dry!

It's frankly unacceptable that at this "Top 100 World" University the bridges have no roofs, and riverside paths flood whenever it rains! Drainage and shelter - this is all I beg of them!

Surely, if *Nouse* can save porters, it can save my soggy shoes and tarnished skirts?

It's high time the University started looking after its students, and protected us from the awful weather that frequents these parts. There's never this problem in the golden triangle.

Jamilla Cenkins
Alcuin

Nouse welcomes your letters. Please indicate if they are not intended for publication.

Email letters@nouse.co.uk or write to: *Nouse*, Grimston House, Vanbrugh College



Nicky Woolf

YUSU Bar Special

It was high noon. The town of Langwith, Texas sweltered in the January sun. Only the clutch of saddled geese outside the Courtyard Saloon were moving in the destructive heat. They shifted restlessly. Perhaps they could sense what was coming.

An aging management student dozes in the sunshine, his tennegallon hat pulled down low over his snoring face. A shadow falls over him. He awakes, and looks up - and a look of terror covers his face. Scrabbling, he runs for his life.

Meanwhile, town Sheriff Tom Scott and postmaster Rory Shanks are helping get the Courtyard Saloon ready for opening night. A long time in the making, this is the first saloon opening here that's not run by the big bad cattle-rustlin' gangsters up on Hes Hill. It's a big night. The proprietor, old father Burton, has been in town for longer than anyone still alive can remember. This is his dream.



None of them realise then that some dreams... can be nightmares.

The party is going well. The liquor was flowing. Abba was playing, but despite that everyone was having a good time.

But then they arrived. They had been respectable townfolk, once. YUSU Presidents and sabs. But power had changed them. Twisted them. Made them... evil.

Mickey Armstrong, small-time gangster, oozed evil from every sweaty pore. James "The Badger" Alexander had gone mad with power and drink. He just oozed. Nat Thwaites-McGowan would only speak through an agent. But evil by proxy is still evil.

"This here bar," drawled Armstrong in a voice that sent a chill through Burton's heart, "was my idea. It's my bar." His eyes flashed with devilish light.

"I have been authorised to say," McGowan's agent told me in as evil a voice as she

could muster, having only been Alcuin chair, "That this bar was Nat's idea. Anyone who says different..." She drew her hand across her throat.

James Alexander spat a mouthful of half-chewed salmon canape into Jane Grenville's drink. "This bar," he growled "is mine."

It was Armstrong who went for his gun first. His bullet struck James Alexander square between the eyes, but it only angered him, like a bb-pellet hitting a 40-stone Kodiak bear. He roared, and beat his chest, then picked up new Alcuin chair Oliver Hutchings and hurled him at McGowan, who decapitated him with his hunting-knife, spewing grisly gob-bets of alternative music everywhere.

When the dust settled, four doorsafe officers lay dead. James Alexander was writhing in a pool of blood and VK green. Grenville was duelling Armstrong with battleaxes.

Apart from that, the launch went well.



Moment of Zen

Sneaking around the Courtyard opening party seeking delicious current-affairs-flavoured canapés



Oh, James Alexander, you big drunk-en badger you. The former YUSU Prez turned prospective politician (VOTE BADGER IN '10) was spotted by MoZ operatives feeling the strain at the brand new Courtyard bar - clutching a beer, a large white wine and no less than 7 VK greens. "Are those all for you?" our brave agent asked. "Yeah, mainly," he grumbled.

Oh dear. MoZ has learned that the heroic Mr. Burton, doyenne of the campus alcohol scene, was slightly the worse for wear after celebrating his new baby's birth (thanks to Prez Scott for that disturbing metapohor). Apparently, the great man woke up "surrounded by VK-cherry-coloured sick." VK cherry is available from Courtyard bar, £2.50.



But whichever former YUSU Presidents try to claim the Courtyard bar as their own idea - and they all do - this was a triumph for Matt Burton, Rory Shanks, and the team from this and last year. It sells Absinthe. And, it does nachos and tapas. MoZ salutes you.

Overheard: During an awkward pause in Tom Scott's Presidential speech to the assembled delegates, dignitaries and YUSU royalty present at the grand opening of the new bar, former President and MoZ favourite Anne-Marie Canning was heard to lean towards her pal Joey Ellis and whisper, "should we be applauding?" It is not clear what they concluded.



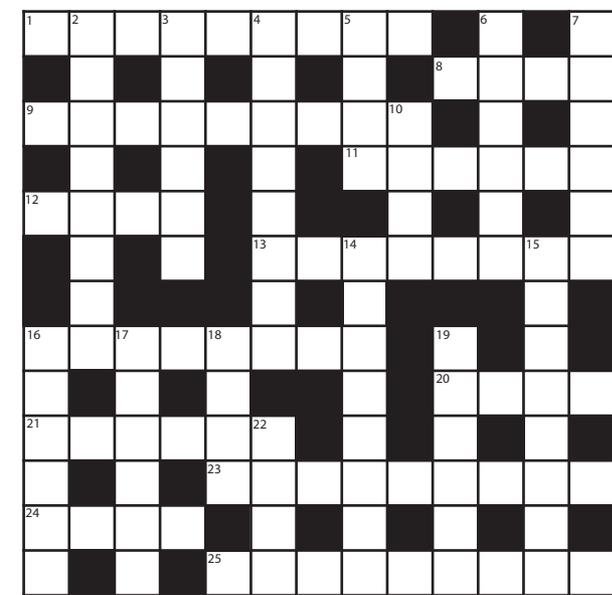
MoZ hears on the grapevine that cheery, outgoing AU President Alex Lacy is scared of facebook. "I hate it," he told our correspondent in a fictional interview. "Matt and Rory keep poking me, and inviting me to events in Selby that turn out not to exist." He really has deleted his profile, though, meaning that legally he no longer fully exists.

If you have any juicy tidbits or gossip to share, send them to:



socs12@york.ac.uk

Nouse Crossword



Crossword compiled by Dexter

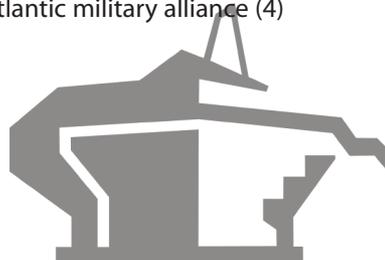
Across

- Langwith Bar (9)
- Meticulous (4)
- Ethnic _____, Yugoslavian war crimes (9)
- Eyewear brand (6)
- Midwestern US state (4)
- Member of powerful elite (8)
- Old hag (8)
- Beast (4)
- Peter Jones (example) (6)
- Indian side (4,5)

- _____ Fruits, old candy (4)
- Venereal disease (9)

Down

- Naval ship sunk at Pearl Harbour (8)
- Motive (6)
- In the form of the letter "Y" (8)
- World's biggest little city (4)
- Fisherman (6)
- Jewish immigration to Israel (6)
- Group sharing common identity (4)
- Insinuation, often sexual (8)
- Royal vehicle (8)
- Large _____ Collider (6)
- US President (6)
- Type of golf club (4)
- Film genre (6)
- Atlantic military alliance (4)



Answers available on
www.nouse.co.uk/crossword

Global Focus

1. GAZA STRIP

Hamas have announced a week-long ceasefire in order to allow the Israeli troops to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. The conflict, which has lasted for three weeks, saw Israeli troops enter Gaza in a move that Israel said was to prevent Hamas rocket fire against Israelis. The conflict, which has aroused international condemnation of Israel's actions, has so far claimed over 1000 lives. The humanitarian crisis in Gaza is serious, and the ceasefire is not expected to last.

2. KHARTOUM, SUDAN

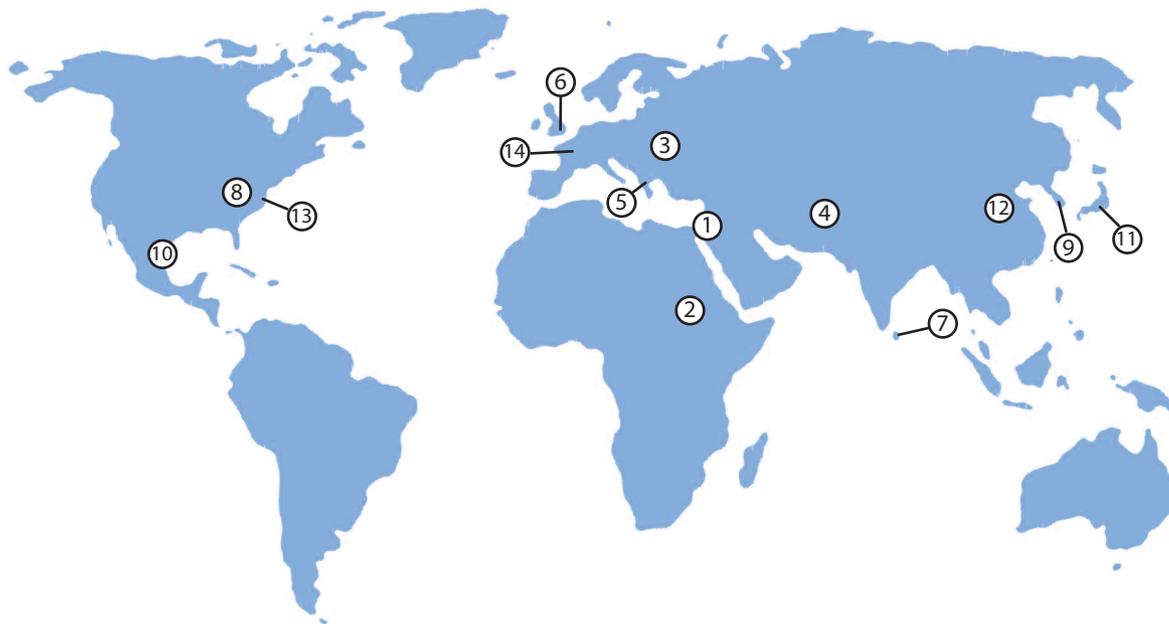
Hassan al-Turabi, an Islamist leader, has been arrested by the Sudanese government after calling for the arrest of president Omar al-Bashir for his involvement in the Darfur conflict. The incident has put pressure on the International Criminal Court to try Bashir on the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

3. KIEV, UKRAINE

Russia has resumed gas flow through the Ukraine following a contractual dispute depriving 18 European countries of energy. Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko has agreed to pay the much higher European prices demanded by the Kremlin.

4. ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

The Pakistani government has detained more than 120 people allegedly involved in the Mumbai attacks of December 2008. Interior Ministry Chief Rehman Malik said the move showed Pakistan was serious about fighting terrorism but has called for more information to prosecute the detainees.



5. ATHENS, GREECE

Unrest continues in Athens as far-left insurgents target police indiscriminately. Riots continue in response to the recent killing of Alexandros Grigoropoulos by a member of the special guard for which they blame the government and seek revenge.

6. LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

Controversial plans to build a third runway at Heathrow are to be approved. MP for Hayes and Harlington John McDonnell, which will be directly affected by the expansion, was banned from the Commons for five days for picking up the mace in protest following the announcement.

7. KILINOCHCHI, SRI LANKA

Sri Lanka's military have captured the de facto capital Kilinochchi from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in what has been described by president Mahinda Rajapaksa as "an unparalleled victory" for government forces. Kilinochchi has been a Tamil stronghold for a decade.

8. WASHINGTON DC, US

Barack Obama is inaugurated today as President of the United States, the world's most powerful office. George W. Bush officially leaves office with the lowest approval ratings of any President since Nixon. Obama suffered early setbacks over Cabinet selections,

with the Commerce Secretary elect standing down following a scandal.

9. SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

Opposition MPs physically stopped a vote on bills passed regarding an increase of freedoms and the economy. The government tried to pass the measures during their final days in office, but were met with fierce opposition. Over 1000 police were called in.

10. MEXICO CITY, MEXICO

Mexico is considering outlawing the sale of toy guns in order to try and curb child aggression. The government fears that children are more likely to become criminals if they have access to plastic guns at

an early age. Mexico's gun-related death toll topped 5,300 last year.

11. TOKYO, JAPAN

Two rival yakuza gangs are preparing to fight for control of the city centre. The gangs are becoming more ruthless in the recession as they see their profits from legitimate enterprises thinning. Police say the gangs are armed with hand grenades and mines and are very dangerous.

12. BEIJING, CHINA

Authorities in China have begun a crackdown on websites containing pornographic images or references. The measure will last a month, and 277 websites were closed within the first 11 days. The crackdown comes in the year when China overtakes the US in internet users to become the world leader. 19 websites including Google have been named and criticised by the government for lack of censure.

13. NEW YORK, USA

An Airbus A320 made an emergency landing in the Hudson River following a double-engine failure after it collided with a flock of geese after take-off. All 155 passengers survived the crash; the pilot has been praised for his skill and quick-thinking.

14. PARIS, FRANCE

French Justice Minister Rachida Dati sparked controversy when she returned to work just five days after a Caesarean at the age of 43. The father of the baby girl is not known. Despite controversy, she remains popular with the French public.

-----NOUSE.CO.UK/POLITICS

Obama's alternative agenda: 'maybe we can't'



Peter Campbell
POLITICAL
ANALYSIS

TODAY'S INAUGURATION ceremony of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States sees an expected 4 million people descend on Washington D.C., with countless more watching world wide. Not one of those watching would struggle if asked to describe Obama's promise in a single word; that promise has been declared to the world and demanded all across America on November 4th: Change.

When Obama walks into the Oval Office he will be faced with an in-tray that can only be described as 'from-hell'. Domestically, his first and most important task is to recover the American economy from its current state. While his \$700bn package has passed through the passages of Congress, albeit with a certain degree of opposition, the US is not going to feel any less financially squeezed until a long way down the track, particularly in the area of mortgages.

On the foreign front, however, it seems

that things are even worse. The only possible ray of hope (the type that Obama can believe in) is that Iraq, which threatened to be a persistent thorn in the side from day one, has become a chapter that is now drawing to its conclusions. In its place is the mess in the Middle East, and the promise of bringing about a lasting peace settlement looks even less likely than ever.

If that wasn't enough, he will bear the weight of having to mirror the unequivocal success of the Iraq surge with a similar Afghan one, as the US prepares to send 30,000 reinforcements into a war that they must win, regardless or not of whether they actually kill Osama Bin Laden (which was revealed to be "not a necessity" at the end of last week).

The deepest barrier to change comes not, funnily enough, from the world that surrounds the White House, but from those who work within it. Firstly, Obama's Cabinet is far and away the clearest sign that he is willing to sideline change in order to score political points. He seems, rather unwittingly, to have adopted Gordon Brown's original idea of 'big tent' politics, or a 'government of all the talents'. The inclusion of Robert Gates, Bush's Defence Secretary, does not quite ring true



The world will look on with anticipation

with the guise of total and radical removal of policy and direction from the previous administration, something that many would assume that Obama seeks. The second is Hillary Clinton, former First-Lady turned Secretary of State. Placing her polarising personality aside, the choice to include her will mean retaining close political ties with a family who have had fingers in Washington's pies for decades.

Secondly, the change that was much promised, therefore expected, through policy

will not take such a prominent role as previously demonstrated. The policies that made headlines in America - namely healthcare reform and beginning to tackle climate change - will be moved from the in-tray quietly into the 'holding' draw, and quickly forgotten. The severity of the downturn and the need to reassure Americans about their jobs will take priority over any previously heart-felt need to save the planet for future generations. Obama's claim that he would close Guantanamo Bay, met at once with praise and an affirmation that he was more than rhetoric, has been postponed beyond his first 100 days while his team works out on which country to deposit the inmates.

Obama currently enjoys approval ratings that almost enable him to walk on water. These will not last, and may even run out as soon as his inauguration ceremony has ended and the gathering masses have departed the streets of D.C. to attend numerous balls and functions.

A man who promised so much, and who delivered his victory speech to a crowd that would make most self respecting music festivals look like sideshows, may be about to learn his first lesson of highest office - managing expectations.

YUHS protests as riots seize Greece

GEORGE LOWTHER

Peter Young
POLITICS EDITOR

FOR MANY Greek citizens, last month's shooting of 15 year-old Alexandros Grigoropoulos was the straw that broke the camel's back. A nation already troubled by a struggling economy, mass unemployment and corruption in Parliament reacted with horror to what they saw as an unprovoked and tragic loss of life.

The Athenian district of Exarchia where the shooting took place is notorious for police clashes with so called 'anarchist' groups who repeatedly show their resentment of the government through vio-

"By turning to violence protesters not only worsened the situation but overshadowed the real frustration of the majority"

lence. Such clashes, typically with young citizens on the extreme left, have left the area in a tense state where police and youth view each other with suspicion.

Rioting is all too familiar for Athenians living in this area and most of the adult population still remember the rioting associated with the shooting of Michalis Kaltezas (also 15) in 1985. In this respect the majority of peaceful Greek citizens view the current riots with a grim sense of déjà vu.

The shooting of Alexandros has raised serious doubts about the relationship



Nikos Andreadis,
President of
York
University
Hellenic
Society

between some sectors of the police and the Athenian youth due to the lack of provocation involved. The incident was not a response to violence but, according to several eyewitnesses, a response to a merely verbal dispute.

The York University Hellenic Society (YUHS) expressed disappointment with both the police force and the violent reaction of Greek citizens. Nikos Andreadis, president of YUHS, told *Nouse* that "by turning to violence protesters not only worsened

the situation but overshadowed the real frustration of the majority of Greek citizens who expressed their protest peacefully."

By launching a campus leafletting campaign at the end of last term YUHS aimed to protest both the shooting and the violence that followed in a peaceful way. Their aim was to express that violence is not the Greek way and that it is only the practice of extremists.

The society issued a petition to Greek Prime Minister

Kostas Karamanlis and the Minister for the Interior Prokopis Pavlopoulos expressing disappointment and a desire for change. Part of the statement read: "We strongly feel that such violent acts, coming from the country where democracy was born, are not only unreasonable but also relegate Greece worldwide... We promise to play a role in improving Greek society, by accepting our responsibilities as citizens, so as to never again witness similar events of cruelty in our country."

'War on terror' a mistake says Miliband

ROB MATTHEWS

Tom Hobohm
POLITICS EDITOR

FOREIGN SECRETARY David Miliband surprised political commentators last week by declaring the 'war on terror' a mistake during a speech in Mumbai.

He made the comments at the end of his trip to the state capital where he sought to ease tensions between India and neighbouring Pakistan.

He described use of the phrase 'war on terror' as a mistake, saying, "The more we lump terrorist groups together and draw the battle lines as a simple binary struggle, the more we play into the hands of those seeking to unify groups with little in common" It seems the Labour minister sees a fight against terrorism as more complex than simply a struggle against a single, united, 'terrorist' front. "It is not Al Qaeda that has made India a sub-



Foreign Secretary David Miliband MP offering insight into world affairs

stantial terrorist target practically every month for the last twelve" he argues on his personal blog.

He stated that declaring a war on 'terror' "implied a belief that the correct response to the terrorist threat was primarily a military one - to track down and kill a hardcore of extremists", a sentiment that the

Foreign Secretary doesn't agree with. Instead, he argues, the way to counter terrorism is to "by championing the rule of law, not subordinating" This attitude can be seen in his latest move supporting President Obama's intention to close Guantanamo.

Indeed, the Obama camp

won't officially talk about a 'war on terror' at all, and will probably adopt a less military-focussed rhetoric in general to show the world that America's war-mongering days are over. The British government informally dropped the use of the term in late 2006.

The timing of the speech is key. Delivering this speech so close to the end of Bush's presidency is seen by some as a move to distance Britain from the foreign policy that the administration has pursued. British officials, however, maintain that the timing of the speech was decided by the mission in Mumbai, and were not intended to politically position the UK. They did, however, concede that power changing hands in Washington had allowed the Foreign Secretary to be 'less cautious' with his language. The 'war on terror' so far has been directed by America. Only time will tell exactly what kind of war President Obama intends to fight.

Political
Edge



Lida Mirzaii

IN DEFENCE of the 'controversial' decision to broadcast the alternative Christmas speech by Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Dorothy Byrne, the head of Channel 4 News and Current Affairs commented: "As the leader of one of the most powerful states in the Middle East, President Ahmadinejad's views are enormously influential [and] we are offering our viewers an insight into an alternative world view."

What a shame then, that what was actually presented was an insipid speech lacking any form of insight into the cultural or political infrastructure of Iran and its relation with the world.

In his token grey suit, Ahmadinejad was given enough time to spout a vacuous 'spiritual' message infused with political jibes. His comment "If Christ were on Earth today, undoubtedly He would stand with the people in opposition to bullying, ill-tempered and expansionist powers," is an embarrassingly transparent

"Ahmadinejad was given enough time to spout a vacuous spiritual message infused with political jibes."

allusion to America and Israel's foreign policy, and was ironically followed by "Undoubtedly He would hoist the banner of justice and love for humanity to oppose warmongers, occupiers, terrorists and bullies the world over"

All this seems ridiculous coming from a president doing everything in his power to trample on the banner of 'justice' in his own country. Under his administration, juvenile executions have escalated, peaceful protests stifled, women's rights further reduced, and the existence of homosexuality denied. Try telling Arash and Kamir Alai, two physicians renowned for their work on AIDS who are in arbitrary detention without a charge, that their President isn't a bully. Or Zaynab Bayazidi who is serving a four year prison term for being a member of the Human Rights Organisation of Kurdistan, whether she believes the sincerity of Ahmadinejad's message.

Unfortunately for Channel 4, Ahmadinejad's speech wasn't sensational. It was a waste of time. If it had shown what Ahmadinejad really thinks, it could have been an edifying insight into the policies of an 'enormously influential' politician. But the president isn't that stupid. Ultimately, this was simply a mundane and mendacious PR stunt which did little to enlighten what Byrne termed a "critical time in international relations."

The recession will affect students

Camilla Jenkins talks to Deanna Oppenheimer, CEO of Barclays Retail Bank and 18th Most Powerful Woman in Banking, about how students can prepare for the credit crunch in 2009



Students think they are insulated from the current recession. The most obvious effects of the credit crunch, like declining house prices and rising unemployment, don't affect us, at least not yet and rock-bottom retail sales and bars and restaurants desperate for business seem positively beneficial.

Deanna Oppenheimer, CEO of Barclays Retail Bank, sees things differently. She confirms what we have managed to deny so far "students need to be aware that the current financial climate will affect them. This is completely unprecedented and world-wide," she says. "We haven't seen the bottom of this yet and 2009 is going to be a tough year."

Oppenheimer, with over 20 years experience in the banking sector, knows what she is talking about. This December, the retail sector saw the worst sales for 14 years and BBC economist David Kern expects the UK economy to shrink by 2.4% in 2009 rather than his earlier prediction of 2.2%.

But for students, with loans flowing in and zero-interest overdrafts still relatively easy to acquire, the crunch may not seem that worrying.

However, while it's tempting to justify lavish spending as a much needed and totally magnanimous cash injection into a

failing economy, Oppenheimer's advice for students is more prudent.

"You should always pay yourself first, especially when starting out. Students need to understand the importance of savings and develop good financial habits that will help them later on."

Oppenheimer's over-arching piece of advice for students is one of self-sufficiency. While this may shock a generation brought up during the peak of the welfare-state, she makes the point that, "you can't expect cheap money to be available or government support programmes when you leave university."

Indeed, for us, going into your overdraft seems like a necessary ramification of Christmas but Oppenheimer specifies that it's designed for emergencies and should be used as such. "Students have to decide how close to the financial edge of risk they are willing to go. They need to provide their own safety net."

"There has been a lot of cheap credit flying around. Some banks forgot what it meant to be a 'good bank' and lent money to people who were unlikely to be able to pay it back. At the moment, we have to alter our perception of the market," Oppenheimer predicts.

She is, however, quick to

Oppenheimer was brought in to make Barclays "lean and mean," says The Times

clarify that blame doesn't entirely lie with the banks: "Responsibility also lies with the consumer. People need to ask themselves how much risk tolerance they have. They have to ask themselves how much confidence they have in their savings, in their job, before they take on any more debt."

Oppenheimer's message, rather refreshingly, is one of preparing to ride out the storm rather than the apocalypse of the financial world.

"[Barclays] have been pretty careful so far and we've had good lending performance relative to the industry. In fact, we are actually lending more this year than we did last year, but we've implemented procedures to ensure that we're responsible about it."

While credit acquisition will suffer as a direct result of the crunch, Oppenheimer is also cautious about the future of graduate recruitment programs which are often driven by financial companies.

Soon, thousands of students clutching impressive degrees will flood the job market; Canary Wharf, once the Mecca for wannabe yuppies, will not be able to absorb them all.

While Barclays continues to offer several

graduate recruitment programs, theirs alone have been cut back by 33-50%.

Oppenheimer admits that the job market is going to be tough for graduates and that they must do their best to be

"Students have to decide how close to the financial edge of risk they are willing to go."

prepared.

"So many students come out of university with great theoretical and writing skills... I manage 35,000 people so I may have the smartest team, but if I

don't understand how to motivate and work with them, nothing will be accomplished," she says.

Furthermore, Oppenheimer continues, "I was the youngest member of a Top Managing Committee when I was 29 and the best thing I did was listen and absorb the advice of the other members. If I had gone in and said here's why I'm the smartest, it would have been a disaster. My ability to listen probably boosted my career more than anything else," she explains.

As the highest-ranking female member of Barclays, Oppenheimer clearly knows what it means to be a successful woman in what still is a fairly male-dominated field. However, she sees no reason why this should affect her, or indeed anyone.

"Banking is perfect for bright women," she continues. "It's performance based. If you want to break down stereotypes then you should start in fields where you're rewarded on performance rather than perception. When you're looking at tangible performance figures it's hard to argue that you aren't the best."

The job market we will enter will be nowhere near as welcoming as it was three years ago. On the other hand, Oppenheimer conveys an air of quiet confidence.

"Things will be difficult but consumers will re-adjust...the best students will continue to get into graduate recruitment programs and the rest will have to up their game," she says.

As students, it is hard to argue that we shouldn't be playing financially safe when everyone else has to.

Perhaps it's time. "You have so much more access and information than my generation ever had. Take what you've learned and apply it." Oppenheimer's message is one that we know we ought to have been following all along; work hard, play hard without getting into debt and you'll be fine. Easy enough then.

CURRICULUM VITAE

- Oppenheimer grew up in Idaho as the youngest of six children.
- She spent 20 years working for Washington Mutual Bank, the sixth largest banking institution in the United States.
- She oversaw acquisition integrations, sales and services and led the bank's marketing and advertising programme as President of its Retail Banking Services group.
- She joined Barclays in 2005 as the highest ranking female member of the bank and was nominated the 18th Most Powerful Woman in Banking.

Crisis in Gaza: The Debate

As the situation in Gaza continues, **George Galloway** and **Neil Lazarus**, two authorities on the Middle East, express their opinions on the origins, faults and solutions for the region's problems

ZORIAH



George Galloway



As I write the death toll in Gaza is reaching 1,000 – nearly 400 of them confirmed as children. I dread to think what the figure will be by the time you read this.

What is happening in Palestine is murder on a mass scale, perpetrated by one of the most powerful states in the world with the backing of US, Britain and its allies. I say what is happening in Palestine for a significant reason: Gaza is part of Palestine. The corporate media gives the impression that there is this strange place called Gaza, full of people called "militants", and "ruled" by Hamas.

But this is an attack on Palestine – all of Palestine and every Palestinian. And Hamas is the duly elected government of the Palestinian Authority, voted in in an election described by former US president Jimmy Carter as one of the "cleanest and fairest" he had ever witnessed. It's not only Gaza that is suffering.

There have been no rockets fired from the West Bank, but Israel has killed 25 Palestinians in recent months. The attack on Gaza has already called forth a huge feeling of solidarity in

Britain and the world. It has united Muslim and non-Muslim in huge demonstrations and other events. Now it has to become a mass movement of practical and political solidarity. That is why I wish to dwell on what must be done rather than why it is right:

Firstly, public protests are important – they keep our movement visible and, believe me, the pictures reach Palestine.

Pressure must be brought to bear on every elected representative and everyone in public life in Britain to speak out firmly for the Palestinian people and for official action against Israel, which UN officials want investigated for war crimes.

No person of conscience bought South African goods during apartheid. Today Israel, its produce and manufactures should also be shunned. The call to boycott Israel is growing, and Jewish supporters of the Palestinians are among the most vocal.

It is time to flood the people of Palestine with practical aid. I am pulling together other individuals and groups to organise a convoy from Britain to Gaza led by fire engines donated by the Fire Brigades Union. Your university, mosque, community group, trade union, church, etc. can sponsor it or provide a truck, two drivers, costs and fill it with things the people of Gaza

need.

Finally, whenever you are called upon to vote in elections in Britain, remember to ask those who want your support: "what did you do when the bombs fell on the children and women in Gaza?" The call for an aid convoy from Britain to Gaza is meeting with huge enthusiasm – Stop the War, the British Muslim Initiative and many others are coming on board.

Students and universities in Britain have a vital role to play. The University of Gaza has been destroyed. They need help from you to rebuild it. Too much talk of academic freedom is cant, particularly from supporters of Israel who want to shield it from criticism and sanctions in Britain. What academic freedom do the students of Gaza enjoy? I hope the Viva Palestina convoy and twinning campaign can provide a political focus to spur on a vast aid effort and movement of political solidarity.

In the 1930s the people across Europe, the young especially, rallied to aid the people of Republican Spain, who faced the bombing of towns and the massacres of civilians by the jackbooted General Franco. The cry then was "Aidez L'Espagne!" – the call today should be: "Viva Palestina!"

George Galloway is MP for Bethnal Green and Bow.
www.vivapalestina.org

KOTA BHARU



Neil Lazarus

lated the calm, is firing against and attacking Israeli citizens, and is investing all its resources in arming itself and gathering power.

The terrorist organizations work out of the Palestinian population centres and cynically exploit them, so the responsibility for Palestinian civilians getting hurt rests on their shoulders.

Hamas brings women and children up to the roofs of buildings housing terrorist activity in an attempt to prevent air strikes; it sends civilians to the line of fire; it works out of schools and mosques; it fires rockets out of crowded population centres; and it sends Palestinian mothers to murder Israeli children in suicide attacks.

The truce brokered by Egypt was exploited by Hamas not only to employ terror against Israel's citizens, but also to gain strength and massively arm itself with the intention of increasing their capacity for terror and expanding the range of the threat against Israeli citizens. Hamas men were being smuggled out and were being trained in Iran and Syria.

Israel does not want a humanitarian crisis, and Hamas is the cause of the suffering and distress of the population there.

Most of the countries in

the world and the United Nations have pronounced Hamas to be a terrorist organization, and they are boycotting all contact with it. Israel expects the world's nations to support Israel's war against this terror organisation and even join the campaign.

At the same time as Israel is fighting terror, the government is deliberately and openly maintaining a political process with the elected Palestinian government headed by PA President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister [Salaam] Fayad. Hamas opposes these negotiations and any settlement with Israel, and constitutes an unstable element in the region.

Israel is prepared and ready to respond harshly to any attack or provocation by any factor in the region.

This is a fight between Israel and terrorist elements acting against Israel's citizens, so there is no cause for any outside party to intervene.

We pray for peace here in Israel - and hope for a peaceful future for Israeli and Palestinian children.

Neil Lazarus is the founder and director of www.awesomeseminars.com and author of '5 Rules of Effective Israel Advocacy'



Above: Rockets fired into overcrowded Gaza sparked international condemnation
Top: Israel accused Hamas militants of sparking the conflict by shelling Israelis

Kashmir: Living in the crossfire

As Indo-Pakistani relations deteriorate, Kashmir has once more been thrust into the spotlight as the frontline between the sub-continent's two nuclear powers. **Henry James Foy** visits the region.

Surrounded by barbed wire and filled with soldiers brandishing submachine guns, Srinagar Airport, with international ambitions and dreams of becoming India's northern hub, is more Guantanamo than Gatwick.

Outside the airport's sentry towers and heavy gates, the overwhelming military presence continues. Soldiers, idly fiddling with rifles or chatting in small groups, outnumber civilians who huddle in groups by the side of the road. Shutters on shops are closed and traffic is minimal.

On a bridge leading out of the city, two Indian soldiers man a checkpoint of barbed wire and a fortified machine-gun turret. They speak Hindi, not Kashmiri, and fire questions at our driver.

"The soldiers can stop you going for no reason. They have complete power," our guide remarks, shrugging, as we are waved through after a few minutes of questioning.

As we drive through town after town – typically the only car on the road – it becomes very apparent that the Indian Army is not left over from previous wars in the region, nor are they on an extended peace-keeping mission; this is an internal occupation.

Srinagar, only 50km from the 'Line of Control', an unofficial ceasefire line created in 1971 between India and Pakistan, and only 160km away from Islamabad, lies on the front line in what has, since the terrorist attacks on Mumbai and the blame placed on the Pakistani government, shifted from diplomatic debate into a high-tension standoff.

Even in Pahalgam, a small

"[Border] force protection measures can be transformed into an offensive in the shortest possible time"

Indian Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor

town deep in the foothills of the Himalayas, the Indian army is present. An outbreak of separatism here would be tough to imagine, yet all along the one road that runs through the collection of fabric stores and small hotels small groups of armed soldiers gather.

"The soldiers are now a part of the town, of life. There is nothing for them to do. They watch, and wait. I do not know for what," a shopkeeper in Pahalgam tells me. "I think maybe they are here just to



Over 60,000 Indian troops are stationed in Kashmir

watch us, to see," he shrugs.

The military presence in Kashmir is substantial. The Indian Border Security Force totals around 180,000 troops, with over a third stationed in here alone thanks to a string of wars with Pakistan and an armed government drive to quash separatist movements.

Jammu & Kashmir is India's only Muslim-dominated state, while the Kashmiri Valley, in the North, has a Muslim population of over 97%. In the late 1980s, a struggle for religious freedom culminated in the formation of insurgency campaigns calling for Pakistani rule. India claimed these were funded by the Pakistani government, and as a result invoked policy in 1990 allowing troops to use special powers in the state.

And the situation could soon get much worse. Since the events of November, the governments of New Delhi and Islamabad have escalated tensions and put both sides of the border on high alert.

India's "endeavours for peace and restoration of friendly ties should not be construed as a weakness. India...will give a fitting reply to terrorists," said Sonia Gandhi, Indian Congress President in late December. Indian Army Chief General Deepak Kapoor told the *Times of*

India that troops in Kashmir were on high alert with full-scale "force protection measures that can be transformed into an offensive in the shortest possible time."

This month, Pakistan's Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani said that the situation on the border has "once again turned fragile," while Army Chief Parvez Kayani said his forces were "prepared to meet any eventuality. Pakistan will respond within minutes of any surgical strikes by India." Pakistan has moved an estimated 20,000 troops to the Indian border this month, and cancelled leave for all its soldiers.

Indian Air Force jets have reportedly been chased out of Pakistani airspace, while alleged Pakistani militants were

arrested in Kashmir for an attempted plot to use terrorism to disrupt the recent state elections. Other reports suggest that the Taliban have offered their assistance to the Pakistani government should any attacks on India occur.

"We are at the cusp of war," said former Pakistani ambassador Zafar Hilaly. "I really do think there is a chance. We shouldn't, by any means, rule out some kind of hostile action on the part of India," he told *The Guardian* in late December. The Foreign Ministers of both countries have declared that the four-year-long peace process in the region has broken down since November.

Recently elected Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Omar Abdullah, has stressed

that revenge for the Mumbai bombings will achieve nothing. "Pakistan is not an enemy but some forces within that country were inimical to good relations with India. It is those forces who have to be defeated and not Pakistan," he said.

Since 1947, wars between India and Pakistan have killed over 60,000 civilians, 22,000 troops and wounded countless more. With a bitter history and national pride and prestige at stake, they risk tumbling back into armed conflict.

While politicians and generals mull over plans of action and rattle cross-border sabres with stinging rhetoric, ordinary Kashmiris, straddling national and religious identity, must wait to see if they risk getting caught in the crossfire once more.

BORDER TENSIONS

February 1999

Pakistani soldiers and militants cross the Line of Control and take strategic locations within Indian territory. India mobilises 200,000 troops and attacks, beginning the Kargil War. Pakistani plans to launch a nuclear attack but are talked down by US President Bill Clinton before India drives the Pakistani forces back across the border. Over 2,000 troops are killed in 4 months of fighting; Pervez Musharraf launches his *coup d'état* after the war.

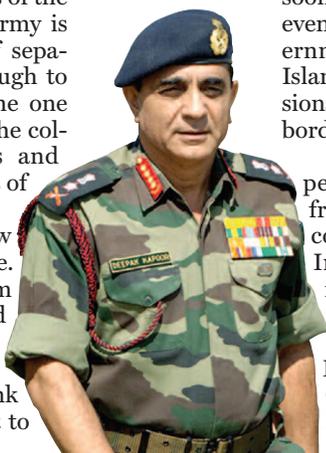
December 2001

India claims a bomb attack on its Parliament building was Pakistani-linked, and moves 500,000 troops to Line of Control. Pakistan responds with 120,000 troops.

Resulting skirmishes kill 50 civilians and 800 combatants. Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf warns India "not to expect a conventional war from Pakistan", while Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes says India could "take a bomb or two or more, but when we respond there will be no Pakistan."

December 2008

India claims a three-day terrorist siege in Mumbai was Pakistani-linked, and demands the extradition of suspected terror leaders. Pakistan refuses, and moves 20,000 troops to the border following accusations of 'war-mongering' by both sides. Army chiefs from both countries declare they are ready for armed hostilities.



Bright future for volleyballers punching above their weight in the big leagues

Leigh Clarke
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

NOT MANY OF York's sports teams have enjoyed the same amount of success in recent years as the men's volleyball team.

Following cup success and promotion into Northern Conference 1A in 2006 - the pinnacle of competitive university sport - they qualified for the national BUSA Championship playoffs in the following season, finishing eighth overall. Their former president, Ben Brown played for England under-eighteens, current player Janis Koknevics is attending the English student tryouts, and the team has continued to play at the highest level.

The women's team won't be outshone, however. Their captain Lisa Breitschuh is also heading to the tryouts, they're sitting comfortably in Northern Conference 2B and you wouldn't bet against them racking up points for York in this year's Varsity and Roses.

So where has the club's success come from? President Jon Stammers doesn't pretend to know the secret. He tells me how other universities have "better training and more funding". The 'big two' of their current league - Sheffield Hallam and Leeds Met - are well coached, well funded teams full of strong and athletic players.

"They're a joy to watch," says Stammers, on the back of playing both teams consecutively and losing each time. That said, York have managed to survive and compete with these teams in the top division

since 2006, and currently are joint third. This is a team without a professional coach and as such have only two training sessions a week.

The men's success shows that sometimes winning is not down to coaching or funding, but instead good, hardworking players and high team spirit.

Everyone I talk to at their Thursday practice talks of the enthusiasm, spirit and ambition of the club. Breitschuh tells me how the women's team is "full of lots of improving beginners" and has an "enjoyable" atmosphere. She hesitates to use the word "relaxed" - possibly because she fears presenting the team as non-competitive - but there is clearly an emphasis on camaraderie. They are able to play their volleyball in a friendly atmosphere and it has served them well in competition.

This season, the women's team's results have been mixed but they seem to be in transition, with many of the players first and second years who will stay and continue to improve.

Men's captain Jack Butcher says how his team have also suffered from inconsistency this season, with the typical sluggishness from the late York start and a high turnover of players from last year proving problematic.

Despite this he says, "we've held our own in the league and beaten the teams we should have beaten". The team's only major disappointment was their failure to qualify for the Student Cup, where they were drawn in a "tricky pool".

Last term, they were helped by Luca Accorsi, who had experi-

ence of playing semi-professional volleyball in his native Italy. He had a positive impact on the team, and many people are keen to tell me about the admired "Italian stallion". He is indicative of the cosmopolitan vibe within the club.

Coming from countries where volleyball is emphasised in school, the Europeans add immeasurable strength and experience to the team. Unfortunately, being international students means they are often only at the university for a short time - and at the end of last term, the "Italian stallion" left for home.

The club is keen to attract members of all abilities, though. Stammers tells me that the club offers sessions on a Thursday evening to those with little or no experience of competitive volleyball. These are taken by club coach and men's player Pietro Galli, and have recently seen up to 15 members attending weekly. Butcher adds that the club's growth should see a successful next few years.

Stammers has big ambitions for the club himself, with sponsorship high on the agenda to facilitate trips to international tournaments in the summer. His passion is something that is more than evident throughout the club and is refreshing to see in university level sport.

The men's team's next fixture is a tough tie away at Leeds Met on 28 January. Meanwhile, the women will play away at Northumbria in the BUCS Cup first round on the same day. Should they win, they will play in the quarter finals two weeks later.



ALEXANDRU HRISTEA

Gutsy and passionate play has preserved York's big league status

New manager Foyle aims to rebuild City

Adam Shergold
SPORTS EDITOR

MARTIN FOYLE has pledged to reconstruct York City from the foundations up, knitting together every aspect of the club behind his ambition to return as soon as possible to the Football League. In an exclusive and revealing interview with *Nouse*, the former Port Vale boss laid out his vision for the struggling Conference outfit and expressed his dismay at the wider state of football in the twenty-first century.

The first positive signs of the 'Foyle factor' emerged during the last week, with an impressive 2-1 away victory over Oxford United in the FA Trophy backed up with a convincing 3-0 league win against Lewes on Saturday. By adopting a flowing style of play which is anathema to the standard long-ball tactics of non-league football, Foyle is starting to coax the best from a squad often negative under his predecessor Colin Walker. Most

encouragingly of all, striker Richard Brodie, reeled back in from a loan spell at Barrow, has started scoring regularly, keeping the Minstermen above the relegation watermark.

Having experienced football as a player in the south, with Aldershot and Southampton, and the midlands, as Port Vale's record post-war goalscorer (he hit 107 in nine seasons), the time felt right for

a change of scenery. "I'd done the rest of the country, and it was now time to sample the northern mentality," Foyle said. "I had been keen to come to York City for over a year and so I was pleased to get the nod from the chairman."

But how to arrest the club's decline, which arguably started after their finest moment - victory over Crewe Alexandra in the division three playoff final at Wembley

COURTESY OF YCFC



Foyle believes the club needs a move away from Kit Kat Crescent

in 1993 - and culminated in ignominious relegation from the league in 2004? "The club need to move with the times and need stronger foundations," replied Foyle, alluding to a rough masterplan. "We need a new stadium, and soon. Better facilities mean we can attract a better quality of player, a new generation of supporter, new sponsorship. If we can achieve this, I predict the Football League within five years."

Clubs like York don't feel the decadent trappings of the modern game; the multi-billionaire owners and all-seater stadiums are a parallel universe but does that 'buzz' of being involved in football still exist? "As supposedly intelligent footballers, we always looked at the management and said, 'yeah, that's easy. I could do that.' It was a shock to the system, its hard work all week long." Foyle's last week said everything about the challenges facing coaches at this level; never-ending rounds of meetings with everyone from youth to reserve teams, and from the Centre of

Excellence to eternally-demanding supporters' groups.

Foyle's views on the modern game make for interesting listening: "the quality just isn't as good as back in the eighties. Back then, teams like Liverpool and Everton were top, top passing sides. Football today is drying up."

With clubs in York's position increasingly affected by economic worries, the unearthing of local talent is more critical than ever before. "The big clubs seem to collect prospective superstars at ages as young as seven or eight, before they have chance to develop. How can you tell a kid is going to make it at that age? You just can't. Its just putting unnecessary pressure on them."

So, does Foyle see himself in North Yorkshire in five years time? "I would be lying if I saw myself standing still here. You've got to have ambition, I want to do the best for myself."

>> YORK CITY vs. LEWES: Read the full match report online now at nouse.co.uk/sport



TheMixer

22 Acres of dreams... in your dreams

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON. Sport o'clock. As *The Mixer* surveys the lush green loveliness of the 22 Acres under the crisp spring sunshine, hoards of York's finest, bedecked in amber and black, prowl for BUCS points. So, where the fuck is everyone?

Now, do students at York have some unspoken fantasy for Jeff Stelling and his *Countdown* conundrums? Maybe *TM* never recognised that students assign as much importance to watching retro episodes of *Flog It!* as standard pursuits of drunken debauchery and waking up in strange beds? The point here is, why not, once in a while, crawl out of your smelly living pit and watch some sport?

Of course, every game comes with its bedraggled assortment of dutiful WAGs, housemates and random well-wishers, but where's the university spirit? Where's the interest in OUR teams? If there really is passion for sports here in



this beautiful part of the world, why not get out and support? And not just at the annual sports orgies of Roses and Varsity, when everyone suddenly pricks up their ears and becomes fervently pro-York.

TM guarantees you will be richly entertained. Some of the best sports fixtures we have ever seen have occurred in this very postal area; whether it be the rugby team

racking up a century of points against Huddersfield and still being pissed off, the college football title decider that ended 5-5, leading to frenetic fag packet mathematical calculations, or the half-time entertainment being provided by tanked-up athletes wrestling naked in the mud... Erm, that's a story for another time. So, come on, let's get behind 'em!

Flying High

Roses is coming. And it's coming in a big way for the American Football team at York. The side is set to perform in York City Knights' rugby league stadium accompanied by the full monty of US sports style entertainments. Flame-throwers and cheerleaders should make it some spectacle.

Mid-Table Safety

Taking part in the recent York Indoor Tournament, York Ultimate Frisbee team was defeated narrowly by those tasty-sounding teams Curious Bacon and Lancaster Fish. A national sports event or a Heston Blumenthal concoction, *TM* hasn't quite made up its mind.

Relegation Zone

Sheffield Hallam are in the zone this week confirming their status as academically the lesser of the city's universities. Having sent York what *TM* can only describe as a ridiculous £9.20 kit-cleaning invoice (bad enough), their AU then contrived to mis-spell its own name. "Athletic," we believe, doesn't have two 'll's.

Where'd all the fat people go?

AFTER WONDERING for some time how fat people got so fat, *TM* finally stumbled on the answer in the depths of the Sports Center. A shocking discovery reveals that the gym today is being used by people who don't really need it: thin people.

The anti-fat strike began with imposing methods of restriction for extra baggage that rivals Heathrow airport. You need to be a stick insect to make it through the turnstiles at the entrance, and the

top floor of the gym is only stairway accessible. If a fat person does make it this far they should be warned, now they have to look at themselves sweating for the next three hours in giant mirrors covering all the walls.

Like generations throughout history the weaker species are being weeded out. Who gave thin people the right to take over the gym? Surely the territory belonged to fat people first, they needed it most, didn't they? Thin people are greedier than you think; fellow students should watch out for the rise of Fatism. It may start in the gym, kiddies, but it'll end in bloodshed.



Channel 4 to rock up to BUCS

TV STARDOM beckons for the lucky competitors at the inaugural national BUCS Championships being held in Sheffield this March.

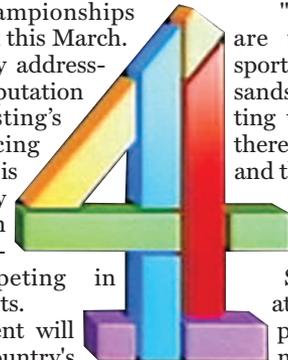
Channel 4, finally addressing a rather pitiful reputation as British broadcasting's bastion of horse-racing and late night poker, is looking to take early advantage of London 2012 fever by televising students competing in Olympic featured sports.

The four-day event will boast some of the country's fastest woman Montell Douglas,

who is currently studying at Middlesex University.

"The Championships are the highlight of the sporting calendar for thousands of students, so it's fitting that Channel 4 will be there to capture the passion and the glory of the competition," said Karen Rothery, BUCS Chief Executive.

So while York's presence at the event will be disappointingly limited with most teams having failed to qualify, at least we'll get to watch what we're missing on TV.



College Notebook: Egg Chasers

with Adam Shergold

Rugby is back. A thrilling tri-college tournament, organised despite all manner of difficulties, has heralded its first class return. *Nouse* sees what all the fuss is about...

THE RENAISSANCE of college rugby, by means of a triangular tournament involving James, Alcuin and Derwent, has proved an unexpected sporting highlight of the past term.

Competitive and exciting matches, played in the correct spirit, have been the hallmark of a competition which remains undecided, with the final clash between James and Derwent to be rescheduled during the next couple of weeks.

The challenges faced by the tournament organisers; most pressingly fiddly details of insurance, suitable venue (nearby Archbishops Holgate school answering the call), officials and beating the inevitably inclement weather of winter, would have appeared insurmountable to some. However, Paul Guest, Alex Muntus and a list of other names too numerous to mention have been undeterred in their commitment and perseverance, deserving credit for reviving a college sport often tarnished in the past.

As Muntus acknowledges, there have been teething problems: "the weather problems have been frustrating and we've delayed as long as possible to ensure everyone gets a chance to play. We can't be going round stealing university players."

Alcuin drew first blood in the opening encounter, fending off a spirited second-half comeback by a numerically depleted James side to win 13-10 in freezing conditions. A week later, further inconvenience, and intrigue, was added to the tournament by the postponement of the Derwent-James fixture, but Joe Rankin's team would not be denied, upsetting Alcuin 14-6 in the pouring rain a week before the Christmas holidays. Therefore, all three teams are still mathematically in with a chance of scooping the title, but that would maybe miss the point.

"We wanted to get college rugby established again," said Alcuin fly-half Guest. "It was all about taking the initiative and

compared to last year, it's been much better." A sentiment echoed by his James co-organiser Muntus: "our main aim was to get people talking about it again. Having said that, I would love nothing more than beating Derwent."

Such has been the success of this pilot, plans are well advanced to expand the college rugby experience. A meeting between college sports representatives this week will discuss the viability of including Halifax, Wentworth and a joint Vanbrugh/Goodricke side next time. "Over one hundred people turned up to the university rugby trials in fresher's week," added Muntus. "We want to tap into this interest, there are definitely people out there."

One secondary benefit of college rugby's return is fostering closer ties with the university sides, a miniature feeder system of sorts. "We've been concerned in the past about getting in the way of the university team," Guest added. "But they've been really supportive."



GEORGE LOWTHER

An expertly run college tournament has boosted rugby's profile

Ambitious Lacy to lobby for a Sports Department at UGM

Dan Hyde
SPORTS EDITOR

YORK SPORT PRESIDENT Alex Lacy will propose two radical motions at the up-coming UGM in an attempt to revolutionise campus sport.

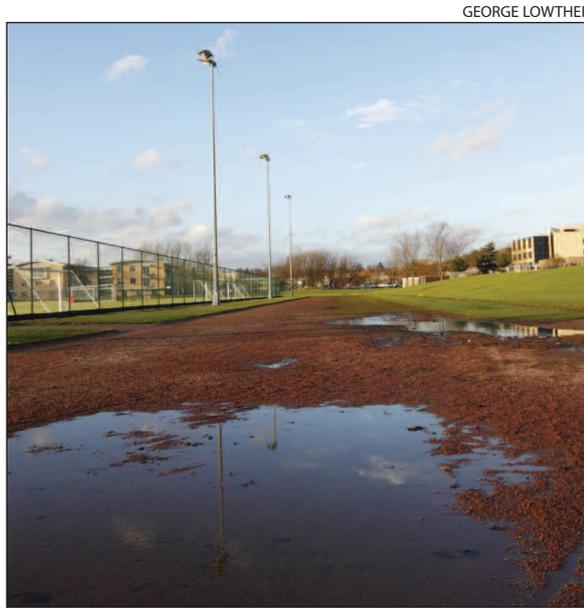
Lacy will use the meeting, scheduled for Thursday of week four, to lobby for a Sports Department at the university and to suggest a change to York's term dates that would see an earlier start each Autumn.

As *Nouse* reported last November, the potential benefit of a dedicated department for sports and the sports sciences would be to open the door to the government's HEFCE funding scheme - a move that would remove the financial constraints currently holding back sports facility development at the university.

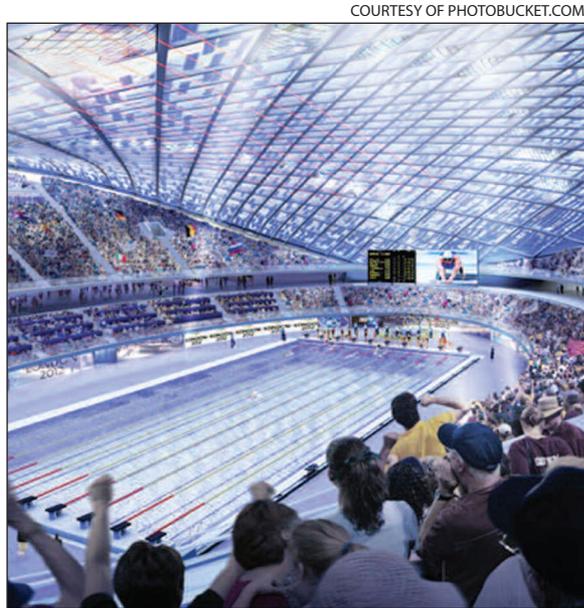
"A new department would make the world of difference to sport here," Lacy said. "HEFCE funding would mean we could really push forwards in sporting terms and fulfil the great potential we have."

Lacy also believes that the move would be welcomed universally by the student population. He said: "Quite apart from the funding issue, I think it [a sports department] is something that students in general would want at the university. Having that sort of department would create a greater diversity in the type of people we have here and that can only be a good thing."

A potential stumbling block



GEORGE LOWTHER



COURTESY OF PHOTOBUCKET.COM

York's running track (l) and Manchester's Aquatics Centre (r) show the facility gulf between the unis

for the York Sport President is the reluctance of the university management to countenance further thoughts of expansion, given the extensive Heslington East project currently monopolising both budg-

"A specialised sports department would make such a difference here and all it needs is somebody to get the ball rolling."

York Sport President
Alex Lacy

et and logistical planning.

"There is no harm in suggesting these issues, as it eases them into the management's consciousness, but it is too late for any 'new' departments on Heslington East, now," said York's Pro Vice-Chancellor, Jane Grenville.

"A new department involves a

large-scale planning and consultation operation and it takes quite a long time from thinking to planning to the realisation of those plans," she said. Grenville refused to condemn the slow progress of the current upgrade programme, but did admit that HEFCE funding would make a positive difference to sports financing.

A motion that may have more chance of immediate success is Lacy's proposal to adjust the Autumn term starting date - an issue that has hampered the pre-season preparations of York's sports teams for many years.

Grenville admitted that this year was "particularly bad" and suggested that "there have been conversations about term dates within the university management and it is certainly on the radar" but

offered no assurances of UGM success.

"We were two weeks too late this year, and it really hurts our teams," said Lacy. "It puts us way behind our competitors in terms of preparation and those two weeks would make a massive difference."

Lacy has already made tentative initial approaches to the university management over this issue and is confident of success.

Elsewhere, there are plans afoot to streamline the complex sponsorship arrangements currently operated on an individual basis by York's various sports clubs.

"We're hoping to simplify some odd funding arrangements," Lacy said on the topic. "Additionally we'll be looking at new sponsorship avenues as a further boost to club coffers."

Michael
Leahy



York Sport Treasurer

WELL IT'S 2009, and I'm sure many resolutions have been made (and broken). Exams are now out of the way, and sport at York is starting to get back into full swing.

The BUCS fixture list may not be as packed as it was last term, but Roses '09 is just around the corner, and preparation is key if we want to win the Carter-James trophy for the third consecutive year. While York Sport members have been training, playing and performing over the past term, the York Sport Committee has been working to make sport at York more accessible, more visible and more efficient.

As I'm sure you're aware if you've been reading this column, York Sport has undergone some big changes this year, to some very polar opinions. Superficially, at least, these changes seem only to deal with the branding and colours of York Sport, but important decisions need to be made regarding the financial side of sport.

Traditionally, clubs asked for money based on their projected spending for the next academic year, with their income being deducted from this to calculate how much money they'd need to balance their finances.

While fundamentally this is a sound basis for allocating funds, there are flaws - the budgeting process itself is outdated (we only stopped using paper copies in 2006!) and the budget documents themselves are not always handed down from committee to committee.

I won't bore you with all the gritty details, but we're aiming to produce a budgeting document that will act as a financial planner for the year, helping clubs become self-aware of their spending and hopefully stop any mishaps before they happen.

This way, next years' club treasurer can see what money they have to spend on equipment or coaching for the club, for example.

As well as this, a more hands-on approach to the process of budgeting will help treasurers devise better budgets, with a workshop on drawing up a budget planned, and grant allocation meetings taking place later on this year.

This is just one area of innovation from York Sport this year. Besides empowering club treasurers, we'll be supporting them in the challenge of finding sponsorship. Any profits from these changes will be ploughed back into providing match teas services, training days, entertainment on Wednesday evenings and improving health and safety provisions.

It's a lot of change to take on board, but ultimately it will make things easier for clubs to run their own finances, and keep things ticking over more smoothly from year to year. Phew!

Futsal firsts on verge of Nationals

James Grey
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

THE UNIVERSITY of York Futsal first team is close to qualifying for the BUCS Championships for the first time in the club's ten year history after two wins out of two in the initial group matches late last term. York are currently in an excellent position to be one of three teams to represent the Northern Region at the tournament held in Sheffield in March.

The second round of qualifiers are scheduled to be held on the February 8 with York needing to win two of their final four games to qualify for the national finals.

Having lost most of last year's key players to graduation over the summer, the team faced a "difficult challenge" blending a new squad together, according to Futsal Club Vice-President Ivan Lourie. "Going into the weekend of the first round of qualifying games, we had not yet played a competitive game together," he said.

With this in mind, friendly wins against both Lincoln's first and second teams the day before the heats provided a crucial warm-up.

The first qualifying match saw the new squad take on a testing Northumbria University side. York took the lead three times with Anton Murphy particularly dangerous in attack, but a lack of team experience meant sloppy goals were conceded at the other end, allowing Northumbria a foothold in the game. But York proved too strong in the second period, with their attackers punishing the opposition at nearly every opportunity to make the final score 7-4.

The story was much the same in the second game with York pitted against Sunderland. From the start it was a very tight and scrappy affair but Sunderland's players, more used to the physicality of the traditional eleven-a-side game, gave away a spattering of needless freekicks. York, though, overcame the aggressive approach and again took their chances well to win com-



JAMES GREY

Two wins from two has York's futsal team close to qualification

fortably, 7-3.

A quirk of the fixture list saw York play one game less than the other six teams, and it will be made up in four matches scheduled for February 8. York currently occupy the third qualifying spot in their group and Lourie described

potential progress in the tournament as "an incredible step for us as a club."

The finals will be televised by Channel 4 and are already attracting the scouts, with new England Futsal manager Peter Sturges confirming his attendance.

SPORT

Martin Foyle

In an exclusive interview with *Nouse*, the York City manager reveals how he plans to restore the club to former glories.
YORK CITY >> P21



York set sights on BUCS rugby title after Teesside whitewash

Andrew Brown
SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

York University 44
Teesside University 0

YORK'S RUGBY firsts started the year in the best possible way by extending their winning BUCS League sequence to four matches with a 44-0 victory over Teesside on Wednesday. Two tries apiece from Seb Weir and Ed Drewett, as well as further scores by Nick Brown, Mike Callis, Will Tate and Peter Nathan, kept the team firmly in contention for the championship title against hapless opponents.

An active York defence refused to grant their Northeast visitors a foothold in the game, and had effectively secured the three points by half-time. The greatest testament to York's miserly rearguard arrived with twenty minutes remaining, when Teesside, presented with the chance to run a penalty within the home side's twenty-two, were content merely to get on the scoreboard. Sadly, in their only opening of the game, the kicker was thwarted by the width of the upright.

The performance delighted captain Callis, who commented afterwards, "it was encouraging to see there had been no loss of fitness or unity over Christmas. We weren't disjointed at all." When pressed on whether the team had enough potential to win promotion, he said, "I see no reason why we can't win the league. It's totally realistic if we keep things together."

Combining quick hands and powerful attacking thrusts, York were convincing from the outset, scoring through Brown in the corner following neat passing from a scrum. Immediately from the restart, they piled on the pressure once more and, after a neat kick-and-chase move had fallen just short, Callis capitalised on a fumbled pass to finish in a more con-



JUSTYN HARDCASTLE

A try-scoring bonanza from York rugby firsts provided the perfect start to 2009 and leaves the team on course for the league title

ventional manner.

The only slight problem for York was their struggling conversion kicker James Mortimer who, after missing four kicks in the first half in the absence of regular fly-half Rob Grant, handed over duty to David Lowe, who fared little better, managing two out of his four kicks.

By this point outclassing Teesside both technically and phys-

ically, a third York try was just reward, as Weir touched down following a powerful scrum drive. Shortly before the interval, a fourth score, this time by Tate, stretched the advantage above twenty points.

This pattern continued immediately in the second half. York's dominance in the lineout and scrum delivered a fifth try with Drewett bursting through. Brilliant possession play involving Mortimer,

Lowe and Drewett down the right-hand side was denied by a timely tackle but, following a quick reorganisation, York worked the ball across field to score try number six.

Following Teesside's unsuccessful conversion attempt, York reasserted their supremacy with a flowing move on the break, finished by Weir and converted by Lowe. Unwilling to allow complacency to settle, the home side

rounded off the game with a well-worked try by Nathan, pushing the score to 44-0 and providing the perfect start to 2009.

"The real tests are yet to come, particularly away to Newcastle in the next week or two," added Callis.

YORK: Stone, Corp, Grant, Innes, Redshaw, Callis (c), Tate, Weir, Buggé, Mortimer, Brown, Fellgate, Lowe, Nathan, Drewett.

Latest news and views in *TheMixer*

A sideways glance into planet sport here at York. This week, where have all the spectators gone, why can't fat people use the gym and other essential sporting conundrums.

THE MIXER >> P22

Nouse.co.uk set for exciting relaunch

Our regular web coverage across the world of campus sport has never looked so good. Keep up-to-date with all that's going on and read and comment on exclusive blogs from team captains

WEB >> NOUSE.CO.UK/SPORT



Serving up a treat: Volleyball in focus

One of York's most consistently successful clubs, the volleyballers hold their own despite lacking the funding and coaching enjoyed by their rivals. *Nouse* meets them.

TEAM PROFILE >> P21

College Notebook: Egg Chasers

With all three teams still in contention entering the final match, Adam Shergold asks whether the return of college rugby has lived up to pre-tournament expectations.

COLLEGE RUGBY >> P22

