



“Let his days be few; and let another take his office.
 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow”
Barack Obama under fire - M5-8

Search for missing Chemistry student centres on River Ouse

YORK PRESS; SAM NEWSOME



Laura Connor
 DEPUTY EDITOR

THE SEARCH for missing University of York student Pierre Le Moignan has entered its third week as North Yorkshire Police admit that the investigation is focused on the River Ouse.

Police, who have stated that they are “extremely concerned for his safety”, have been forced to suspend their search of the river until water levels at the Ouse have dropped following recent flooding, and as such are yet to find a body.

Janice Bryan, Press Officer at North Yorkshire Police, disclosed: “The circumstances of his disappearance lead us to believe that he may have entered the river at some

point after 10pm on Saturday 21 November.”

Clothes and a note displaying the date and time, which are suspected to be Le Moignan’s, were found by a pedestrian on Sunday morning beside the river.

The walker who found the clothes, who wishes to remain anonymous, told *Nouse* that “everything was in its rightful place... my first initial thought was that someone had jumped into the river. The clothes were too well-organised for them not to have been left on purpose.”

Nouse understands that the minimal campus notification of his disappearance, in contrast to the ongoing search for Claudia Lawrence, is at the request of Mr Le Moignan’s family.

A police spokesman said that Mr Le Moignan’s mother and sister lived in Lampeter, Wales, and officers were keeping them updated about the search.

The walker who discovered the clothes added: “There was something about the way the items were so neatly packed that was unusual, so I went over to have a look and I found a wallet, a mobile phone, some keys and a watch piled underneath the hat. There was also a piece of paper balanced on top of the items with the date on it and a time. It was a shock...”

Bryan explained: “River searches have been carried out. However, due to the current rise in river levels, officers are monitoring the situation before any further searches can commence.”

Mr Le Moignan, who has just entered his fourth year at the University and is studying Chemistry, has been described as 5ft 4in tall with a thin build, light brown hair and wears glasses. At the time of his disappearance he is believed to have been wearing a red fleece top with a tweed hat and grey scarf and gloves. Friends have described him as a “quiet” student who “kept himself to himself”.

David Garner, University Press Officer, said: “We are extremely concerned about the well-being of Pierre Le Moignan. We would appeal to Pierre, or anyone who knows of his whereabouts, to contact North Yorkshire Police immediately.”

If anyone has any information please contact North Yorkshire Police on 0845 6060247.

Construction work on Hes East halts

WORK ON parts of the Heslington East expansion have been put on hold after UCS Civils, the company contracted to complete the work, went into administration last week. The company were contracted to complete work building car parks and roads on the new site last year. >> NEWS P3

Campus rent bands proposed

PLANS TO introduce rent bands to distinguish between different qualities of accommodation on campus have been met with outrage. Under new regulations, recently refurbished rooms will demand a higher rent in a scheme YUSU officers fear will create segregations across campus. >> NEWS P2

YRLA break-up causes confusion

STUDENTS HAVE been left in confusion following the break-down of the online letting agency YRLA. Remaining tenants have complained of a lack of information from the agency, and some are seeking legal advice concerning the validity of their contracts. >> NEWS P4

Preview: Clay Pigeon Shooting

SPORTS EDITOR Adam Shergold spends an afternoon wielding a gun and learning about a very different kind of sport with one of York Sport’s more unusual members. >> SPORT P17

York Come Dancing Photos and Analysis

>> P8



University rent-banding to create greater financial segregation between students

Victoria Lee
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

STUDENTS HAVE this week voiced outrage after YUSU revealed University plans to introduce rent-bands to distinguish between different qualities of accommodation on campus.

Many have expressed that the introduction of any form of rent-banding could lead to the separation of wealthier students from the less financially well-off.

Ben Humphrys, YUSU Welfare Officer, said the introduction of such rent-banding would create segregations similar to "New York City, but on a University basis".

Currently, all on-campus accommodation is the same price; the only distinction made is between standard and en-suite rooms, along with the number of weeks let per year.

Over the past four years, the University have invested over £5 million on improvements to accommodation.

According to Jane Grenville, Pro Vice-Chancellor, since the refurbishments a "number of rooms in the older colleges are of a lesser quality than the newly-built or recently refurbished [rooms]" meaning "those occupying standard or older en-suite rooms are [now] subsidising the occupiers of new en-suite accommodation,

which is underpriced."

On his first day at York, one first-year student from a college with a lower standard of accommodation than Derwent, commented: "The price of the accommodation is the same and yet it is not of the same standard."

Grenville has suggested that to prevent these kinds of complaints arising in the future, the University must "show the other types of room available and offer [students] some reduction on rooms based on condition/furnishing."

Official YUSU policy rejects the idea of any form of rent-banding. According to Humphrys, during negotiations with the University, YUSU has managed to change University rent-banding from "26 bands to just four".

Under the newly proposed rent bands, the cheapest rooms - all of which will be in Derwent College and Langwith College - will cost just over £80 per week.

The most expensive rooms, the majority of which will be in Alcuin and Goodricke College, will cost over £110 per week.

The University has also proposed that an accommodation and food package should be available in some colleges. However, according to Humphrys, this will only be an option in colleges which fall into the "cheapest rent band."

Although the University has maintained that the new rent-banding system will not generate more



JASON LOZIER

Derwent College would provide some of the cheapest accommodation

revenue than the current system,

Humphrys claims that because the accommodation and food package would only be available in the cheapest colleges - which would inevitably attract less financially well-off students - the University would effectively be "increasing revenue through rent on the cheapest band of property."

Sam Asfahani stated: "If the University has to increase revenue, it should be done equally. He added: "I'm pleased that we have succeeded in making the University go some way towards taking the views of students into account."

COMMENT >> Page 10

Fusion 2010 theme is announced early

Fusion has announced its theme for 2010 as 'Twisted Fairytales'. Scheduled for the 5-6 March in Week Eight of Spring Term, Fusion promises to combine the creative force of the 20 committee members with music, dance and fashion. The society's website says it is expecting a "professional spectacle" celebrating "the diverse individuals and talents of the University of York". Fashion and Style Director, Will Booth, said: "Fusion 2010 will be visually spectacular and definitely a date for the diary," Booth stressed that the main aim is to produce "a fabulous end result and raise a record amount for charity".

Student death on A64 sparks road safety talks

The death of a University of York third-year History of Art student, after a car accident on the A64 last Sunday, has reignited concern as to the road's safety.

The A64, which links York and Leeds, claims around ten to twelve lives a year and there have been campaigns for it to be made into a dual carriageway since 2005. The recent incident comes only weeks after campaigner, Mike Knaggs, released a statement saying "the A64 is completely out-of-date and until it is improved accidents will continue to happen."

There is now hope that a £500 million scheme to widen the road will be revived.

YUSU Disability Committee proposed

The creation of a YUSU Disabilities Committee was one of the motions discussed at last Thursday's UGM. If passed, the new committee's roles will be to "promote Disability campaigns" and to "represent the Disabilities movement on campus". The committee's creation should improve welfare support for disabled students. Ben Humphrys, YUSU Welfare Officer, said: "This would be a massive step for disabled people on campus. There's a lot of progress being made at University level on disability issues and having a disability committee only strengthens the student voice in this progress." Voting closes tomorrow.

Reporting by Jess Haines, Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Chris Young

Courtyard to be heavily affected by January exams

Camilla Aparc
NEWS REPORTER

THE LANGWITH JCR section of The Courtyard will not be available for food and drink consumption for over half of Week One in the Spring Term.

Due to an increase in the requirement for space to hold examinations, Langwith JCR, which adjoins The Courtyard, will be used for sitting exams in January. This means that the only bar run by YUSU may suffer some

loss of trade during the four affected days due to reduced seating space.

Langwith JCR is not formally part of The Courtyard but the University agreed that it may be used by YUSU when not needed for examinations.

In consideration of maintaining examination conditions, the University have asked the YUSU run bar to "refrain from serving there [the JCR] and to ask customers not to take their drinks and food in".

Lewis Bretts, YUSU

Democracy and Services Officer, wishes to arrange an assembly of a heated and carpeted marquee in the decked area of The Courtyard to compensate for losses in space.

Jane Grenville, Pro-Vice Chancellor, has said that she "held the interests of the students under examination to be paramount" and that they must be able to take exams in suitable surroundings.

In light of the impending situation, Bretts has stated: "I'm disappointed but not surprised; however, I'm really excited that we've found a solution, and it will ensure

that students will continue to have a great place to relax and socialise before and after their exams."

Central Hall and the Exhibition Centre will also be in use for sitting examinations. Grenville stated: "We were able to move one exam session from an evening to a morning to reduce the impact on trade but the complexities of the timetable meant that we could not make other adjustments."

Grenville said that she feels that "this is the least disruptive solution for the University community as a whole".

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While many students are preparing to return home for the holidays, some are getting ready for a Christmas on campus. Liv Evans speaks to some of those for whom Christmas is in Yorkshire.

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Financially suspect Heslington East contractors go into administration

SAM NEWSOME

Hannah Ellis-Petersen
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

WORK ON PARTS of the University Heslington East expansion were put on hold last week after the contractors, UCS Civils Ltd, went into administration.

A Nouse investigation has uncovered that UCS were awarded the £2.4 million contract at the end of last year despite serious questions regarding the financial failings of its parent company, the Rand Group.

The contract ensured the building of a new roundabout, a car park and internal roads. The first phase of this construction was initially due for completion early next year.

UCS collapsed when the parent company, the Rand Group, was forced into administration after struggling with financial difficulties for the past year.

A University spokesperson said they were "considering options" for how to complete this part of the project.

He continued: "Work on the Dean's Acre link road will be extended. We are in the process of securing another contractor who will be on site in the new year with the aim of completing the work as soon as possible."

Questions have been raised about the University's decision to hire UCS for such a major part of the expansion project. UCS were contracted at the end of last year just after Linpave Construction,

another part of the Rand Group, had also gone into administration. 2008 was the first year that UCS reported a profit since it was taken over in 2003, and the Rand Group has made no profits at all over the last five years.

Work on this part of the project has completely halted. All builders hired by UCS were sent home over a week ago. One of the builders working on the site, who preferred to remain anonymous, stated that if the building of the new roads and roundabout is put on hold it will "definitely impact the whole Heslington East expansion."

He added: "I don't know exactly what happened with that construction company but it doesn't send out the best message about the management of the project."

John Meacock, the Heslington East Project Director, stated: "We advertised the roads construction package for Heslington East in accordance with the European procurement rules. UCS submitted their proposal and were selected based upon a number of assessment criteria that included commercial evaluation and technical ability."

"The contract that we entered into with UCS provides sufficient safeguards to ensure that the work should be able to be completed without any additional cost to the University. We can confirm that the corporate information provided by UCS confirms that UCS were



UCS Civils Ltd were employed by the University despite questions being raised about the company's financial stability

profitable in the recent past."

In addition to stopping construction of the new roads, the collapse of UCS also means the temporary traffic lights on Hull Road will be in use longer than planned.

The traffic lights have been causing long queues and gridlock in and around the University, which has angered both students and locals.

A local resident has stated: "This project was supposed to be beneficial to

our area but all it seems to be doing is causing annoyance."

"I don't know exactly what happened... but it doesn't send out the best message about the management of the project."

Builder working at the Heslington East site

Jonathan Wells, Chief Executive of UCS, said: "This

is a very sad day for all of us. Everyone in the business has fought valiantly for many months in the face of the most damaging recession any of us can remember."

Ian Green and Stuart Maddison, of Pricewaterhouse Coopers were appointed as joint receivers two days after the company's bank accounts were frozen. It is estimated that over 200 jobs will be lost as a result.

This is the first major disruption to the Heslington

East expansion project since it began over two years ago.

Over 600 students are residents at the campus, which is the new site of Goodricke College.

The University has come under criticism for the ongoing construction work, which has not been completed in time for the influx of new students this year.

The University invested £500 million on the campus extension.

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COMMENT >> Page 9

Racial Equality Officers "must be black"

Sam Lawson
NEWS EDITOR

YUSU HAS COME under fire after failing to address the ambiguous self-definition of racial background requirements for Racial Equality Officers, outlined in their constitution.

The YUSU constitution states: "Candidates for Racial Equality Officer must be black by the National Union of Students definition."

Under National Union of Students (NUS) guidelines, 'black' is an all-encompassing definition, that includes African, Caribbean, Asian and Middle Eastern students.

Many students at the University of York have claimed to be outraged at YUSU's decision to use the obscure NUS definition,

feeling that it detracts from their own identity. One black student, who wishes to remain anonymous, said: "I feel that this definition detracts from my identity. I get that the NUS has its definition but why does York have to have the same one?"

A first-year student from another ethnic minority origin who, under the YUSU and NUS definition, is classed as 'black', said: "I don't like that I am being put under 'black'; I'm not black."

Questions have been raised as to why, despite a myriad of complaints, YUSU have failed to change the definition.

YUSU's general feeling is that of difficulty in finding a widely accepted alternative term for the required racial background of a Racial Equality Officer. The term, also used by the University of Cambridge, is one that they feel is

particularly difficult to resolve and the current definition is the best option that they know of. YUSU admitted that the term has caused them problems in the past

When confronted about the issue, Jason Rose, YUSU Campaign's Officer, claimed that although YUSU had approached the matter in the past, to create a new definition would mean the huge effort of having to "constitutionalise what an ethnic minority is".



national union of students

The use of the word 'black' to describe students from non-black backgrounds has often been seen as insensitive.

However, YUSU has argued that there is no perfect description for such a wide range of different, non-Caucasian groups.

Rose continued to say that the general consensus towards the effort involved in creating a new definition was: "Bollocks to it".

Ben Humphrys, YUSU Welfare Officer, said: "The central

problem with constitutionally defining who fits under the remit of the racial equality officers is that there is no common wording for this which doesn't have substantial difficulties."

Abrafi Kusi and Deniz Ekren, YUSU Racial Equalities Officers, said: "We appreciate that there may be some ambiguity and this wording is being actively reviewed. We welcome any alternative suggestions."

The question of changing the definition has been raised before, both at York and other universities, some of which have proceeded to change the definition in their own constitution.

'BME' (Black and Minority Ethnic) has often been used as an alternative term by other universities such as Oxford and UCL. However, the use of this wording has also prompted serious debates.

York students caught up in bitter

JUSTYN HARDCASTLE

Charlotte Hogarth-Jones
EDITOR

UNIVERSITY OF YORK students have been thrown into confusion following the breakdown of the on-campus letting agency Yorkshire Residential Letting Agents (YRLA).

Whilst their website states that the partnership was officially dissolved in October 2009, a bitter legal battle amongst the directors and ex-staff has led to rumours circulating the University.

Student Services have also been heavily criticised, with a source telling *Nouse* that “they don’t know their elbow from their a*se hole”, and another saying that they “often give students misleading advice”.

Students have complained of a severe lack of information from the agency, with many YRLA tenants now questioning the validity of their contracts and are currently-seeking legal advice.

YRLA originally comprised of five partners: Robert MacMahon, his wife Elizabeth MacMahon, Adam Bennett, his wife Victoria Dibb-Bennett and Ali Erzov.

However, personal disputes amongst the directors have since caused the partnership to break down. It is also understood that the vast majority of YRLA staff left during the split.

The agency, which was last year ranked along with Sinclair and IG Property in the top three student accommodation agencies in York, has now been split down into two.

Robert MacMahon and his wife now run Access Properties York from the original YRLA office in Market Square on campus, where they have ten months remaining on the lease.

Adam Bennett and his wife have since relocated to an office in Gillygate, where they run Adam Bennett Properties. Their website, www.adambennett.co.uk, still states that they hold an office “located near the shops on the University of York Campus” and sources reporting to *Nouse* suggest that they are soon to set up above Costcutters, in direct competition with Robert MacMahon.

Ali Erzov is believed to be working with the Bennetts, although he was unavailable to comment at the time this article went to print.

YRLA tenants were first alerted to friction within the management when the website www.yrla.co.uk was seized by Bennett, who owns the domain name.

The original site was replaced with a statement, saying “notice is given that the partnership between Robert MacMahon, Elizabeth MacMahon, Adam Dennis Bennett, Victoria Ruth Elsie Dibb-Bennett and Ali Ersoz trading as ‘Yorkshire Residential Letting Agents’ and/or ‘YRLA’ principally from the premises at Unit 5, Market Square, Vanbrugh Way, Heslington, York, YO10 5NH determined/dissolved on 14 October 2009.”

Lists of properties were also replaced with a link to Bennett’s new site, www.adambennett.co.uk, and his contact information.

MacMahon then retaliated through the site www.yrla.com, by posting a similar message, contact details for the staff of A.P.York, and a link to his site www.apyork.com.

An email was later sent by MacMahon to all YRLA tenants, stating: “You may have been contacted by Adam Bennett and I am writing to confirm that he and his wife have resigned as partners.”

He continued to say that “the business will continue with the two

remaining partners, my wife and myself” and that “as far as you are concerned, it is business as normal.”

Whilst the message said nothing to reassure students about the status of their contracts, it stated: “Adam has control of our website and has turned it off”, and that they were “sad and disappointed with [his] actions.”

One of the rumours emerging from the split is that the change of YRLA to A.P. York has invalidated the tenants’ current contracts.

A source talking to *Nouse* stated that “students should have been notified who they should pay rent to” and that “they haven’t been served with a section 47 change of name or address so they don’t have to pay rent.”

MacMahon, however, disagrees. He said: “The tenancy agreement is with the landlord not the agent so it isn’t affected... students will be contacted if any alternative payment arrangements apply.” He added: “To any student acting on that advice – don’t try to be clever, pay your rent.”

Whilst the legal status of YRLA tenancy agreements are still under investigation, YUSU Welfare Officer Ben Humphrys advises that “current student contracts should not be directly affected by the changes, but if any student is worried then they can drop into the Advice and Support Centre in James College and we’ll go over any problems.”

Speaking on the split, MacMahon stated: “Some parties are being quite aggressive and are running agendas you do not want to get into.”

Bennett also spoke to *Nouse*, commenting that YRLA “wasn’t run like a partnership, it was more like a dictatorship” and described MacMahon’s style as being of full of “smoke and mirrors”.

Meanwhile, a legal battle



The old YRLA office in Market Square, now Access Properties York



Adam and Victoria Dib-Bennett's letting agents in Gillygate are waiting to recommence trading

YRLA BREAK DOWN

1. YRLA formed with five original partners: Robert MacMahon, Elizabeth MacMahon, Adam Bennett, Victoria Dibb-Bennett and Ali Erzov
2. Personal disputes cause Adam Bennett and many other staff to resign from YRLA
3. Bennett takes control of the www.yrla.co.uk domain name
4. MacMahon sends an email to YRLA tenants officially informing them of the split
5. Bennett relocates to offices in town
6. MacMahon continues to work from the old YRLA offices on campus, in market square, although he changes the name to Access Properties York

rivalry between ex-YRLA partners

SAM NEWSOME

between the two directors continues, with a source suggesting that there is disagreement over the amount that one will pay for the other's share in the partnership.

Whilst both MacMahon and Bennett have argued that their respective agencies will now take third place in York's top three student letting companies, what is certain is that the landlord's that previously rented through YRLA will now have to choose which of the two to do business with, or alternatively decide to let through a completely different agency.

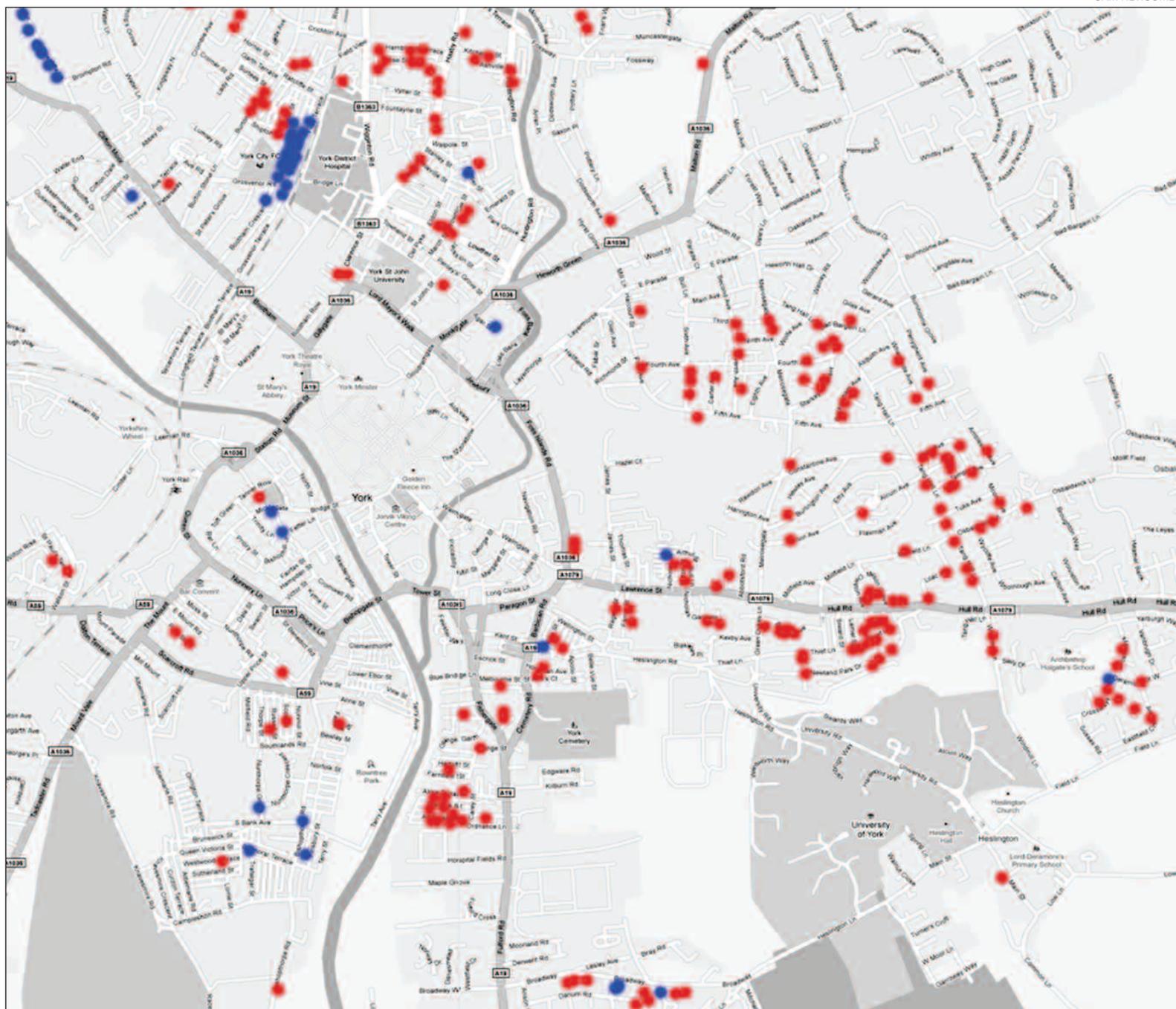
Through a *Nouse* investigation, it has been estimated that MacMahon currently controls 200 properties and Bennett controls 38.

However, a source suggested that MacMahon may well have "properties on his website which landlords have not yet agreed to let through him", and Bennett said that he is aiming for "quality not quantity", stating that he wants "the best landlords with the best houses in the best streets, nothing more."

It is also rumoured that Bennett may have "more properties in a separate agency which he is planning to merge" with Adam Bennett Properties.

During the course of this investigation, both Bennett and MacMahon were also accused of "scaremongering", with freshers being heavily pressured into signing contracts for houses as early as November, despite houses being readily available later in the year.

Humphrys agreed, speaking of "the importance of not searching for accommodation until February, when [YUSU will] be providing you with all the inside information you need to make a good choice from the surplus of accommodation in York."



Red dots indicate student properties in York on Robert MacMahon's website; blue dots indicate all of the properties on Alan Bennett's website

LEADER >> Page 9



Student welfare needs to come before petty bickering

Laura Connor
DEPUTY EDITOR

Moving out of campus accommodation involves much more than a change of location. Living without parental guidance beyond the cosy student milieu of campus life is scary: it is one of the first real experiences students will encounter within the big bad world of bills and domestic chores.

And it comes as a shock. Most second-year students will never have had to incorporate the mundane logistics of running a household with the pressures of an undergraduate degree and a social life.

We don't expect the University and its campus letting agencies to jump forth and offer us an avuncular hand to gently lead us through such times; but student letting

agencies have a responsibility to ensure that student welfare is paramount. Students have become too much of an easy target in the manipulative fiscal game which the housing sector freely embroils itself in.

Bitter disputes within what was the notorious letting agent YRLA are not only petty and unprofessional, but completely irresponsible. The five partners' cattiness has amplified what should have been a personal situation into an unnecessary worry for students.

MacMahon has completely overlooked the necessity to reassure students about the status of his company's housing contracts, and instead focused on how "sad" and "disappointed" they were by Bennett's actions. Since when did

individual disagreements amongst professionals become more important than the needs and expectations of hundreds of naive and clueless students?

"Students have become too much of an easy target in the manipulative fiscal game which the housing sector freely embroils itself in"

MacMahon's response to questions over the legality of his actions exemplify his utter insensitivity even further.

By suggesting that students

may "try to be clever" and evade paying rent when he has made the chronic error of failing to misinform students about who they should be paying rent to, demonstrates his inability to sympathise and work with the student population he is intending to serve.

After *Nouse* unrevealed reports last year about the failure of Sinclair properties to effectively serve its student customers, it seems that now is a prime time for the University to sit up and take full note of student welfare.

We don't expect superb luxury and surrogate mummies and daddies to lead us through the process; but surely we deserve a decent quality of life and some genuine, impartial advice from letting agencies not so caught up in their own

internal affairs and financially advantageous schemes?

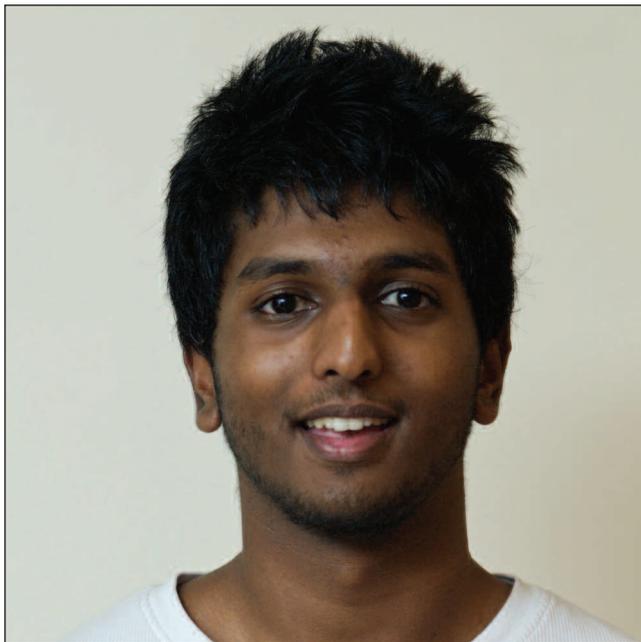
Or a University which ensures that independent agents don't "scaremonger" their students into unfair and unsure financial situations?

The respective 200 and 38 properties owned by MacMahon and Bennett apparently aim for "quality over quantity", but YRLA's reputation does nothing to make us trust in their integrity as landlords. 200 properties within the traditional student housing alcove of York certainly doesn't signal quality over quantity to me.

Student letting agencies and the University alike need to put student priorities into perspective: enough of this childish infighting; more decent housing.

First JCRC Chairs revealed

JASON LOZIER



The successful few: Holly Burton, Tahir Shetty and Conor Wilcock have been announced as the JCRC Chairs 2010 for Derwent, Vanburgh and Langwith respectively

Harriet Ellis-Petersen
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

THE FIRST RESULTS for the JCRC elections 2009 have been announced.

The result for the new Chair of Derwent was announced on Friday night, with the uncontested candidate Holly Burton officially taking up the position. With previous experience as RAG representative for the college, and having helped organise events such as Big D, she hopes to establish a more approachable JCRC. Other issues on her agenda include continuing the fight to prevent the closure of Derwent Bar, as well doing more to enhance college events such as 'Slag and Drag' and 'Rave D'.

The Vanburgh Chair, which was announced on Saturday, was more hotly contested, with four candidates running for the position. Tahir Shetty was declared the winner, with his policies of greater college integration, better funding

and organisation of college sport proving most popular. His election has caused some controversy as he has no previous experience on the JCRC, though one Vanburgh student said "he seemed like the most openly committed to being Chair" and his Presidency of Politics society demonstrates some experience of leadership.

The final college Chair to be announced last week was that of Langwith, with 2009 Bar Representative Conor Wilcock winning the position. Though he ran unopposed, he was still proved a popular choice, particularly in his aim to "fight for the provision of an adequate and awesome social space for Langwith on Hes. East".

Wilcock also intends to make improvements to, and "extensively promote", the Langwith Lounge, notable for its alcohol-free status, now that he's been elected.

In the Langwith JCRC elections, Jason Rose, David Clarke, Rosie Emery and Damien Storey, who were running collectively for

Entertainment Representatives, were 'R.O.N-ned'. This is a relatively rare occurrence in which more people voted to re-open nominations (RON), than for the candidates themselves. A by-election for the position will take place on the third week of next term.

The results of the Goodricke JCRC Chair election will not be announced until Thursday. It is the most contentious of all the college JCRC Chair elections, with four candidates running for the position.

Alex Chadwick has placed particular emphasis on representing student views on the JCRC and improving transport links with Hes West so that students are able to attend social events and lectures with ease, something that he says will lead to Goodricke having a better "connection with the main campus".

Danny Munroe is the only first-year running for the position, his main campaign focus being on improving welfare within the col-

lege, something that he argues his qualifications in counselling make him experienced in dealing with.

In contrast, Tim Ellis, last year's college bar rep, said that as Chair he would introduce a college mascot, George the Goodricke Lion, who would "represent us at events, on main campus and events and make sure the rest of York knows Goodricke is the place to be."

The final and only female candidate is Sophie Walker, who also held the position of bar rep last year. Her election promises include the creation of a summer event for Goodricke and ensuring that "strong links with the main campus are maintained to keep the JCRC from fragmenting".

The Halifax JCRC Chair elections are to be fought between Lydia Blundell and Chris Edwards. Blundell was Common Room Officer last year and one of her top policies is to create more working space around Halifax due to its distance from the library.

Edwards, on the other hand, has focused his campaign more on extending Costcutter opening hours. He stated that: "Although I lack experience, my love and passion for Halifax is ever present."

Though the election results for Alcuin and James have not yet been announced, the positions are running uncontested.

Ollie Todd, the candidate for Alcuin Chair, has previous experience as an ordinary officer on the JCRC last year and was a key figure in the 'Save B Henrys Campaign'. His plans for the future, should he become the new Chair, includes getting all Alcuin students involved with online opinion polls and run weekly meetings where students can voice their concerns.

Tim Green, who is running for James JCRC Chair, stated that his main aim, should he be elected, is "getting people more involved in the college. That means more people playing sport and better events that people are excited about going to".

Internationally successful Virtual Learning Environment rejected by University of York

Victoria Lee
DEPUTY NEWS EDITOR

A GOODRICKE College first-year student has created a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to rival Yorkshire VLE, which has thus far been denied by the University.

Educis VLE is currently being used by international companies such as British Airways, but has been snubbed by the University as it rivals the current Yorkshire VLE used by students. Educis founder, Freddy Elletson, has approached the University with a view to discussing ways of improving Yorkshire VLE and allowing Yorkshire and Educis to work side

by side so students can get the most out of virtual learning. However, according to Elletson the University "won't give [him] the time of day".

In his attempts to make contact with the University, Elletson has been working with Charlie Leyland, YUSU Academic Affairs Officer.

Leyland, who describes Educis as "an excellent project", is now trialing the site with this year's Course Representatives. Elletson said "Charlie thought Educis could be really useful for this year's Course Representatives... Charlie uploads all the stuff she organises onto Educis and this is then accessed by the Reps."

He continued: "Charlie



JASON LOZIER

Elletson founded the Educis VLE

thought about using Yorkshire instead, but found it too difficult." To use Yorkshire, Leyland would have needed the University tech team to help her set up, something she was able to do on Educis without help. For this reason, according to Leyland, it "made sense" to use Educis instead of Yorkshire, which seemed "too complicated". Unlike Yorkshire, Educis offers an international learning environment, which transcends individual schools or universities; this allows students worldwide to discuss lecture notes together and create learning groups.

Although Freddy does not see Educis as a competitor to Yorkshire, he describes himself as "frustrated" when lecturers who

don't use Yorkshire also refuse to use Educis. English literature lecturer, Richard Walsh, has refused to consider using Educis, describing Yorkshire as the "primary source" for students at York.

Educis was designed to be a learning environment but it is already being used for alternative purposes. The site has also caught the attention of the Sherwood Hotels chain. British Airways is currently trialing Educis for inter-departmental communications, while the Chefs and suppliers of Sherwood Hotels use the site to keep each other updated on food stocks and supplies.

Freddy has added that, "Businesses seeing of use for Educis has been very encouraging".

YUSU conflict over porters

JASON LOZIER



YUSU Officers remain undecided on the portering campaign

create progress, extreme measures are needed."

Ngwena responded that other issues also needed to be taken into consideration: "We must bear in mind [that] portering is not the only issue."

He claimed that while YUSU has been focusing all its attention on the portering campaign, other important problems have begun to fall by the wayside. Ben Humphrys, YUSU Welfare Officer, supported Ngwena, saying YUSU, "can't ignore such issues to focus exclusively on portering."

In reply to the continuing welfare issue, the University has given

YUSU a mandate to create a dossier, proving that students have been harmed as a direct result of the portering cuts.

"If we can't demonstrate this, aren't we answering our own question on whether or not to pursue this campaign? If we can't demonstrate this then we need to reconsider our position," said YUSU Democracy and Services Officer, Lewis Bretts.

A significant number of YUSU members supported a continuation of the direct action portering campaign. This led to what has been described as "vastly exaggerated claims" vocalised.

University fails to warn students about "disgusting" drain works

Jamie Day
NEWS REPORTER

THE UNIVERSITY have been criticised for the failure to inform students about the extent of work being done on the campus drainage system.

The work has resulted in a foul stench lingering around Langwith and Vanbrugh colleges.

Students received no notification that works would be taking place or of its timescale. A first-year English student stated: "I have to walk past it every day, it literally smells like a sewer. It seems odd that they haven't been able to sort it out sooner."

One of the drains located outside the The Courtyard in Langwith has been left open. Ben Barron, a first-year student, stated: "It's disgusting; we've got to live here. Nobody wants that smell where they live. It's bad enough going for a cigarette outside in the cold, but the smell makes me feel sick. It's even more frustrating that the University haven't conducted the repairs outside of term time, knowing that we are reaching the end of this term."

Campus services officially started working on the problem during Week Seven which then led to the smell being released. Repair

work then continued, which along with the odour, meant the fencing off of certain pathways. The inconvenience of the situation sparked complaints from some students.

The drains still remain open, suggesting that the smell will continue to linger for the foreseeable future. An explanation provided by the University suggests that the flooding has caused heat ventilators to dry out.

The University's Pro-Vice Chancellor for students, Jane Grenville, commented: "We didn't aim to do this work in term time, but once the smell appeared we had to investigate it."

YUSU Welfare officer, Ben Humphrys, commented on problem: "We've looked into this and are confident that the situation is being resolved quickly."

JUSTYN HARDCASTLE



Campus drains criticised

GEORGE LOWTHER

Langwith Punch banned

Zachary White
NEWS REPORTER

LANGWITH COLLEGE Provost, John Issitt, has this week banned the traditional weekly Langwith Punch event after last week's session "got completely out of hand".

Langwith Punch has been running for 26 years and is, according to Sam Asfahani, Langwith JCRC Chair, "central to the Langwith spirit".

The decision to enforce the ban was taken after two toilets had to be closed due to unacceptable levels of vomit and one student was found barely conscious, face down in his own vomit.

Issitt claims the traditional event has given him "a lot of grief over the years". He feels that it is now endangering The Courtyard's licence as well as forcing cleaning staff to perform "fundamentally unreasonable" jobs.

Issitt commented: "I cannot be seen to condone dangerous levels of drinking... I have [banned Langwith Punch] for the welfare of our community."

Although Asfahani admitted that the average consumption per person during the two hour punch session is approximately half a bottle of vodka, he still claims that "the event is misunderstood; no one is forced to drink".

He conceded that the events of the night presented a "huge welfare

issue" but also claimed that "it's never normally that bad".

Although punch is not officially run by members of the Langwith College JCRC, the majority of those involved with the weekly event are members of the JCRC. Concerns have been raised over whether JCRC members, who are supposed to be figures of responsibility, should be allowing such irresponsible drinking.

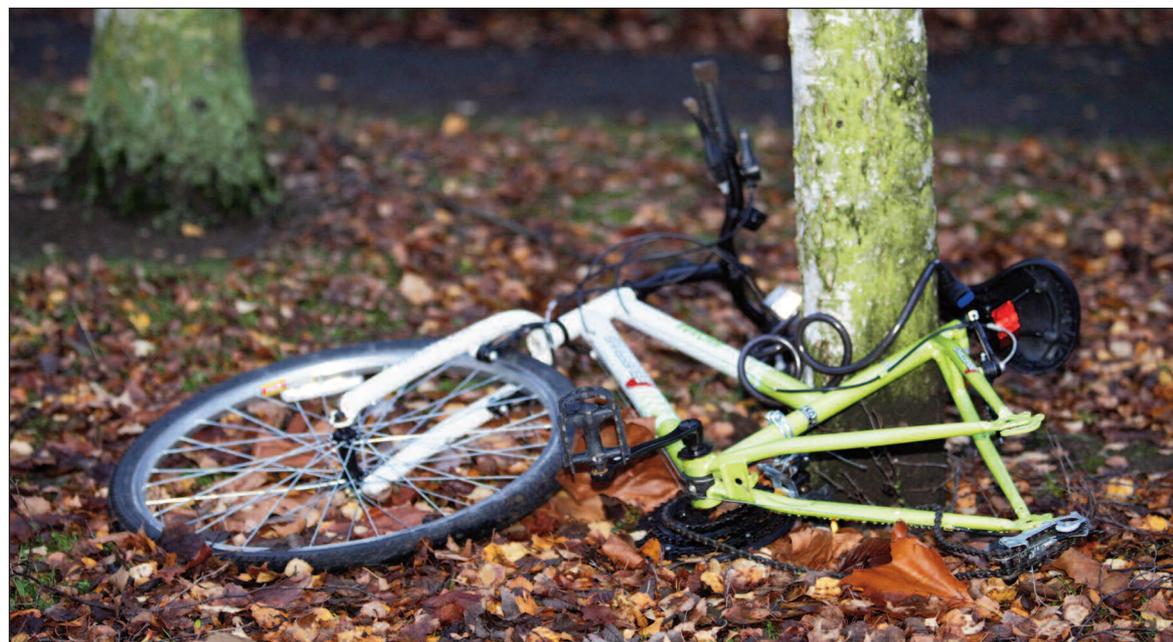
Ben Humphrys, YUSU Welfare Officer, commented: "No event should promote irresponsible drinking, and it's important that at college events JCRCs ensure no-one feels pressured into drinking too much."

Many students within Langwith view the decision as unreasonable. One student, who attended the controversial party, said: "What happens on that night is no different than what happens at any other social: people get drunk."

Asfahani says he "understands the Provost's decision" but does not "support it". He is "hopeful" that Langwith Punch will be reinstated, claiming: "There are no problems with Punch that can't be solved."

Students have voiced fears that banning the event will not prevent it happening, simply force it off campus where the University will not be able to monitor it. According to Asfahani, this could create even greater welfare issues.

COMMENT >> Page 9



Sudden spate of bike thefts on campus

Rachel Banning-Lover
NEWS REPORTER

ANOTHER FOUR bikes have been stolen on campus in the last seven days, bringing the total number of bikes that have been reported stolen to 35. Halifax College has seen more thefts than any other area on campus.

Concerns have been raised by the North Yorkshire Police about how secure students are keeping their bikes. Several measures have been taken by the North Yorkshire Police to prevent further bike

thefts.

Tom Rollinson, PCSO for the University of York and Heslington, has stated: "We are providing extra high visibility patrols on campus and have run several cycle tagging days and offer crime prevention to people who are seen to secure cycles poorly."

Rollinson advises students to use secure cycle sheds on campus and a good quality lock to prevent further bike theft.

Bikes should be secured with a D-lock and a thick cable lock that secures through a wheel and the bike frame. Students should be

aware that these are available at a discounted rate from the security office.

Bicycle tagging has so far been judged quite a success, as at least three cycles have been found using the tags fitted by the police.

York is regarded as one of the country's premier cycling cities, especially within the student community. Council figures reveal that over 1000 bikes are stolen in the city each year. In response to the figures, the crime prevention initiative, Safer York Partnership, has issued bike safety guidelines available at www.saferyork.org.uk.

York Come Dancing

Jim Bulley and Chris Young follow the highs and lows of this year's York Come Dancing as Peter Warner-Medley is declared victorious

PETER WARNER-MEDLEY and his parter Abigail Wilson were announced the winning couple of York Come Dancing on Sunday.

The charity event, organised by York Dancesport and RAG, saw eleven campus 'celebrities' pair up with a member of York Dancesport to perform one unique piece. Upon their victory Warner-Medley, YUSU LGBT Officer, and Wilson were presented with a signed copy of Craig Revel Horwood's biography each.

The pair, who came joint third in the judges vote with Lewis Bretts, YUSU Democracy and Services Officer, and partner Emily Sargeant, were victorious after audience donations were counted and added to the scores.

Bretts and Sargeant came second in the overall rankings, followed by judges' favourites Ed Lewis-Smith and Sarah Cook.

Warner-Medley and Wilson, whose Jive was greeted with a standing ovation by the audience, were tearful when accepting their award and thanked "everyone for everything".

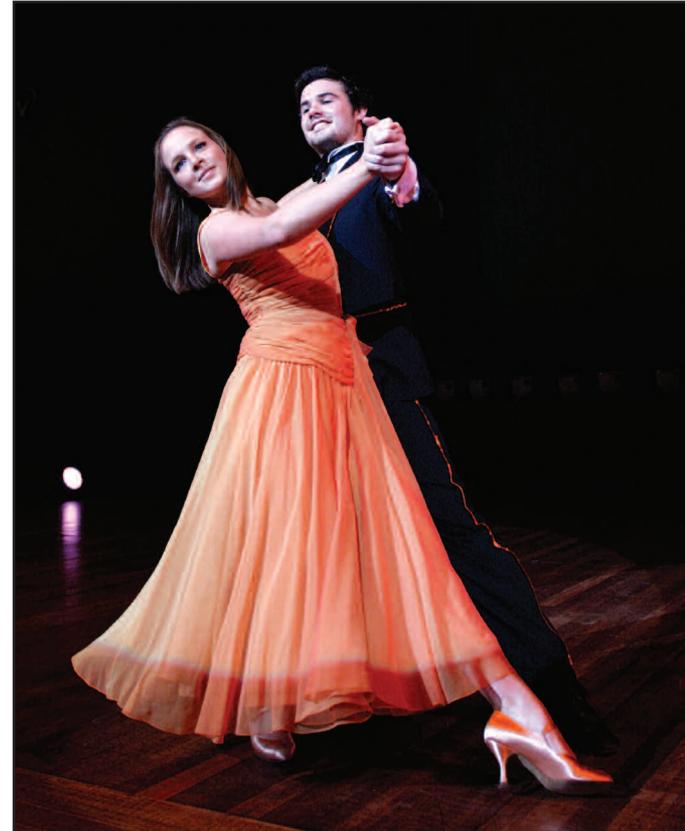
The event raised £1,298.95 for RAG from audience donations alone. Money raised from the sale of programs will also be donated.

Supporters in The Courtyard were also able to take part in the voting, with RAG assistants and the friends of contestants collecting donations throughout the University.

Internet viewers, who were able to view the competition through *Nouse's* live blog and YSTV's live stream, were also able to vote in a special 'Online Winner' category. Anna Bucks, YUM Chair, was declared victorious online.



SAM NEWSOME



SAM NEWSOME



GEORGE LOWTHER



JUSTYN HARDCASTLE

JUSTYN HARDCASTLE



Comment & Analysis

A campus culture of drinking is at serious risk of extinction

Ben Gascoyne

Comment Editor



Our current tabloid climate sensationalises and ruins events that are not without their merits

Finally, we have our own miniature Carnage to fret over. Not content with letting, first, *The Sun* (and shortly after every single other news outlet seeking some easy yellow journalism) dominate the stakes of questionable student drinking habits, the otherwise unheard of Langwith Punch is the perfect time for our University the chance to shine. “What a mess!” we’ll say. Anybody over the age of forty will label the whole thing and anyone caught with an Apple VK in their hand a disgrace. At some point, someone will surely vomit on something dramatic. Maybe that Buddha statue. Central Hall has definitely been done.

But that’d be irresponsible: while he is required to strike a somewhat diplomatic tone, Langwith Chair Sam Ashfani still makes a good point in admitting that if people really want to drink to excess, they’ll end up doing it outside of campus anyway. While there are undoubtedly welfare issues to contend with on campus, it is a relatively safe place regardless. A welfare issue on a quiet residential street is far more likely to lead to a night in the cells.

It is of course understandable that the University must protect itself. There is a careful balance that they must strike between operating a bar and operating a legal hazard. If the Langwith Punch event is indeed “threatening” the credibility of the license of The Courtyard then steps must be taken to protect itself.

As an idea, banning the event in order to protect the interests of the wider Langwith community is

questionable. As a college, it is not exactly famous in its modern incarnation for having a college spirit. If it takes an enormous college-wide social so as to keep it ticking by in some scant fashion, then perhaps the ugly side of a few drunks need be tolerated.

Criticism has even been levelled at Langwith JCRC members for being involved. YUSU Welfare Officer Ben Humphrys labelled the event as “irresponsible drinking” and pointed out the involvement of the committee members in it. These students are not paid for their JCR work and are charged with the unenviable task of keeping colleges viable at a time when many question the viability of the whole college system. It would be unreasonable for them to shove bottles in throats and demand they

drink, but situations are always far more complex than simplistic stereotypes of socials.

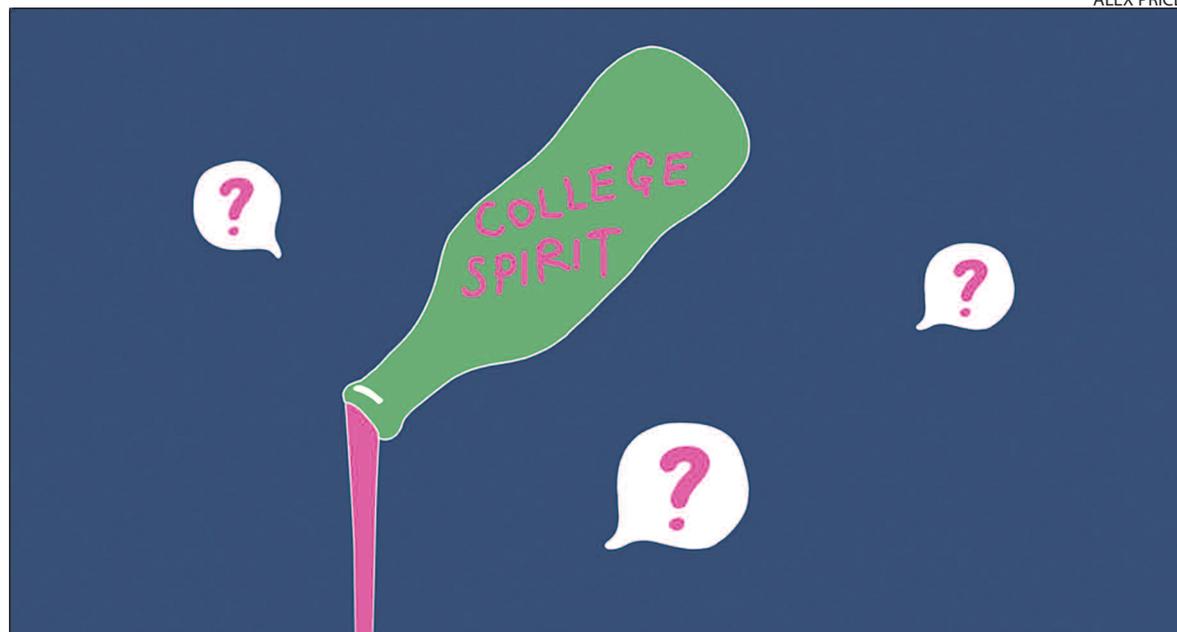
It seems unfair on the majority, that presumably do not lie face first in their own stomach contents post-punch, for the event to be banned. After managing to persist for 26 years it feels like a particular shame that an event could be cancelled. Will John Issitt, Langwith Provost, assist in replacing the event with something equally as good for promoting college unity, or has he made a snap decision in the aftermath of a bad one?

Langwith is not the only college that faces the potential of losing their traditions. Goodricke is in an entirely different location than six months ago, now more akin to a fancy Halifax than the

former site of accommodation dubbed as some of the worst on campus. While the University tried and failed to close Derwent Bar over summer, the future of an eternally hilarious campus perennial, Club D, was certainly not safe while things were more uncertain.

Unfortunately it is now far easier to stigmatise binge drinking in our current climate of sensationalism. When the tabloids found out that a student urinated on a war memorial, a reactionary public demanded those responsible for organising the event be immediately punished and we must be careful of avoiding the same fate. Langwith Punch held 26 years of tradition for the college, and the decision to kill it based on a climate of condescension for drinking is a shame.

ALEX PRICE



Hannah Brearley



University diligence is severely lacking

Whichever way you look at it, £2.4 million is a lot of money to be throwing about. It seems even more when you’re not getting the results you were paying so much for.

With all the time, money and effort being invested in the Hes East campus expansion, you’d think the University would investigate companies entrusted with contracts, particularly in the current financial climate. Instead, as contractor UCS Civils, charged with producing new roads and car parking, has gone into administration, we are left wondering if this is the case. Considering the amount of money at stake and the

inconvenience caused, the University has seriously neglected a responsibility to several thousand students and locals by failing to look into the company’s background before taking them on.

So now construction is left in a state of limbo; work has halted while the University searches for a new contractor, resulting in increased and prolonged inconvenience for everyone in the area. Temporary roadworks disliked by students and locals will remain longer than anyone hoped, and once again, Heslington East risks being more trouble than it’s worth.

Thankfully, the money has not been lost; the University wisely

protected itself in the contract with the defunct company.

Time is being wasted due to congestion and incomplete works.

“spending money without checking what you’re getting is thoughtless”

It may not be a critical issue compared with global warming, but this situation could have been

avoided by a few checks into the company’s background. Would they employ a lecturer without looking into their academic credentials or employment history? Hopefully not. Therefore, why didn’t they ask a few simple questions of UCS Civils?

Such information is not difficult to find, and sheds considerable light on the company’s financial trouble. For example, 2008 was the first year UCS Civils had made a profit since 2003, while their parent company failed in even this. If the University had known, would they still have done business with them?

The facts do not inspire con-

fidence, and perhaps would have led the University to look elsewhere. Due to poor planning, we are stuck with incomplete roads causing delays and traffic.

I’m sure that when the new roads are eventually finished they will be extremely useful. However, spending money without checking what you’re getting is thoughtless; spending money like that when the project will cause significant disruption is neglectful.

Hopefully, the University has learned a lesson in this. Perhaps the next contractor hired will be of sounder financial footing, and will gladly complete a frustratingly unfinished job.

NOUSE

Est. 1964



No room for avoidable errors

It is a universal truth that when a company are contracted that has made no profit for the past five years disaster will ensure. There is an old French expression that seems appropriate: 'Tout s'arrange, mais mal.'

Heslington East is no exception. A £500million expansion is a huge investment, may gamble, for a University not famed for its swollen coffers. This newspaper is shocked that such mandatory due diligence on a contractor was not fully executed. We must hope that this is a unique occurrence, and not the tip of the financially insecure iceberg.

Indeed, the University has assured *Nouse* that work on the roads and roundabouts on the Heslington East site will re-start in the New Year. But as the proverb suggests: 'it will all work out, but badly.' One may question what good could possibly come out of such a situation, and suggest, perhaps, gross negligence and incompetence on the part of the University.

In typical style, the University is insistent that it has made no mistakes in the employment of the Rand Group – the parent company with the disastrous profit record. John Meacock, the Heslington East Project Director, may have ticked all the boxes when creating a criteria for contractor selection: European Procedural rules followed; selection made on the basis of meeting certain assessment criteria, etcetera etcetera.

Yet he failed to address the key issue; failed to simply scratch the surface and discover an unknown that would, perhaps have saved it all working out, but badly.

The comments of a builder working on a different part of the site were far harder hitting: "I don't know exactly what happened with that construction company but it doesn't send out the best message about the management of the project." Sloppy management and coordination cost private industry millions each year. For the University to select a company so obviously clawing their way back up the business ladder, in a blatant waste of student's fees and Government money, is, frankly unnerving.

Heslington East is undoubtedly well on its way to becoming a well appreciated addition to the University, yet, once completed, rumours of incompetence will assure. The University must learn from this experience.

Letting ourselves down

At first glance, it looks like just another minor detriment to the student population of the University of York. Another letting agency has gone down the tubes. However, this one actually affects us. Many will be prey to the confusion induced by such an aggressive break up. Students will be without information on their letting arrangements, unsure of whom, what or how, exactly, they are paying.

However, there is something to be learned from such an occasion. The break up of such an integral company in the student population, surely must now make us more aware of the dangers of renting and letting. The quest for a house is a minefield. First-year students across the University will, despite pleas by YUSU not to, be looking for a house at this very moment, hoping to get 'that' perfect one with 'the' best deal. But we must be aware of companies that thrive on our naivety. Many times have freshers been lured into extortionate deals earlier on in the year despite the continuous surplus of housing in this city.

Students must take note of this and do thorough research. Without this, situations such as that of YRLA could end up putting them in trouble. Valuable cash from ever more elusive student loans could be saved by just putting in that bit more effort over a bit more time.

Student apathy is arguably at an all time high as more and more students find the effort expended for certain causes, simply not worth it. Students are becoming more economical. However, if there ever was a cause worthy of attention, this is it; we must just take our time.

York Come Donating

Last year this newspaper witnessed York Come Dancing's escapades unfold in a location far too small for the number of attendees present. This year organisers over-estimated the interest in the dancing abilities of an elite group of "campus celebrities", resulting in a half empty Central Hall. Whilst the promotion of the event was strong, this effort from York Dancesport was not reflected in their ticket sales.

Ultra-vires ruling has made it illegal to fundraise for charities other than the RAG nominees. This has had a great impact on the runnings of York Come Dancing; the primary focus of the event lay on raising cheers in correlation to the popularity of its "famous" contestants rather than specifically on the raising of funds for elected charities. The only reminder of the event's altruistic purpose was during a silent RAG slideshow, which in itself emphasised the benefits of being involved in RAG as opposed to where the money raised during the evening will actually go to. The total raised for RAG was a formidable £1,298.95, yet the profits made from ticketing sales for the event went directly to Dancesport and the running costs of York Come Dancing, barely selling enough to break even of running costs.

It is true that we generally attend events like York Come Dancing to support our favourite contestant or friend; however, creating any level of success in such occasions seems possible only when under the pretence of supporting the status of "celebrity". What should be more important is not the number of supporters any given candidate has in the crowd, but rather how generously those people intend to give.

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JCRC election campaigns are worryingly reliant on Facebook

My flatmates grew increasingly restless throughout last week, frustrated about being inundated with Facebook messages advertising Junior Common Room Committee (JCRC) election candidates. They are not without a point. Since the JCRC elections began my Facebook has been barraged with group invitations begging for support.

Sceptics may say that using Facebook is a very lazy way to campaign, despite being effective at generating support. While hustings gave students the opportunity to hear from the candidates directly before voting, the majority of my college chose not to attend. Would it be based on whichever Facebook friend happened to request their support? More importantly, would they vote at all? One candidate admitted to me that voting ultimately comes down to the amount of friends they have who are willing to vote. It raises questions as to whether election promises are truly worth making.

There is no consistent policy across colleges to cover online cam-

paing for JCRC elections. Some do not allow use of certain features, some have no restrictions at all. When the results are out for all races, and the dust has settled, perhaps the variations in turnout and competitiveness will offer some insight into the wisdom of which policy is better.

"For many of us, a Facebook invitation is the extent of our involvement in these elections"

The consensus of the enthused electorate that I know (many of whom stayed in to watch *I'm a Celebrity... Get me out of here!* during the college hustings) agrees that they will vote for anyone familiar, if they even bother to vote at all, making the whole process more of a popularity contest than an election



Liz Fletcher

Camilla Aparc

Deputy Comment Editor



New fees may make social divisions worse

The University of York could soon be turning into a real-life social melodrama based on college accommodation. The recent proposition from the University to introduce rent banding will have social consequences beyond the financial worries we currently face.

Rent banding can only suggest impressions of social class division. We're already under extremist misconceptions that the inhabitants of Alcuin are snobby rich kids who don't understand the concept of weekly budgeting and that those in Derwent walk around campus like filthy tramps because they're unable to take a shower more than once a week. And these stereotypes exist even before any financial banding.

Those in the highest band will assume the stereotype of having an aristocratic superiority complex, and presume the lower bands to be disgruntled and jealous. It may be wrong, but everyone's guilty of being judgmental at times. The University should recognise these implications as separate from their own concerns about generating more income. Students don't need to be reminded of disparity within campus accommodation – we already know. But this doesn't mean that the actual students living in various colleges are any different from each other.

If (or more likely, when) banding comes into practice, I have visions of next year's freshers from the lowest band standing on Central Hall bridge, above its blue glow, giving sorrowful renditions of 'Part of that World' à la Ariel from *The Little Mermaid*. In reality, only

when they get to know people from other colleges and avoid judgments based on living standards, will they realise that banding provides nothing more than a label.

In fairness, the concept of rent banding may be necessary in some cases. It's unreasonable to be paying the same amount for the same type of room in Langwith as in new Goodricke; where the latter would clearly be nicer. However, it's the subsequent segregation of students because of their financial means that is unfair. By using a few bands as possible, we will be able to promote equality – aren't we meant to be living in a society attempting to overcome prejudice based on financial income?

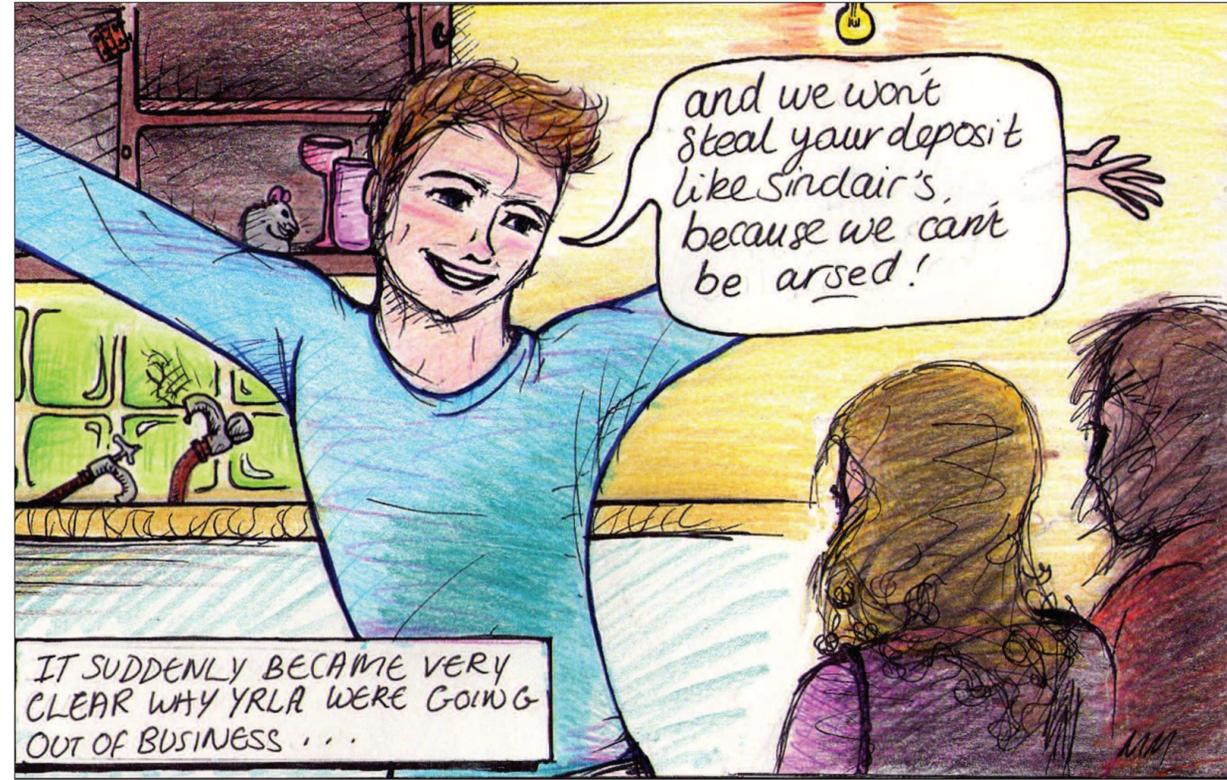
It seems that the plan to turn the lowest band into catered accommodation is somewhat flawed. For those with financial restrictions, being forced to pay for a school dinner-esque food package at nearly £5 per meal, we could budget our

food shopping better for ourselves. What's more is that accommodation which was previously the cheapest will no longer actually have that particular attraction to prospective students.

Attempting to avoid the York accommodation television melodrama seems futile. There's nothing we can do other than campaign to keep "accommodation equality". In the end, it will not be us, but the new students of next year who will be choosing their accommodation when rent banding comes into focus. For the University, proportionate charging might have an impact on its students well-being in a real additional to their finances.

There is an increase in rent every year; yet the University need not publicly create implications of inequality. Rent banding intrinsically alludes to a financial hierarchy. The University of York does not need to be turned into a Dickensian social commentary.

RHIANNON WILLIAMS



MAXINE MUTTEN

James Cousins



Gender agenda: why men deserve consideration too

While issues of women's inequality have long been rife, men are increasingly at risk of being on the end of injustices

As a male literature student you get used to being told by proponents of the feminist school of thought that you are – by the sole virtue of being in possession of a Y-chromosome and a penis – automatically and irredeemably of the devil.

One particularly ardent subscriber to this critical stream railed, rather memorably I might add, against the presence of fathers at childbirth as "a penetration – and I use the term intentionally – of the female sphere". Quite.

Nobody's denying that females, historically, have had a pretty rum deal in the equality stakes: from Aristotle's description of women as "a kind of mutilated male" a couple of thousand years ago things didn't perk up much, and I use the term intentionally, until sometime last century.

But it is the male of the species that has been looking haggard and under threat as of late. The Sunday Times examined recently the rise of stay-at-home fathers, in the context of both the recession – wiping out many traditionally male-dominated jobs – and longer-term educational trends that have seen females outpace males from GCSEs through to employment. Female undergraduates now outstrip their male counterparts by almost 50% and there is a corresponding disparity in numbers of entrants into high-paid jobs such as medicine and law.

While you could easily, and not entirely incorrectly, argue that such changes are a long-overdue swing towards economic gender equality,

the fact is that the playing field is changing fast and such rapid transformations inevitably bring with them a new set of only partially-anticipated problems. These abrupt changes are accompanied by a background trend of single-parent families, often lacking a male role model, and alarming rates of male-perpetrated crime – in 2006, 80% of crimes were committed by men.

The writer of the Sunday Times piece, in her attempt to make sense of these shifts, revisited the

"It is the male of the species that has been looking haggard and under threat as of late"

works of the influential feminist Simone de Beauvoir, venturing so far as to posit that it may now be the male who is "the second sex". And that is a radical claim indeed.

In the light of the looming obsolescence facing the hunter-gatherer you'd think that the creation of the first ever men's society in Manchester University (MENS society - Masculinity Exploring Network and Support) would be greeted with cautious nods of approval, provided that they avoid the stigma of macho Bullingdon-esque drinking clubs of yore. And in theory at least, this newly founded group does so admirably, taking a

proactive approach that aims to foster responsible masculinity and raise awareness of male issues, from testicular cancer to the high rates of male depression and suicide.

But no, the NUS women's officer Olivia Bailey has found it in herself to be suitably outraged, claiming that "discrimination against men on the basis of gender is so unusual as to be non-existent, so what exactly will a men's society do?" Clearly she hasn't been reading *The Times*. She continued in similar terms, adding, "To suggest that men need a specific space to be 'men' is ludicrous, when everywhere you turn you will find male-dominated spaces".

Such reactionary responses are unhelpful. This isn't a conspiracy to ensure the continuance of some kind of centuries-old male hegemony – the MENS society does not discriminate on the grounds of gender (almost a third of its members are women), it's just that the focus is on masculinity and what this means in contemporary society.

Surely anything that encourages an open and honest conversation about our roles and our responsibilities can only be a good thing? After all, males – especially British ones – have never been renowned for being especially emotionally forthcoming and whatever tentative steps we can take towards bettering ourselves ought to be welcomed with open arms. There's no dark secret lurking at the heart of masculinity, just a grubby, slightly dazed teenager wondering what to do next.

Maintaining perspective on privacy



Hannah Ellis-Petersen

Privacy is a pretty dubious concept at university. You just have time to accept that when sharing one shower between twelve people, you get used to finding your flatmate passed out naked on the kitchen floor, and you eventually learn to block out the questionable noises drifting through paper thin walls late at night. It's all part of the experience.

However, there are certain privacies in life in general that I like to think are a given. Our mail isn't censored and our phones aren't tapped – it's one of the advantages of living in a liberal democracy. Except perhaps not. It has recently come to light that the University in fact owns all the emails received and sent from all student university e-mail addresses. This means that we are fully accountable for everything we put into writing.

The number of people who are conducting illicit affairs or organising secret revolutions through their university e-mail is likely to be pretty limited, so it is easy to question why this lack of privacy even matters. After all, should the University wish to trawl through my 421 e-mails, all they would find is hundreds of updates from everything from cheerleading to knitting society (I may have got a little carried away at fresher's fair). But, for me at least, the issue lies in the principle of the matter.

We live in a society where we are caught on CCTV an average of 300 times a day, where our DNA is taken from us at every given opportunity and where the introduction of ID cards is imminent. It's no big brother state but it certainly doesn't promote individual freedom and privacy in any shape or form.

So why on earth does the university feel more surveillance is justified? Yes, they can go on and on about student safety and welfare, but it makes me shudder to think of all the atrocities that have been committed in the name of 'citizen protection'. While I am sure militarising the University isn't on the cards just yet, they seem to be going to unnecessary lengths to keep tabs on us. Besides, where is the fun in life without some risk?

As a student it is your role to send angry e-mails rallying against the University administration and planning to overthrow 'the man', or whoever happens to occupy the biggest office in Heslington Hall. It's a rebelliousness and a passion that should be allowed to thrive in the university environment rather than be restricted by overzealous security policies. We have our parents for that already.

Do not let this be the start of a new trend for the University. Possession of our e-mails may be one thing, but we cannot allow further intrusions into our privacy to become a simple fact of life.

Join the debate at
nouse.co.uk/comment

> Online poker **M10**
A story of internet love and loss

> Media exposed **M12-13**
MMR? HPV? Are we over-reacting?

AUTUMN WEEK NINE
Tuesday 8 December 2009

MUSE.

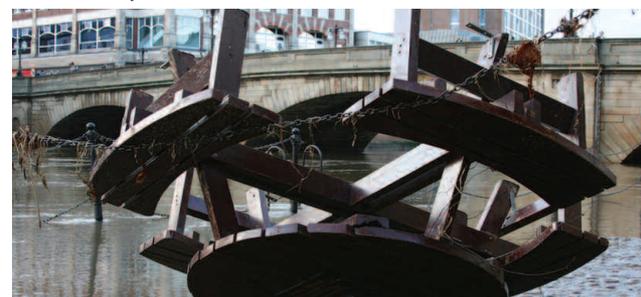


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I present to you a new **MUSE**, redesigned and re-energized. Our journey has been long, complete with battles over Page o' Fun (**M4**) and exclamations of "but we are artiiiiisstees" when asked about the more mundane aspects of running the magazine. However, the three rules given to me by my dear Editor have been followed: no disruptive fonts, no shiny paper, and no, no sudoku. Not to mention the fact that no blood was spilled and only one girl threw up. And thus, I consider our first edition a success.

Obama analysis **M5**, the impact of the recession on the creative industry **M9**, Questions about the hype surrounding the LHC, diseases and other scary things are answered **M12** and **M13**, fashion brings the latest looks for the Christmas season **M16**, Grayson Perry interview **M18**, learn about the 60s revival in London **M21**, Finally, our new pub column **M23**. Hurrah.

Henry James Foy

Consider this. Two Russians are walking down a street in Moscow. One is the father of the other's son. My question: how are they related?

Now, to give you time to think it through a little, I'll fill this paragraph with superfluous details about the crisp winter air on that particular Moscow day, and the well-cut black trenchcoats that they were both wearing.

Got the answer? Well it's rather simple really – they're married, and are the mother and father of the son. Now I'll bet the majority of you didn't even begin to contemplate that one was female. Why? Do we think of Russia as a vast expanse of snow inhabited only by blokes? Of course not. Rasputin's playboy reputation would be in tatters if we discovered he actually played with boys.

So what's my point. Well, it's that we're all a little bit chauvinistic. Even you girls that didn't spot the answer. It didn't enter your mind that women were permitted entrance to a riddle.

Now chauvinism is wrong. In fact, not even wrong, but stupid and dangerous. Especially the inherent patronism inherent in chauvinism; the condescension dressed up as "Oh darling, let me get that for you" or "Don't worry, I'll build the wardrobe, you put the kettle on."

I learnt my mistake on a night out in Leeds last week, where, soaked through with rain, we were waiting at the station for a bus that never came, when we spotted two young ladies, themselves and their suitcases drenched.

"Oh," loudly remarked one of the more inebriated of our group, "Look at those poor girls with their suitcases in the rain." His compas-

sion for these lost waifs, so loathed by ardent feminists, was a mistake.

"POOR?! You calling me f*cking poor?" the one with the most acute sense of hearing and a repulsive crop of blonde hair screams in our general direction. We recoil. Perhaps they didn't need our friendly sympathy. Perhaps, in fact, they were super-women. Perhaps I should research Leeds - obviously the domain of the Überfemsch - a little more next time.

"F*cking posh tw*ts, calling us poor." Oh, silly me. This is about income groups, not mis-placed pity, and she's united them both under the one socio-economic-slur banner. Now we're for it. "We ain't f*cking poor are we?" she asks of her partner in rain-soaked misery, whose 'I'll stab you' glare confirms that she's wholly on-board with this 'piss-off-you-wankers' enterprise.

A stranger stood near us pipes up in our defence: "No, you see, he was just saying that it's unfortunate that you have to carry around that big suitcase in the rain... you poor thing." Oh no. He used the sodding P-word again. It was all going so well until he said p...

"F*ck off! I'll f*cking kick your head in!" she screams, leering and gesturing with her lit cigarette like it's a full-blown flamethrower.

I've never had my (f*cking) head kicked in, and threats of that nature aren't frequently directed at me, but I was pretty certain that she'd do a bloody good job of it. We scuttled off to safety.

The thing is, while I'm pretty sure she's not read a lot of Simone de Beauvoir, and doesn't subscribe to Germaine Greer's podcast, the blonde-haired Myra Hindley look-alike and her medusa-esque companion on that rain-soaked night



"Patently, feminism is dead. The bidding, patronised woman is dead. Soon, all men might be dead too. Welcome to the age of the Female 2.0"

ultimately disproved exactly what my little riddle aims to state.

I not stupid enough to look down upon women. They're bloody scary. If we'd provoked a bloke, at least the female members of our company might have escaped with their limbs intact. If blondie had got her way, it would have been like Ypres on the pavement.

Patently, feminism is dead.

The bidding, patronised woman is dead. And if that night in Leeds was anything to go by, soon all men might be dead too. Welcome to the age of the Female 2.0.

And here's some more food for thought. Women's Committee – that bastion of social equality – has brought out a magazine full of 'anonymous sexual experiences'. Now unless all the authors are les-

bians, I'm sure there's a fair few men across campus nervously flicking through the pages. Let that be an awkward lesson to all you chauvinists out there: The day of the silenced woman is gone, too.

So if you didn't immediately work out that women are allowed in riddles, watch out. A Female 2.0 might find you and kick your f*cking head in.

Social pariah Charlotte Hogarth-Jones

*Outside Vanbrugh paradise – it is cold, and wet, and visibility is cruel for a sleepy, squinty, moley little creature like myself, scuttling on my way home... *

Cradling my laptop, dark chocolate Bounty in mouth, I glimpse my hip and trendy DJ chum Nik heading off into the distance... "Nik!" I call. No reply. Perhaps understandable as my call was somewhat muffled by a mouth full of semi-chewed but oh-so-tasty desiccated coconut. I swallow and brave a second holler at my homeboy. "NIK!". This time he definitely hears, swivelling round like the Hunchback of Notre Dame in a beanie. Yet, far from the welcome I was expecting, he pivots round and quickens to a trot. Reeling, I am suddenly overtaken by a Mary Whitehouse-esque desire to teach this young ruffian some manners. Never one to take a social snubbing gracefully, I throw caution (and, I might add, a good 10p worth of remaining confectionery) to the wind and spring forward with remarkable dexterity to grab the rascal by his handily placed hood. Yoinking him back with a pleasing level of violence I bring the cad directly to my eyeline. "OI! NIK! HI! IT'S ME!" I boom roughly half a millimeter from his face. That'll teach him. "I'm not Nik." "Oh." "Can you let go of my hood?"



The Guardian Student Media Awards
Time: Midnight.

Alcohol consumed: Everyone else was drunk too you know... The *Nouse* team are happily "getting their groove on" when a bright spark amongst us suggests we go and talk to Evan Davis. "Evan Daviss? Nononono I don't know him, he's not my friend" I explain to the masses in the centre of a RunDMC-style dance off. "No, he'sss he'ssss um, the guy off

Dragons Den" a more quick-witted member of the team cleverly observes and deftly shepherds the still gyrating herd towards said celeb. People begin to approach him with silly, silly ideas. I however, am different. "eehhh Hello Evan" I carefully pronounce, putting my wine down so as to long uber-professional. "I.errrr...I was wondering...what umm, what is your advice for an award winning newspaper?" In my head, I congratulate myself not only on managing

to remain upright, but also for having come up with such an astute, mature, and obviously work experience deserving question. "I miss my family" says Evan. Hmmm...

*I have just become Editor and decide to reward myself with a little present, a shiny, nifty little Blackberry. Having signed the next sixty years of my life and my internal organs away to O2, I comfort myself. This is not just a phone. This is going transform me. I am going to become suave and sophisticated, wear elegant pop socks instead of no socks, and eat Alpen and exotic berries for breakfast instead of unhealthy, joke foods like prawn crackers from left over takeaways, or Haribo Tangfastics. I upload an impressive list of contacts who I don't know and can guarantee to never call, and prepare myself for the new persona I am soon to adopt. "Hi, Charlotte, it's Mr.X here from Heslington Hall." "Ah, hello, sorry if you can't hear me perfectly, I've just got a new Blackberry you see." (I wait for the gasp of admiration) "Um yes, actually I was calling because I think you might have sent me a photograph of your foot by accident, and I wanted to let you know." Oh dear.

So-called life: Liam O'Brien

Though its significance may escape (or probably disinterest) you, you are currently staring at the pages of *New MUSE*. As I write, I am all too aware of this column's placement on M4, described in some circles – and not without due cause – as 'The Black Hole'. Deciding upon how best to avoid a battery of angry comments on this most difficult of pages is one of the duties assigned to the magazine's editor, and these are duties to which I am still unbearably attached in a deeply troubling separation anxiety that has seen my life take a woeful turn.

Spending two years in the *Nouse* office has rendered me under-equipped to deal with the quotidian activities that plausibly light our methodical and dreary existence. I have replaced talks about the features section with *Dragonball Z* and *Dog the Bounty Hunter*, and I have read (and this is especially sad) all of the extra material on the module reading list. Each day is a struggle to wrestle myself from the dark and cloudy penumbra I wake up in. A walk around campus, now not necessarily completed in the throes of impossible fatigue, is awash with a colourful melee of people, elections and event ticket-hawking that I have quickly grown to despise.

Nevertheless, one cannot spend one's life in an eternal mope, and post-*Nouse*, my social calendar has opened up in auspicious and diverse ways. Rather than terrorise the *Nouse* freshers, I prefer, at the various parties held here in York, to go around falsely informing people of just who *Poppy Babcock* is. For the record, I don't actually know, though the stir has me thoroughly amused. At dinner parties and



soirées around the town, I am completely conscious that I am suffering from an upper middle-class nightmare.

Our paper is often subject to the assumed label of 'toff', yet many of our writers insist that they are the scourges of all things elevated and Sloaney. I was state-educated in Liverpool, though this is not as proud a label as one might think. Of the two main private schools in the city, one is miles away and frankly, a waste of money, and the other is known locally as a haven for the spawn of drug dealers; should one wish for MDMA from a Year 9, ample supplies will greet you from their prestigious school gates.

The overwhelming truth is that whilst I've been at York my accent has changed into an unpleasant and suspicious hybridization of scouse and 'Southern'. Most of my friends are from wealthy, private-ed backgrounds and when I go home I am roundly accused of betraying my roots.

But what of it, readers? I am cautiously optimistic about the friendship opportunities that York, and most towns offering a university that is not an intellectual cesspit, have to offer. The food is certainly better, and the home visits are a less hazardous venture than ever before.

This conclusion has also been reached by a good friend, who comes from Dewsbury near Leeds, best known as the site of the false kidnap of Shannon Matthews. Formerly subject to the delights of visiting friends whose homes stank of cat piss, this decorous individual has welcomed the southern enclave of the University of York. As she recalled visiting a schoolmate who kept an owl (named Solo Spirit) tied up in her wardrobe and pythons robbed judiciously from the local reptile park in the bathroom, I slept more comfortably in my York bed than ever before, my hand losing grip on a biography of Robespierre.



Christmas by numbers

1st the rank of cosmetics and skin-care products on the top list of items most commonly shoplifted in 2007. Merry Christmas, Mummy!

4th where Father Christmas comes in the world ranking of famous people recognised by primary school children. Jesus comes sixth. The Queen is first, but she's real.

2nd of November is when parents start noticing their children behaving better to impress Santa. Hopefully, they'll never discover what the cheque stub to York Police station for £150 in your cheque book is for.

3⁰ is the number that the name Holly came in the UK's favourites list last year, down from 16th in 2003. My middle name is Holly. I'm trying not to be offended.

£50 is the average value of children's stockings compared to £18 for our parents generation. I no longer get stockings. Spoilt brats.

7^{0%} of dogs get some sort of Christmas present from their owners. You can dress them up all you like; they're not replacing your family this Christmas.

9^{2nd} is where the name Gabriel comes in this year's most popular boy's names. This is sensible; at least this way, you won't need to buy another fairy to put on top of the tree.

1,663 numbers of years Father Christmas has been dead. According to Wikipedia. Sorry kids.

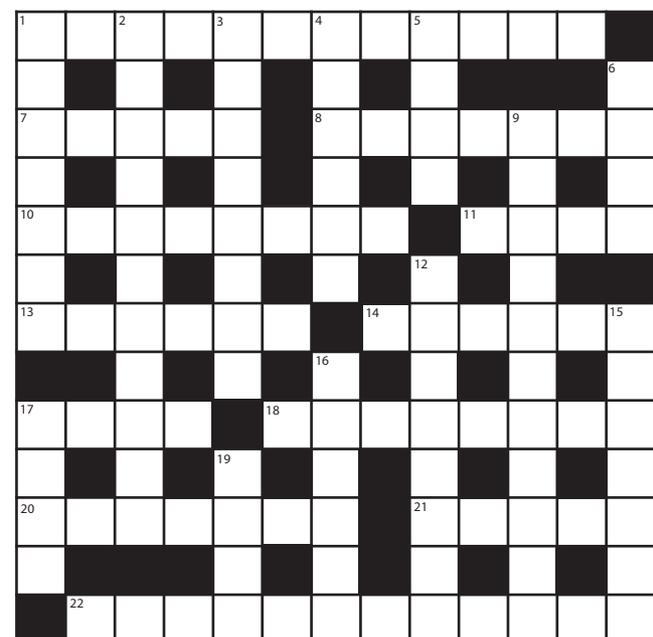
5^{76,000} the number of copies of the X-Factor Hallelujah cover sold. It was much better in Shrek. Enough said.

7^{50,000} British children write a letter to Father Christmas every year. They send it to: "Santa, Reindeerland, SAN TAI." Wrong postcode, you cretins. Don't you know he lives in the North Pole?

2.4 million times Santa will be over the legal driving limit if he consumes every glass of alcohol 54% of parents said they would leave for him.

N^{il} the likelihood of us having a white Christmas this year. I hope you enjoy mud. I don't mean to dampen the festive spirit, but just call me Scrooge.

The Nouse Crossword



- 11. See 5 down
- 13. Cream-filled cake (6)
- 14. Sexually exciting (6)
- 17. Natural satellite (4)
- 18. Passenger accomodation (in a car) (4,4)
- 20. Raw seafood cuisine (7)
- 21. Easternmost US State (5)
- 22. Sometimes, infrequently (12)

Down

- 1. One who no longer works (7)
- 2. Unnecessary, redundant (11)
- 3. In the highest (Latin) (8)
- 4. Swarming insect in grasshopper family (6)
- 5,11. *Leon* Actor (4,4)
- 6. Baby Deer (4)
- 9. Passed its best (colloq.) (4,3,4)
- 12. Rail transport worker (Trad. North America) (8)
- 15. Eating utensils (7)
- 16. French South-Pacific island (6)
- 17. Creative influence, one of nine (myth.) (4)
- 19. South-American capital city (4)

Across

- 1. Oscar-winning *Gladiator* (7,5)
- 7. Deceased rap artist (5)
- 8. Eric _____, former French footballer (7)
- 10. An exultation of country over city life (8)

The Nouse Sudoku

	2			9	1			
6							3	
		5	8					7
	9				3	6		
	6						5	
		7	5				1	
2					8	4		
	3							9
			1	7			2	



President Obama's approval rating has tumbled, state voters have turned against him, and his legislative pushes have stalled. **Henry James Foy** asks

Where did it go wrong?

The location, Washington's National Mall, is the same. The backdrop, Capitol Hill, is the same. The crowds, chanting and waving banners, number the same. The object of their attention, President Barack Obama, is the same.

But the scenes of January this year, when thousands packed Washington's streets to exalt in the election of a President "to change America", are a far cry from the angry, violent protests that have marked his administration this year, and driven his approval rating below 50% barely eleven months since his inauguration.

In January, a relaxed Barack Obama strolled down Pennsylvania Avenue, self-assuredly showing the world he was calm in the face of his

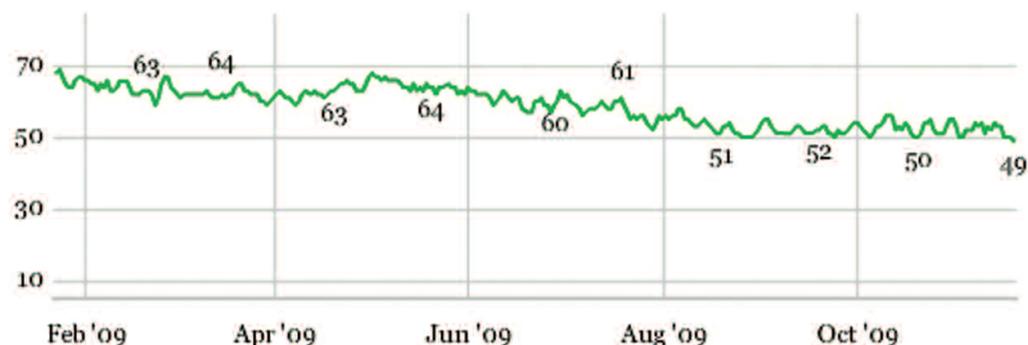
detractors. Today, chilling slogans and movements call for his head, and White House staff fear for his safety at previously innocuous public engagements.

Thousands flocked to Washington this September to condemn the actions of a man elected on a sea of positivity just ten months previously. Banners labeled him a 'Socialist', posters depicted him as a modern-day Adolf Hitler and chants demanded him to "Show us the birth certificate", in support of the 'birther' movement that came to prominence this summer and accuses Obama of being a non-US citizen.

Obama-sponsored legislation is stalling, and White House-backed candidates have lost state elections. Democratic members of Congress are rebelling, and his closest supporters in

Do you approve or disapprove of the job Barack Obama is doing as president?

■ % Approve



GALLUP



Crowds gather in front of Capitol Hill to protest against Obama and Congress this summer

Democratic colleagues in again.

In the face of his domestic failings, some US commentators have slammed the President's apparent aspiration to help the world before he helps America. John Danforth, a former US Ambassador to the UN, remarked that while it is good to have a popular President, the US does not reap the benefits from other governments. "It's nice to be popular [abroad]," said Danforth, "but I just don't see the seeds of a partnership in this information." "He really is a rock star," he said of Obama, but "my response is, 'So what?'"

But a drive through Wheat Ridge, Colorado, quickly confirms that people here don't think of their President as a rock star. His face might be on a billboard, but it's a cartoon of him wearing a turban with the slogan "PRESIDENT or JIHAD?". The comparison of Obama with a Muslim terrorist is chilling, as is the smaller message, which reads: "WAKE UP AMERICA! REMEMBER FT. HOOD!", in reference to the mass-killing of US soldiers at a base in Texas by a Muslim Army psychiatrist last month.

"Since Fort Hood, I've had it... You can't suggest things. You can't profile. You gotta call a spade a spade," the billboard's owner Phil Wolf told FOX News. "Everything I have read about Mr. Obama points right to the fact that he is a Muslim. And that is the agenda of what Muslim is all about. It's about anti-American, it's about anti-Christianity."

It is an ominous trend that is

clean up America's record overseas and resurrect its tarnished foreign policy. So far, he's achieved little. His acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize in October had the critics sharpening their knives, and his supporters bewildered. After almost eleven months in office, he has little to cheer about. Obama, who was inaugurated with an approval rating of 68%, stuck to the party line and to campaign promises, and has seen his personal support among Americans sacrificed for the passage of bills that the Democrats have been waiting to pass for over 35 years. Not since Jimmy Carter left the White House in 1981 have the Democrats had control of The Oval Office, the House of Representatives and the Senate at the same time, and it's been a case of making up for lost time as fast as possible.

Gore's paper-thin loss in 2000 and Kerry's implosion with the Presidency on a plate in 2004 confirmed that the Democrats were the jittery losers that many commentators feared they were. So, when Obama - who would surely make it eight years of Blue at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue - won the party nomination, hands were rubbed gleefully and decade-old legislation that Republican filii-busters and Presidential vetoes had curtailed for so long was dusted off and prepped for re-drafting.

on the Obama dream. The Bailout Bill to support failing banks, the Cap and Trade Bill which places taxes on non-renewable energy, and pledges huge government spending for clean fuels and the recent Healthcare Reform Bill which saw thousands of protestors mobilise across the country in opposition to its potential to create 'socialised medicine' have all dragged the President's ratings to their lowest-ever level.

Lower-class Americans are appalled by the President's concessions in the Healthcare Bill to appease Republican lawmakers, both anti-war campaigners and the hawks in the Pentagon are upset by the President's

This forcing through of legislation, and the compromises that have had to be made in order to move the bills through quickly, has been the real drain

"Everything I read about Mr. Obama points to the fact that he is a Muslim... anti-American, it's about anti-Christianity"

flip-flop attitude to Afghanistan, and blue-collar workers across the 50 states are wondering why their taxes are increasing while at the same time unemployment is soaring.

The criticism is simple: since entering office, Obama has focused on Congress and the foreign arena, and - distracted by both - has lost touch with the people that voted him in, and who will have the choice to vote him and his

the press are starting to distance themselves from the President. For Americans, the Obama dream is over.

Yet in Europe and in the majority of countries across the world, he is still a man adored and revered, a man to take climate change seriously, mend decades of aggressive and failed US foreign policy against the Muslim world and bring peace to the Middle East. A recent Pew Global study found that in Europe, his support shows no sign of disappearing. Results showed that French and German voters have more confidence in Obama than in Sarkozy and Merkel, their respective leaders.

Obama was elected President of the United States by the people of that country. But for the first time in recent history, 'The Most Powerful Man in the World' also had the planet's backing to make that grand title ring true. The world expected, and America expected. But what if we all expected too much?

President Obama is spread too thin. Not only expected to resurrect a Democratic party that had been loosely bonded together in mutual hatred of the Bush Administration, left-leaning voters demanded long-overdue climate change and healthcare legislation. But then right-wing voters who defected from the GOP wanted an economic package to stimulate a sluggish economy - and tax hikes aren't going to please them. Then there's the lobbyist and military pressure over Afghanistan and America's continued presence as Israel's strongest supporter to juggle with the world's expectations on him to

growing as fast as 'Obama for President' t-shirt sales soared in late 2008. The Christian right have weighed in with their own disturbing anti-Obama messages, and an alarming new popular bumper sticker states: 'Pray for Obama: Psalm 109:8'. What appears to be a supportive sentiment of their beleaguered President is quite the contrary. The Psalm in question reads: "Let his days be few; and let another take his office", while the following verse chillingly states: "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow."

David Axelrod, the man who masterminded Obama's journey to the White House has publicly voiced fears for the President's safety, specifically targeting the Tea Party organisation that has sprung up across the country as an aggressive anti-government movement. In September, authorities moved to shut down a poll on Facebook that asked whether respondents thought Obama should be killed.

People are starting to take note. The Anti-defamation League of America report, 'Rage Grows in America: Anti-Government Conspiracies', published a few weeks ago condemned the right-wing media in particular for "demonizing President Obama and promoting conspiracy theories about his administration... [which] may result in an increase in anti-government extremists and the potential for a rise of violent anti-government acts."

But it's difficult to just write these attacks off as right-wing nut-jobs pinning for a return to the glorious Bush years. Support for Obama isn't just falling among ordinary American voters: even his Democratic Congressional colleagues are becoming more vociferous about a man that they saw as a saviour of the party just a year ago. John Conyers, the prominent liberal black Congressman from Michigan, attacked Obama's weak leadership and accused him of "bowing down to every nutty right-wing proposal about healthcare". The concessions, Conyers continued "are a disservice to the Barack Obama I first met."

Then, as reports showed an ever-increasing number of unemployed Americans and a rising number of defaulted mortgages, a vote on financial reforms proposed by White House policymakers was pulled at the last minute as black caucus members, formerly the President's closest allies,

threatened to vote against it in protest of wider economic policy.

The Republicans, like any good opposition, are doing all they can to make this uncomfortable period as prolonged as possible. Cap and Trade

The psalm reads: 'Let his days be few; and let another take his office. Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow'

and the Healthcare Bill are still awaiting Senate confirmation, and the longer that bills take to be debated, the longer they stay on the front pages. Not only does this anger left-wing voters who expected Obama to pass these measures quickly, it also allows Republican strategists to maximise the critical sentiment. And with the Midterms looming like the scales of justice above the US Capitol to judge the Administration's first 24 months, right now all publicity is bad publicity.

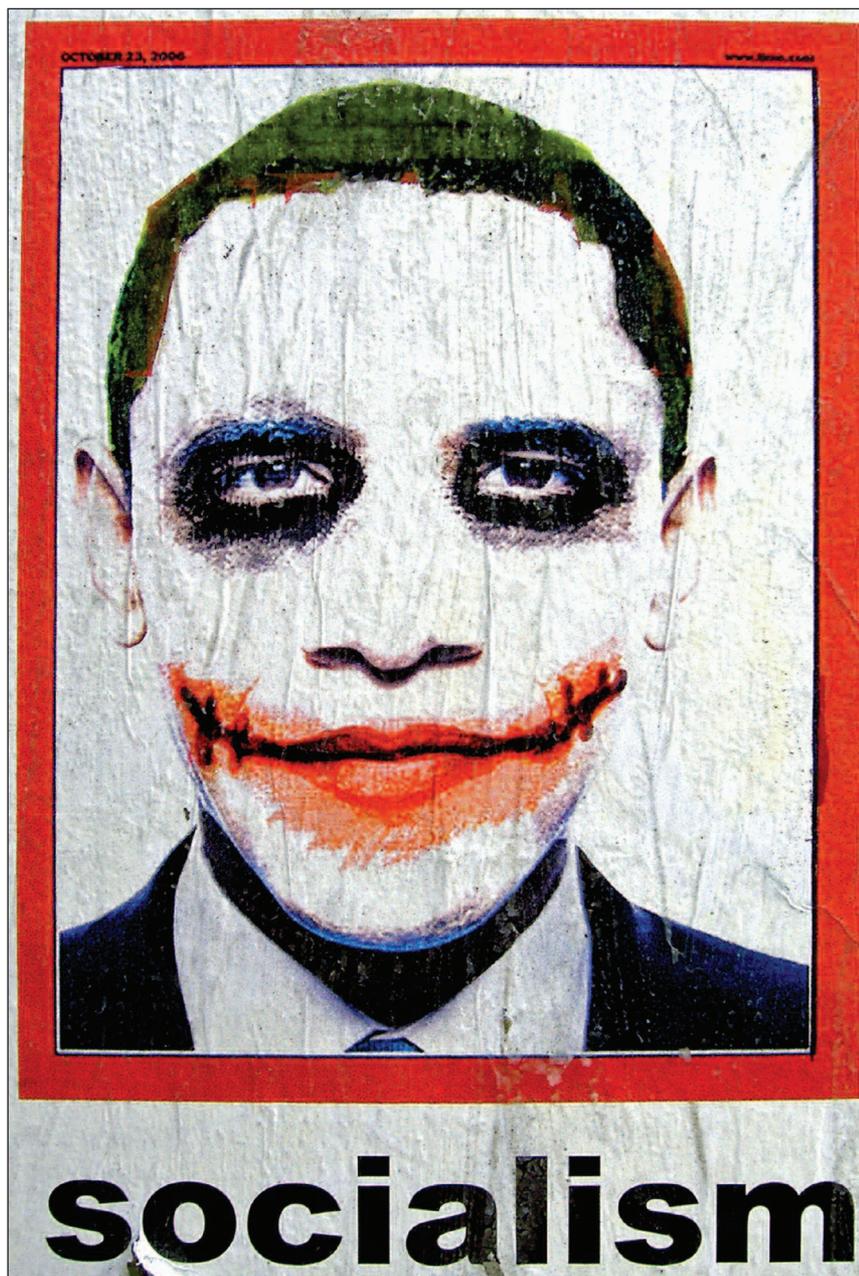
As Republican leaders unabashedly contemplated picking up Senate seats across the country from Obama-tarred Democratic incumbents, one conservative commentator told the *Sunday Times*, "We don't need to slam Obama - his own folks are doing it themselves."

This sentiment, of Democratic implosion in the face of Obama's sliding approval rating, bubbled over in the wake of October's gubernatorial elections in New Jersey and Virginia, and confirmed for the first time a swing from the Democrats at the ballot box.

Virginia, which had voted for Obama after 50 years of support for Republican Presidential candidates, and New Jersey, traditionally a Democratic-voting state, both voted to oust Democratic incumbents in what many commentators saw as an opinion poll on 12 months of the Obama Administration.

While Democratic officials insisted that the vote was not a referendum on his presidency, many in Washington felt that it reflected widespread disillusionment with Obama over the weak economy, job losses and the ongoing debate over healthcare reform.

David Gergen, the US political scientist and commentator, told CNN: "It



(Right) A poster created by a Chicago college student criticised Obama's 'socialist' agenda and quickly swept across the country

shows the way the wind is blowing ... the Democrats can't take power for granted," while one Democratic adviser told the *New York Times* that the Virginia vote was "a race between Barack Obama's spending and Bob McDonnell's thesis," referring to the Republican candidate's controversial University paper regarding women and homosexuals.

The White House was directly involved in both races. Aides were sent to review advertisements and attend strategy sessions, and Obama himself campaigned with Virginia incumbent

Craig Deeds twice, and took part in last-minute rallies in New Jersey for Democratic candidate John Corzine.

With polls suggesting that African Americans, Latinos and young voters - who had elected Obama in 2008 - had swayed away from the Democrats, the Republicans were elated. Michael Steele, the Republican national chairman, said: "We have a long way to go to prepare for next year [when congressional elections are held] but it is a great night to celebrate... This is not just about Virginia but about the leadership in the White House and in Congress."

THE VIEW FROM THE RIGHT



If Obama's mistakes have caused his Presidency to stutter, the powerful American right-wing spin machine has ensured these slip-ups are never far from the public consciousness.

Labelled by an anti-defamation report as the national "fearmonger-in-chief", Fox News' **Glenn Beck** (left) certainly won't be getting a Christmas card from the White House this year. With a habit of comparing Obama with Hitler (if not breaking down into sobbing tears when talking of his patriotism), Beck draws over 3 million viewers everyday to his staggering mixture of conspiracy and nationalism.

Beck's stablemate at Fox News, **Bill O'Reilly**, is synonymous with the channel's GOP-loving reputation. His show is the most watched cable news

program on American television, and contains such golden lines as "I just wish Katrina had only hit the United Nations building" and "CNN has gone to the dark side".

If those two dominate the airwaves, internet aggregator **Matt Drudge** (right) controls the online backlash. His *drudgereport.com*, which was made famous for breaking the Lewinsky scandal and today attracts over 650 million visits a month, keeps the anti-Obama analysis at the top of the most-read charts.

And who can forget Alaska's **Sarah Palin**? Famous for being able to "see Russia from her house", she's back on the GOP bandwagon. Her book is selling like hotcakes, and she hasn't written off a White House run in 2012.



CHARTING THE FALL

January 2009 - Inauguration Approval Rating: 68%

Barack Obama is sworn into office as the 44th US President with a promise to "remake America" in "a new era of responsibility". As the first African-American President, Obama enters the White House on a wave of euphoria and hope, both in the US and around the world. Criticising the economic failures of his predecessor and the two wars that he inherits, Obama reassures voters that the country is "ready to lead once more".



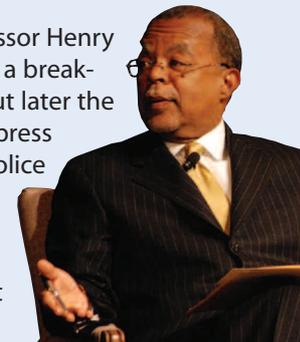
February 2009 - Passing of Bail-out Bill Approval Rating: 62%

Barely a month into his Presidency, Obama signs into law a \$790bn stimulus package that he calls a "historic step" and a "major milestone on our road to recovery". All 176 Republican Congressmen and 7 Democrats vote against the bill in the House, and it squeezes through 60-38 in the Senate. While bankers rejoice, people take to the streets against what they see as a waste of precious tax dollars. The bill adds significantly to the country's burgeoning deficit, and Obama's 'socialist' moniker begins to appear at protests.



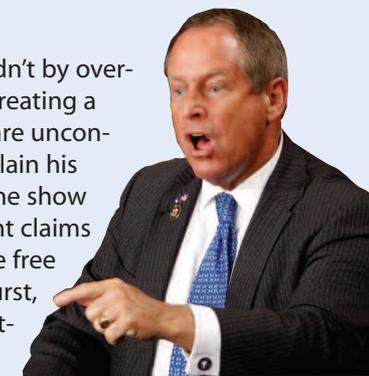
July 2009 - Arrest of Henry Gates Approval Rating: 55%

On July 16, Boston police arrest Harvard Professor Henry Gates in his own home after a woman reports a break-in. Gates is arrested for abusing the officers, but later the charge is dropped. Days later, in an unrelated press conference, Obama weighs in by saying the police had "acted stupidly". The right-wing media goes into a frenzy, police chiefs accuse him of "alienating public safety officers across the country with his comments," and the President is forced to defuse a damaging racial issue.



September 2009 - Healthcare Bill stalls Approval Rating: 51%

Obama sought to do what Clinton couldn't by overhauling the US healthcare system and creating a government-run 'Public Option'. Voters are unconvinced, Obama goes to Congress to explain his plan, and Rep. Joe Wilson (R-SC) steals the show by shouting "You lie!" when the President claims that no illegal immigrants would receive free healthcare. Congress censures his outburst, but the damage is done. The Obama-critics laud their new hero.



November 2009 - GOP win state Governorships Approval Rating: 50%

In the first major state polling since the beginning of Obama's presidency, voters in Virginia and New Jersey go to the polls to elect their governor. Both Democratic incumbents lose to Republican challengers, even with strong endorsements from the President and the White House. Analysts point to a strong 'anti-Obama effect', swing voters move from the Democrats and Republican National Chairman Michael Steele says the results were "about the leadership in the White House and in Congress".



Republican governor challengers McDonnell (left) and Christie both defeated Democratic incumbents last month

image of a President looking to clean up politics both at home and abroad took another hit.

Ambitious overseas trips to China and the Middle East have also come with little reward, save a few mumbled promises from a reluctant Hu Jintao and a bullish Benjamin Netanyahu.

There is also a flip-side to the hope thrown on Obama last November. Bob Ainsworth, the British Defence Secretary, took the audacious step of blaming Obama for falling UK support for the war in Afghanistan last month.

Ainsworth claimed that a "period of hiatus" in Washington, and a lack of clear direction, had hindered the British government's efforts to whip up public support for a continuation of the conflict. It seems that the US President is responsible not only for his own cabinet, but ours as well.

A trip to the Far East that Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel had reportedly hoped would boost his ratings as a leader on the world stage monumentally backfired when photos of the President bowing to Japan's Emperor Akihito hit the *Los Angeles Times*, and were picked up by the hugely influential Matt Drudge's *drudgereport.com*. It was a carbon-copy of the PR disaster that unfolded when Obama did the same thing in April to the King of Saudi Arabia. Americans were aghast at the action, and the condemnation of

"It's nice to be popular (abroad) but I don't see a partnership... He really is a rock star. But my response is, 'So what?'"

a President that shows deference to other foreign leaders flowed.

So where does Obama go from here? His two legislative stumbling blocks, Cap and Trade and Healthcare, will either require an ugly Democratic smash-and-grab job while Republicans and the mighty Fox News cry foul, or a host of concessions that will render the final product spineless.

The President needs to refocus on his electorate. Ignoring Congress and the global expectations is easy to say and hard to implement, but is necessary if his personal attraction is to be enough to stem a Republican upswing at the looming mid-terms.

If Obama doesn't turn back to the ordinary American people soon and work for their best interests, there's a strong danger that at least one House won't be his for very long. M

In 2008 an eight-year Obama administration seemed almost inevitable, but if the current slide away from the Democrats continues, Republican candidates could stand a very good chance come 2012 of swinging the White House their way.

Eighteen months ago, Obama was supported by over 95% of countries polled by *The Economist* before the election. The world wanted him, and moreover, wanted him to deliver. Now, it seems that support and the pressure that comes with it have similarly harmed his US approval.

It hasn't helped that the world's expectations were wild and varied. Obama was cautious not to completely nail his colours to the mast in terms of a climate change policy, but this didn't stop green campaigners across the world exalting at the prospect of a US President that would finally agree to Kyoto-like pledges.

The Cap and Trade Bill, loved and loathed in equal doses across Washington, was a step in the right direction for Al Gore and his followers, but was a crippling tax on an already struggling US economy for voters across the country. The Senate are yet to tackle it head-on, stuck as it is in the log-jam of bills that Republican lawmakers are doing all they can to delay.

In only the past week, emails leaked from the University of East Anglia exposing an alleged plot to 'cover-up' scientific research that discredits the global warming theory are spreading across Washington like a congressional wildfire. Some commentators on both sides of the Atlantic are claiming that these revelations, with the backing of Fox News' omnipotent anti-Obama rhetoric, may mean Cap and Trade is "toast".

Even earlier in his term, the closure of Guantanamo Bay, the illegal detention centre that for many exemplified Bush's loathed presidency and disastrous foreign policy, was lauded by people across the planet. Obama was praised for enacting a campaign pledge so early in his term, and for actively seeking to repair the US's awful reputation overseas.

Yet the American public, initially skeptical of an effective admittance that the camp was illegal, turned hostile when it was suggested by the Administration that large numbers of former inmates would be transferred to jails in the US. The plan stalled, Gregory Craig, Obama's former White House Counsel was made the scapegoat and fired after being labelled "too close to human rights groups" by White House whispers, and the squeaky-clean

Culture crunch?

Historically, recession and creativity have gone hand in hand - **Mia de Graaf** explores the changing reaction of creative industries to rapidly shrinking budgets.

During the 1980s recession, alternative art flourished through cutting edge films, plays, music, fashion and art.

Margaret Thatcher's astute persona and attempts to revolutionize the industry through stringent laws and deregulation led to a flourishing bohemian backlash. Her abolition of the 'Eady Levy' law, which ordered a percentage of box-office revenue to be returned to British production companies, only resulted in the independent sector fighting back. Production companies, such as 'Handmade Films' and 'Working Title', came into existence to fill the growing demand for films. In art, the industry defied Thatcher (who famously ordered the retouching of the eyes and background of her portrait) by responding with the contemporary and the abstract. Many saw this as confirming the long held belief that creativity is born out of social unrest.

Fast forward to September 2008 and Britain is once again immersed in an economic crisis. Since Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy, unemployment has soared, the housing market has plummeted and suddenly money is at the forefront of everyone's minds. Money must be invested carefully and frugally for no jobs are secure, even at the top, and as the economy fluctuates between bad, good, better, and much worse, a bold move could

cost anybody their livelihood.

Ironically, creativity - the tool used as a weapon 20 years ago - is now in exactly the same vulnerable position as the banks. Art requires money and, at the moment, songs, films, and books must conform to mainstream, best-seller styles in order to have any hope of making a profit.

Up until 2007, Wall Street invested more than \$2 billion a year in independent movies to encourage entrepreneurial film making. This number has now been cut considerably. According to John Hillcoat, director of upcoming film *The Road*, "there are 20,000 people out of work in film, and it is a small industry."

Branches are rapidly being cut, preserving only the mainstream core of

each production company. To name a few: Paramount has closed Paramount Vantage (*No Country for Old Men*); Disney, Miramax (*There Will Be Blood*); Universal, Rogue (*Shaun of the Dead*); Warner Brothers, both Warner Independent House (*March of the Penguins*), and Picturehouse (*Pan's Labyrinth*). In 2007, these branches were responsible for over 30% of the Indie box-office revenue, but they are now seen as too risky, and investors are reluctant to buy in. The few companies that remain are being re-staffed with marketing advisors who they hope will steer Hollywood back into a steady turnover of projects. But rumour has it that cuts and collapses amongst the major players of the industry are not over, with Focus Features and

money advertising. Although all great films arguably started out by looking risky - *The Godfather* and *Star Wars* are among many that were initially viewed by investors as too 'out there' - previously, there has always been enough money about to take a risk. Now, with even the Coen Brothers being overlooked, independent moviemakers are pushed to one side.

Music is faced with a similar issue: only the biggest names are guaranteed high record sales, and taking on new artists is dangerous. Last year, the highest selling album worldwide (Lil' Wayne's *Tha Carter III*), earned below \$3 million in sales for the first time in 17 years. For lack of record sales, producers themselves, as well as artists, are forced to abandon the recording studios and perform live. This tactic does not come without its own problems: many producers are taking to the DJ circuit to turn a profit, creating more competition for struggling artists and thereby stifling new talent in the genre.

A further issue affecting the entertainment industry is new technology. Hardcopies are rarely bought when piracy provides any song for free at the click of a mouse. Apple's iTunes is the best attempt made by the industry to match the convenience of free downloads. But with the hit of the recession, even 79p has proven a stretch for record buyers' pockets. This, combined with the rise in internet piracy, means we are still blind to the exact statistics of listener preference, and so are much safer in favouring mainstream artists such as Lady Gaga rather than unknown bands. Following the same approach as film producers with brand films, the music industry opt to fund names that will be instantly recognisable, and will generate sales for the name of the artist alone regardless of the quality of the song.

Despite the drastic effects of the recession so far, we are yet to feel the full effects of the most recent wave of the downward spiralling economy. The production companies within film, music, and fashion that have recently closed still have their final releases to come in early 2010. Based on the direction of culture at the moment, things look bleak. John Hillcoat is not optimistic: he thinks, "we're going to culturally have a wave of shocking blandness".

However, these are simply the immediate effects of the recession bomb that has just exploded. At the moment we lie in the ruins, watching artists falling in its wake, but we cannot expect them to stay defeated forever. There will come a point - as in the 1980s - when the fallen will stand up. Furthermore, while they recuperate, the Hollywood super power will no longer be able to completely steer the market.

With luck, given recent successes of films such as *Slumdog Millionaire*, attention could shift from America to the rising super power of the East: Bollywood. For now, we must wait for this economic storm to complete its course before we can bounce back, fully armed with the next era of creativity. M

Below: Older ground-breaking music contrasts with recent shallow blockbusters



Paramount said to be among the first companies that may fall.

The intake of marketing advisors to the film business is set to spark much 'safer' projects in a ploy to gather viewers. Cue 'brand films': the new wave of marketing films, including *Barbie the Movie* and *Monopoly the Movie*. We may scoff and gasp at the prospect of paying £6 to watch the physical reenactment of a board game, but we are almost powerless to reverse the situation. Power has been handed over to the most frequent moviegoers: teenagers stuck between play-dates at home, and nights out clubbing. Consequently, the near future looks to comprise of escapist films, such as *Confessions of a Shopaholic*, designed to distract attention away from the dark economic cloud that overshadows everything else. 'Feel good' is all that's needed in a review to reel in a large audience, and so these films are seen as reliable.

It appears even blockbusters will struggle unless they can attract viewers without needing to waste precious

LONDON CALLING

“I thought I was a poker genius”

Why work for cash when you can win it? Mark Johnson explains why online gambling isn't all fun and games.

For the past two years, online poker has been my only source of income. I have made thousands playing the various games of poker, and I spent my winnings on games, widescreen monitors, and a variety of rare and limited edition obscurities. I never spent any of it on rent and books because I never needed money for that. I played poker for the luxurious standard of living it gave me over the average student.

I discovered Full Tilt Poker, one of the two leading online poker rooms, after a friend introduced me to Texas Hold 'Em and found that you could sign up for a free account and play for 'play chips'. The site starts you off with 1,000 play chips, and if you ever go below that, you can instantly reload. The idea is that you learn the basics of the game without actually risking any money. I played there for half a year or so and ran my 1,000 play chips into somewhere in the range of 3,500,000 play chips. I thought I was a poker genius.

On my 18th birthday, I deposited \$100 on the site. Within a few days I was down to just \$20. Looking back, I realise I was a terrible player and was playing stakes way above what I should have been. However, I entered a tournament with my remaining money and struck lucky (while presumably still playing terribly) and reclaimed \$80.

Around this time I discovered Two Plus Two, the internet's leading poker forum. I became a member, and started discussing strategy with vastly superior poker minds. I learnt I was committing a series of elementary mistakes and quickly became a stronger player. I started to rise my earnings, although I was still punching above my weight.

One night, while I was playing, I found myself down \$20. The fact that this was a good 10% of my entire bal-

ance terrified me. Since my rocky beginnings, I'd never lost such a large chunk of my budget in one night. I decided to play a higher game to try and recoup my losses (very, very stupid) and lost another \$15. I almost cried.

I was devastated, if not because of the loss of the money, but because of all the effort I'd put in over the past few weeks. This feeling of loss would ultimately lead to the end of my poker career.

The money in my account slowly grew to around \$500. Then came the most incredible week, when, within three days, I collected two first place finishes, a second place and a third place in large-field tournaments for a combined total of about \$1,500. This was mind-blowing. It was beyond mind-blowing.

To earn a £1,000 in a few days in my University room was more than I could have ever imagined. I went on a crazy spending spree and bought loads of stuff. The porter's lodge was inundat-

“To earn a thousand pounds in a few days was more than I could have ever imagined”

ed with parcels for me.

I continued to play and began to profit significantly. Everything went smoothly until I decided to withdraw the majority of my money from my account, leaving me with \$600.

Then I went on the worse run I'd had. I lost \$100 the next day I played, from a combination of bad luck and overconfident decisions. I readied myself to earn it back, but things just went from bad to worse. I couldn't get

anything going, and I found myself down to just \$100, having lost \$500 or so in a few weeks. Despite my previous huge winnings, the mind is a fickle thing, and I found myself transfixed by my Full Tilt account balance, unable to comprehend why it was so low. The fact I was still up thousands of pounds in lifetime earnings suddenly seemed irrelevant compared to the £300 I'd thrown away. I stopped playing.

Over the summer, I slowly started again. I moved down to smaller games to regain my confidence. My Full Tilt balance began to grow again, though very slowly. I made about £50 in a month, and bizarrely, felt great about this. I was starting from scratch again, but I was OK with that.

My balance grew and I started playing bigger and bigger games, getting back into the swing of things. One day, I started to play, but within about eighty minutes, I was losing money. A lot of money. A few big hands went against me, and suddenly, my account balance halved in the space of a few seconds.

I stared at the screen for a little while, having lost a hefty percentage of a term's entire tuition fee in just an hour or so. And yet, despite this, I was totally calm. I didn't feel horrified or furious or in tears as I was two years ago, when I lost a piddling \$35 in a night. I was thinking utterly clearly.

I realised something I'd never fully comes to term with before. It wasn't the loss of money that sickened me - it's only a number on a screen. It was the fact that the past few hundred hours of thoughtful and time-consuming play had been thrown away in a single night. This wasn't a video game - there was no reload button. Money I'd previously had was gone. It wasn't mine any more.

With a remarkable clarity, the real-

isation hit me that my poker career was over. I withdrew my remaining account balance. My last vestiges of poker money were safe in my bank account. I did a quick tally, and realised I'd played over half a million hands of poker. The ride was over.

It seems unreal, now, to look back at those three incredible days where I made over a £1,000 so quickly; that's what takes the average full-time-worker around half a month.

I don't regret playing poker for two years - far from it. I made a ton of money and own a lot of great things that I would have never been able to afford without it. But unless you can stomach losing hundreds of pounds in a night and having all your great play for weeks go to waste at the turn of a virtual card, I wouldn't suggest it.

And even if you think you can stomach that - you can't. Take it from me. I tried. **M**



Christmas away from home

Liv Evans investigates life over the holidays for international students.



Left: bottom right: students staying behind for Christmas
Top right: a Christmas tree

The majority of us will soon be heading home for the Christmas holidays. I'm already looking forward to leaving the barren Yorkshire wastelands for warmer southern climes. The idea of a house with heating, copious amounts of food and probably a dodgy present or two is all that's getting me through these last two weeks of rain and essay gloom.

However, this is not the case for all. According to the International Student Office, there are roughly 2,100 international students in York (over 20% of the University population), many of whom will be remaining on campus for the vacation.

When most people are celebrating the period of festivity with their families and friends, what is done to support those alone over this difficult time? I spoke to a selection of international students from all years, some who will be remaining behind over the holidays and some who have chosen otherwise.

"I haven't been able to find any information regarding events, welfare or things like catering facilities on campus or shop opening hours. Nobody considers what happens [to the people spending Christmas on campus] as it

doesn't affect them."

Rachel, 19, adds "it's such a festive time of year, yet nothing seems to have been organised. Everything just seems to stop - you think someone would put something on. In theory it's a good opportunity to meet new people, but as I have no idea of who's staying and where they might be, I could just be wandering around campus alone."

It seems that the University does not organise anything for the significant number of its population left on campus. Andrea, 19, hadn't heard if any events were arranged. "There's been no real contact from them, I didn't really consider staying behind." Chen, a Biochemistry student, said that, "they may have sent a few emails but I haven't read them. There isn't any contact about events, only things about accommodation and essays".

A quick search of the University website reveals that details about Christmas activities are sparse. The first result on a search for "students staying over Christmas" reveals a PDF with some potentially useful information. Unfortunately, it relates to the 2006/07 academic year.

The International Student Support

Co-ordinator, Louise Sanders, said that there was no way of knowing how many international students were staying behind for Christmas. "I'm going to send out an information sheet this week letting them know what's going on and who's doing what while they're here." This is the first notice they will receive about the holidays. Do they have any kind of meetings or the like to outline what the holidays here entail? "No."

"On Christmas Day we have an open house for anyone here. Aside from that, what happens over the Christmas holidays varies from year to year depending on what the students of the International Students Association (ISA) choose to do."

But Daria Pawlowska, President of the ISA, stated that "the Christmas holiday is too short for us to really organise anything. We'll have a dinner perhaps on the Sunday after everyone else has gone, but that's it. About 20 or 30 people usually come."

"We don't know how many people stay for the holidays. We can guess that it's mostly Chinese students and others from far away countries, as it would be too far for them to go back. Most committee members don't stay themselves -

only three are staying this year, but they have family coming, so they'll want to do things with them. We don't organise anything for Christmas Day itself, or for New Year."

When asked if it was lonely on campus while the majority of students are away, Tammy, 21, admitted that "it can be very quiet and lonely, especially when I'm the only one in the whole house". A Sri Lankan first-year said he was glad he is able to go home: "I think the second-years are comfortable staying over the holidays, they know the area, but I wouldn't really know what I was doing. I wouldn't really consider spending Christmas here. I'll probably go home for all the vacations." Andrea agreed. "It would be especially lonely as I'm in my first-year. I only live in Geneva so it's not too far away, I feel lucky compared to others."

This is not only the case for first-years. A French postgraduate studying Archeology has gone home every Christmas vacation. "I'm glad I get to go home, I wouldn't want to stay here on my own. My parents would kill me if I didn't come home for the holidays. Students from Europe tend to go home, mostly because we can."

It seems that foreign students have become used to the relative inactivity over the Christmas break. "I haven't been home for the holiday for about four years, so I don't know if I'd prefer that. Apart from doing my work, I'll just be hanging round; there's nothing special to do," commented Tammy.

So what do students do, if there isn't any University or student-organised programme? Tammy will be staying in York over the holidays. "I'm preparing for an assessment to hand in after Christmas, I'll be very busy". A Chinese second-year student, who will also remain here for the three weeks, said that the holidays were too short for her to go home. "I have three exams and an essay due in afterwards, I'm too busy to go home." Biology student Kevin said, "I'm staying in England but I won't be in York for the whole time, I'll be travelling around for a couple of days. But I'll mainly be revising."

It is reported that individual provosts tour their colleges during the holidays to see which students are still resident in their rooms over the break. However, there has been no official confirmation of this.

Nothing is organised centrally and so if students are to take part in any of the traditional Christmas activities, they must organise them on an individual basis. "Most of my friends are staying behind, we normally all stay together," said Chen. "Last year, we went to the Lake District together." But this can lead to segregation. Many home students report that international students tend to group together rather than extending their social circle. The failure of the University to provide adequate events for creating new acquaintances can only exacerbate this situation.

"This is my fourth year, and I normally stay here over the holidays, so I'm used to campus being lonely," Kevin admits.

"Going away would be expensive and I have exams. Would I like to go home? Yes, of course." M

The truth behind the tabloids

Is press coverage of science becoming irresponsible hyperbole? **Owen Groves** examines whether the furore is for real.

Look around you. The list of things that might kill you is getting awfully long. If it's not the MMR vaccine, it'll be the HPV vaccine. If it's not the HPV vaccine, it'll be swine flu. If it's not swine flu, it'll be getting sucked into a black hole created by CERN. If you dodge the Swiss black hole of oblivion, a nuclear power plant will probably be exploding just down the road. And, if you are fortunate enough to avoid all of these various demises, global warming will probably get you. Ironically, many of the threats seem to be rearing their ugly heads fast and frequently from that bastion of progress: science itself. The advances intended to save and improve our lives seemingly do the opposite, or so the increasingly intense media scare-storms may lead you to believe. Is the furore necessary? Is it for valid public information on new and risky scientific endeavours? Or is coverage crossing the line into irresponsible hyperbole?

The media is invaluable for getting information out to the masses. Their stories have an enormous effect on public opinion. Nowhere is this more prevalent than in health matters. Unfortunately, there have been a number of media misfires in recent years.

The greatest health scandal of the last decade surrounded the combined measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine and its alleged link to autism, which broke as a story in 2001. The medical paper that originally purported the link was published by Dr. Andrew Wakefield a full three years before the story gathered full momentum. Precious few of the pieces mentioned the overwhelming evidence against a link. They also neglected to

take into account the fact that Dr. Wakefield's study was simply an anecdotal discussion of just 12 children; a tiny fraction of the millions of children vaccinated and the two people per 1000 of the population with autism.

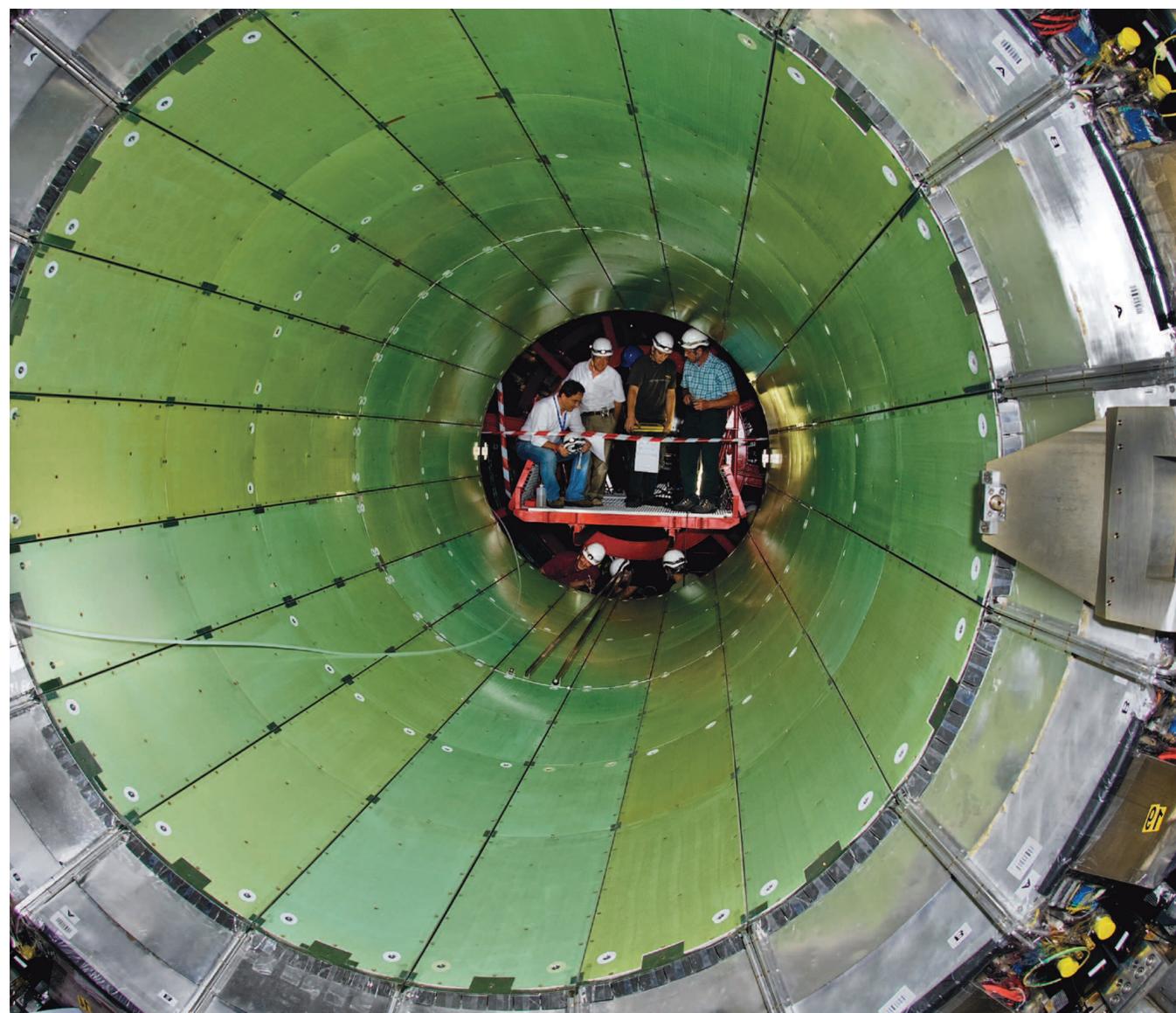
A single study with a sample so small is not capable of proving a link between two occurrences this common. However, the media put its full power behind the study, and in a stunning display of selective deafness, they began finding anti-vaccination lobbyists to support their new thesis. Coverage degenerated into a slew of sob stories, as mother after mother was 'betrayed' by science. Uptake of the vaccine fell by 20%, causing several epidemics and five reported deaths from an easily prevented disease.

In 2006, coverage turned. A powerful study found no link between measles RNA (similar to DNA) in children with regressive autism and the MMR vaccination. The vaccine was re-branded as safe and Dr. Wakefield was vilified for destroying its reputation and endangering a generation. The media's hero became the villain. But the irresponsible reporting was the real enemy, having used one man to cause an eight-year scandal.

This year, history threatened to repeat itself with the cervical cancer jab (HPV). In September, a schoolgirl died shortly after receiving the inoculation, triggering a cascade of stories questioning its safety. Three days later, it was revealed that the girl's tragic death was a coincidence, caused by underlying health problems. HPV was safe once more.

Right: construction of the LHC at CERN took scientists almost two decades

Far right: An anti-nuclear power poster



However, when Googling "HPV vaccine" two months later, the top result (behind the NHS website and Wikipedia page) was *The Guardian's* story, "Schoolgirl dies after cervical cancer vaccination".

Dangers remain in the public consciousness for a long time. The media cannot be blamed for this. Despite sometimes overreacting, it has a duty to warn the public over possible dangers. But newspapers can be blamed for the lasting impact of the stories. One *Daily Express* front page exclaimed "JAB 'AS DEADLY AS THE CANCER'". However, when Dr. Ben Goldacre questioned the quoted Dr. Diane Harper for his Bad Science column in *The Guardian*, she claimed, "I did not say that Cervarix was as deadly as cervical cancer." The entire story was based on a misquote.

Whilst the media rashly jumped to spurious conclusions on both occasions, they can be easily forgiven for how they initially reacted. It could be a matter of life and death. But once situations have been clarified, they struggle to release their views as fast as they should, turning to a mixture of misquotes and select-the-source-to-suit-the-conclusion-syndrome. The irresponsibility of media coverage in itself has become a matter of public health.

It's not just health that can become a matter of mortality when viewed through the prism of the press. In recent years the world of physics has become a world of Armageddons, with the European Centre for Nuclear Research (CERN)'s newest toy, the Large Hadron Collider (LHC), centre-stage.

The LHC is a particle accelerator that aims to smash protons together at higher energies than ever before achieved on Earth. Replicating conditions present during the Big Bang, it aims to search for the Higgs boson, which would help to explain the origin of mass in the universe. Safety concerns began to surface when three men - two non-physicists and one adversary of particle accelerators - attempted to halt its initiation. They believed that the collisions might create micro-black holes that would rapidly grow and consume the Earth. However, two safety reviews had already deemed the LHC safe. Any black holes formed would evaporate away through Hawking radiation. In any case, thousands of higher energy collisions occur above us in the atmosphere every day. No black hole apocalypse has yet occurred.

Nevertheless, as 'Big Bang Day' approached, slight statements of standard scientific uncertainty were

taken as an admission of apocalypse. *The Daily Mail* managed to print headlines like "Are We All Going to Die Next Wednesday?" and many major news sources followed suit. This culminated in the suicide of a 16-year old girl. When the LHC broke down just before its first collision, the relief was palpable.

Whilst not immediately as dangerous to public health as worries over vaccinations, the frenzy surrounding CERN still provoked strong feelings. Scientists received death threats, whilst the 'rock star' physicist Brian Cox said "anyone who thinks the LHC will destroy the world is a twat." But still people asked, "why take the risk?"

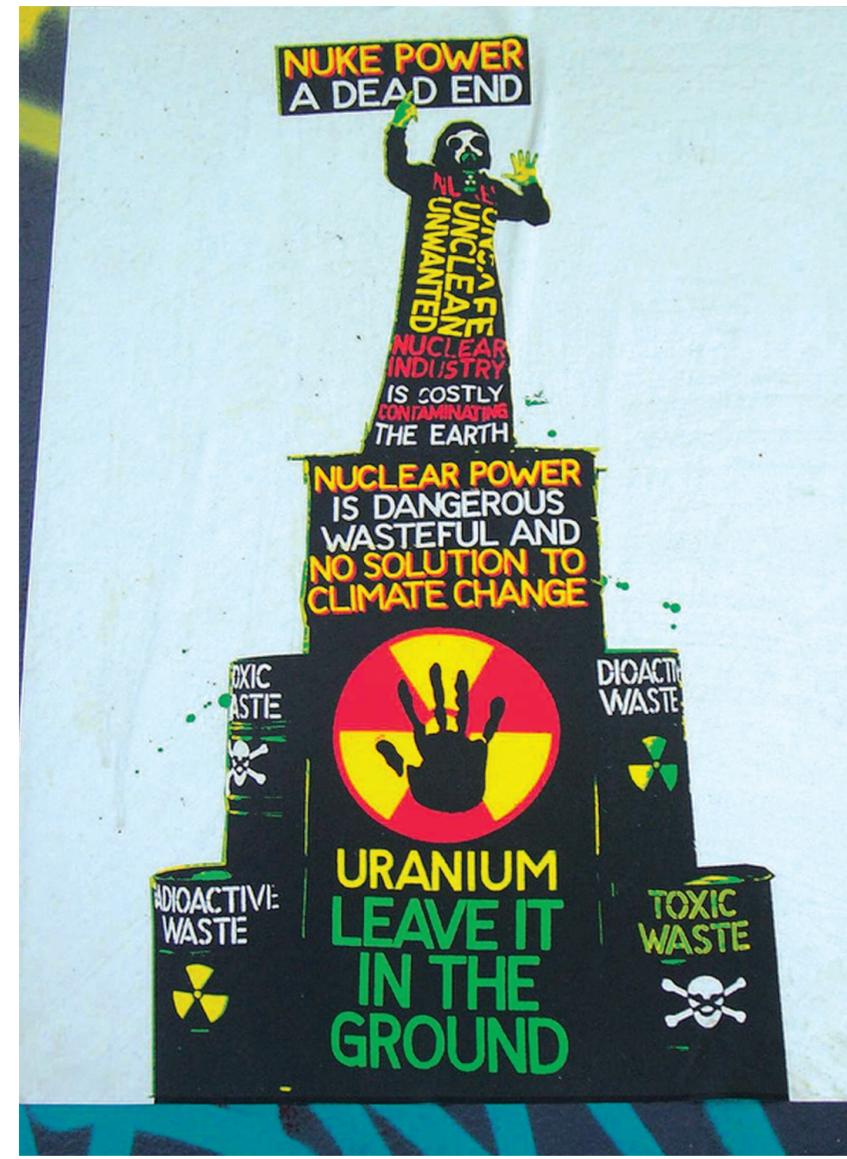
This point of view could be dangerous and unhealthy for human endeavour. Why shouldn't we support scientific endeavour if due care is taken? Science is about ploughing the furrows of knowledge in the name of advancement. We cannot be certain of what we will discover in the darkness of ignorance. We theorise, but we can't know unless we venture there. To constrain ourselves in this way could limit humanity's future advancement. No new drugs or vaccines would get tested; every good idea would be just an idea. Part of humanity's success is in its inquisitiveness.

Professor Cox's comment is more than just a display of bravado. The science community functions through intensive systems of peer review. It's how and why it works. When journals receive scientific papers, they undergo thorough checks for consistency before they are published. The same goes for large experiments. Before they

"The 'rock star' physicist Brian Cox said 'anyone who thinks the LHC will destroy the world is a twat.' But still people asked, "Why take the risk?""

receive funding they must apply to a panel, where scientific merit and safety is analysed.

As a community, scientists know what they are doing. This is uncomfortable for some people. Our society is one where everybody has a right to an opinion but this results in the belief that all opinions deserve to be heard on an equal level, despite lack of expertise. This does not hold in science. This is evident in the reporting of the planned new wave of nuclear fission power stations.



Whilst concerns about waste management are perfectly valid, at the very mention of the word 'nuclear', mushroom clouds seem to form next door to every 'nuclear' family in Britain. But there is a massive difference between our reactors and Chernobyl-type death traps. Newer and safer reactors favour passive safety systems with control rods held out of the reactor by electromagnets and considerably reinforced containment building walls. In the loss of power, the control rods simply drop down and this stamps out the nuclear reaction.

Another previous hazard was due to bubbles forming in the coolant. Bubbles accelerated the nuclear reactions, causing heating. This caused more bubbles to create a positive feedback loop that lets the reaction run out of control. British Magnox reactors use carbon dioxide gas as a coolant, eliminating positive feedback. These precautions ensure meltdowns are averted, and even if they aren't, they would be confined inside the plant itself.

In a recent report on 'The One Show', the increased safety was discussed by a white coat clad expert. Seconds later, we were told by a man, "well, he would say that". Of course he would: it's true. It is unsettling when an expert, with all his training,

can be dismissed in this way. It can confuse public opinion, cloud facts and reinforce the 'not in my backyard' fear of nuclear power. Herein lies the essence of the problem. In the media, any opinion can be presented as having equal weight to those of an expert. Such a level of incongruity makes it difficult to decipher science fact from fear. Panic rules. There is a need for more discerning and considered reporting from journalists and public alike.

It also should be noted that previous errors lead to further work in order to prevent repeat occurrences, and to enhance safety now. Science is always improving and learning from itself, but in the news and public eye, it's a struggle to repair a reputation once damaged. Safety needs to be the focus rather than the danger.

The mainstream reporting on the cutting edge of science advances leaves a lot to be desired. The new vaccines and large scale experiments are not as scary as they are made out to be. In fact, all the scandals and scare stories should almost be indicative of their safety. With so many people searching for the next big threat, when something truly is worth worrying about we should know about it. Science is not as scary as it seems when the fear itself is more of a reason to worry. M

The reluctant colonialist

Has the British Empire really ended? **Laura Connor** investigates whether student NGOs perpetuate colonialist ideology.

My uninspired decision to lug *Ulysses* on a six-week African adventure turned out to be the most symbolic summer reading choice I could have made. Whilst I spent weeks ploughing through the density of Modernist syntax and Greek intertextuality, READ International – the student-led NGO I elected to spend my summer working for – spent weeks distributing British books to Tanzanian schools.

The complete incomprehension I encountered upon tackling James Joyce, as an English literature student who was reading a novel written in her own language and who emerged from a culture which harbours the virtues of a reading ethos, is surely incomparable to the complete incomprehension an East African, Swahili-speaking school child encounters upon opening a British school book?

I developed some serious crises of conscience during my first few weeks in Tanzania. The more I learnt about the Tanzanian education system which, in the birth of its independence from Britain in the 1960s, embarked upon an initiative under quasi-Communist President Julius Nyerere to build as many schools as possible without the significant resources to accompany them, the more I questioned our efforts to distribute English books to Swahili-speaking schools. Was such an initia-

tive ever really going to develop a reading culture in schools, and were we entitled to decide that a reading culture – and specifically our reading culture – is a sign of civilised prestige and should be encouraged?

University students in Tanzania realise the limits of offering British books to a Swahili culture. Books alone do not embody educational authority: they need to be used; they need to be understood. I met a Law student from the University of Dar es Salaam named Shaby, who consistently emphasised the motive of education for most families in Tanzania. There is no acknowledgement of the spiritual and personal development gained from expanding one's education: "The complete focus is on exams, exams, exams."

The passing of exams is what gets kids into university and into jobs. But this is an aim which often flounders in its own futility. So few students are ever able to reach secondary school level and, even when they do, they are faced with the insurmountable task of developing a native's standard of English in order to use our books and pass exams written in English. By distributing numerous books across numerous Tanzanian schools, we were perhaps developing the same quantity over quality that Nyerere instigated fifty years previously.

Another Law student from the

Above: teenagers in Tanzania look through a box of British books.
Right: A READ International volunteer and Tanzanian students.
Far right: A picture of a classroom in Africa.

university, Patrick, argued that if everything was taught in Swahili then there would be a lower drop-out rate. Shaby was passionate in his belief that the government should aim to teach only in Swahili. It would get more kids in schools and more kids staying in schools. A young female Tanzanian student, Ramla, explained the limits of such potential legislation. "English is everywhere. You can't escape it," she told us, with a hint of melancholy defeat in her voice.

Robert Wilson, the director of READ International, stresses that READ "works hard to ensure that it is not promoting any specific cultural view point. We are very selective with the materials that we send to Tanzania and ensure that we do not take any books in subjects that are very culturally specific ... the only values that we do carry with us are a belief in the power of education and in the capacity of young people to change their world."

But how far is this belief in the power of education shared by previously colonised nations in this supposedly post-colonial world? Wilson argues that "these beliefs [in the power of education] are also widely held in Tanzania and many young people highly value their education and are passionate about improving their futures." READ is about more than the

development of East Africa, but the development of our own student bodies: "We want young people to learn from each other and to have access to the information that they need to enhance their opportunities and create the change that they consider to be important."

It is questionable, however, how far young volunteers, who often anticipate life-changing epiphanies at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro or deep in the slums of Delhi during their meticulously-selected, ethically-sound gap years, really encounter such stock phrase 'learning' and developing' experiences. Louise Taylor, a second-year Politics student at the University of Huddersfield, took a gap year in Peru with the student-based volunteering scheme Project Trust. She explains how the biggest impediment was her lack of Spanish and knowledge of the culture she was entering. "There were times when you would get homesick or feel a bit pointless," she says, "particularly in the beginning when you're getting used to a project and you don't have the level of Spanish you need to carry out your plans or lessons or even just to buy a drink ... We occasionally stood on toes when we were ignorant of things like bedtime curfews or religious practices or something. But the majority of the time they laughed it off or it was forgotten about and no-one





had my doubts about the effect a group of British students dumping a load of British books across Tanzania would have. Reading is tough. Education is tough. It requires dedication and a belief in success. If these kids can't envision the benefits of education then the books will remain unopened. Anita's impeccable English and ability to levitate herself into a position of educational power – especially as a woman – made me realise that little steps, the drops in the ocean, are essential to the improvement of the bigger picture, and that Wilson's idealism may just be right.

Anita highlighted to me one crucial impediment that will take longer to overcome, however. Gender roles are still massively limiting factors in the education system. Whilst girls may have the opportunity to go to school like their male counterparts, and whilst the Tanzanian government may purport that they want and aim for sexual equality in education, the reality is much different. The culture is still embedded in every area of education. Anita told me that the best opportunities for women were in the urban areas, where women were not so restrained by the working day, taken up looking after the children, cooking and cleaning. In the village, she told me, life is so tough that the idea of a woman having a job is inconceivable.

Not only is female employment impractical, but the village attitude also tends to be against the equality of women. Statistically, only 5% of girls finish secondary education and that the literacy rate of women is more than 15% lower than the literacy rate of men. Women are placed in impossible situations. If they become pregnant, education is completely out of bounds. Employment, if you ever find it, is just as problematic. Anita told me that often the boss will offer young female employees money or a promotion in exchange for sex, which can often end up in the inevitable situation of pregnancy – a situation that equally ousts a woman from employment immediately.

Such factors exemplify the ultimate limits of NGOs bustling into previous colonies and attempting to improve their quality of life. We may attempt to suggest westernised snippets of liberalism, but the macrocosm of a country's infrastructure is what is always going to be most culturally influential.

Thomas Babington Macaulay's 'Minute on Indian Education', written during the century of colonial questions, the 1800s, shows how education plays a strategic role in ruling over colonised peoples by supporting 'cul-

tural colonisation', which inculcates Euro-centric values. Such an argument is just as potent in the functioning of NGOs today.

Esme Anderson, a third-year English literature student at the University of York, is a founder and trustee of The WAM Foundation, a charity dedicated to the promotion of musical cultural exchange between India and the UK. "One of the most common questions I'm asked is whether I feel that WAM imposes onto the Indian culture," she says. Her answer to such cynicism is simple: "I don't think it does. I believe that we have only fitted into an already existing infrastructure of the teaching of western classical piano, and hopefully have improved the children's experience of learning piano by focusing on enthusing the Indian children and helping them learn how to enjoy their playing rather than seeing it is a chore."

Like READ, the WAM foundation is a very young charity still finding its feet in the developing world.

READ is ambitious. READ is idealistic, and is potentially growing too fast. Next year, READ is aiming to cover regions in Uganda, in addition to the regions it is already covering in Tanzania. Uganda ticks all the boxes for READ. The problems it is encountering in Tanzania at the moment will be overcome, potentially, in Uganda – students are taught in English from primary school, which eliminates many of the communication problems, and has more teachers in schools, eliminating many of the issues with schools not actually using the books. But what about all those schools in Tanzania, which still keep the books stacked up in boxes in the corner of classrooms, which still have students unable to go to university because they have not had or used the resources needed to help them pass exams? READ seems to be becoming a little too big for its very young boots. And the one thing READ needs is time. That time should be concentrated in Tanzania, improving evaluation and pre-distribution, before it's used in Uganda. Once again, Mr. Orwell helps me to elucidate my thinking: "Progress is not an illusion, it happens, but it is slow and invariably disappointing."

But ambition is what will keep these NGOs afloat. Change will happen, one day. Maybe not exactly as it should, maybe under the guise of westernised idealism, but it will happen.

If you would like to learn more about any of the charities mentioned in this article, then please visit: www.readinternational.org.uk www.projecttrust.org.uk www.wamfoundation.org.uk

tion at an institution such as Sunderland.

There is no easy solution. To westernise or not to westernise? If not, then limit the amount of facilities and opportunities available to students in their futures. If so, then limit the level of basic education a Tanzanian child can actually have. Wilson adds: "READ International recognises that

"Progress is not an illusion, it happens, but it is slow and invariably disappointing."

Tanzanian students struggle to cope with the introduction of English as the language of instruction in secondary schools. Our research into the development of education in Tanzania has also made us aware of the views of many in the academic community who believe that Swahili as a medium of instruction right through the education process would be better for the cognitive development of the students... the Tanzanian Government has held its belief that, because English is the language of business and commerce and is widely used in the global community, students should be immersed in English and working with in from secondary school level. Recognising that this is unlikely to change, READ International chooses not to question these choices, but rather to provide resources to schools that will help students and teachers to improve their English."

My meeting with the students in Dar was tough: up until that moment I

took offence. We just went with the way it was and adjusted our way of thinking to theirs."

Project Trust places a greater emphasis in its mission statement on the opportunities young volunteers from our culture can have, rather than the beneficial extent of its work in places it is intending to help, such as Peru. Louise continues to explain that "the main focus [of Project Trust] is to benefit and expand the education of those volunteers who want to learn another language or fluff out their CV."

'CV fluff, which is advantageously capitalised on by British students, seems to be precisely what such student-based NGOs offer in the long term; even if aims are realised on the basis of our cultural code of practice, impediments still remain in the communities we are attempting to assist. In Tanzania, passing exams and entering university is not a secure path to success. Unemployment is so widespread that the relatively few people who manage to have a university education are often left jobless. A Social-Care student I met in Dar es Salaam, Anita, told me how much she had yearned to go to a British university as the degree she will gain from Tanzania will be ignored internationally: "English employers are aware that a degree from Tanzania is not as good as a degree from Europe."

She explained to me that the only way out is to gain a degree from South Africa or, as she had hoped, come to England. But this is beyond hope for most Tanzanians, even for wealthier citizens such as Anita. She informed me that fees cost up to six million shilingi a year for a university educa-

Party on in the new dresses



Sequins and embellishments return in full gusto: constellations and panels provide a new take on all-over glitz.

Forgo cocktail dresses for red carpet drama. **Ruching and soft fabrics** give new meaning to distinction dressing.

The runways are awash with shades of blue. Teamed with structure, an unbeatable nighttime statement is born.

Sofia Redgrave



to the 'good' bit, but I did manage to find a skull pattern scarf (very McQueen) for €3 on my way through - a bargain in comparison to the several hundred pound designer price tag. The Clignancourt flea market is a collection of mini markets covering more than seven hectares. It specialises in antique furniture, ranging from baroque to Art Deco to Fifties classic art prints, linens, silverware, chandeliers and all other weird and kitsch things. Once in the heart of the market, just before reaching the vintage section, I was

"I did manage to find a skull pattern scarf (very McQueen) for €3"

distracted by these oddities. Each stall holder had their own space which they designed in individual and quirky ways, with each one trying to outdo the other (similar to the designer spaces at Dover Street Market). The

area screamed super cool but this was reflected in the prices, and bargaining was notably difficult. A couple of these spaces particularly caught my eye. In one room I was confronted by a giraffe towering over me, with ostriches, lizards and other exotic animals peering out. This amazing collection of antique taxidermy was juxtaposed with the contents of the opposite room full of shiny stage lighting and metal pipes. The next room had a sand covered floor with three pieces of 1970s French furniture perching on it. Totally bizarre. The whole place would be an amazing location for a fashion shoot if only *Nouse* had the budget!

The vintage clothing section was also good, but difficult to navigate. A good tip is to buy 'Paris Vintage' by Sarah de Haro from Amazon which tells you exactly what is worth a visit, and what is worth a miss. I discovered Isabelle Klein's vintage fashion store which was filled with beautiful, designer pieces. There was so much to choose from but all I managed to buy was a new trilby to shield me from the rain. The market has

been given the seal of approval by French fashionistas by hosting its own Spring/Summer '09 fashion show but, in spite of this, it was not the most fashionable part of my trip. The hotel was.

Designed by Philippe Starck and strategically placed in the new coolest quarter of town (on a par with Hoxton or Shoreditch), this hotel seemed to be a beacon for fun-loving, partying types (I spotted Robert Pattinson at the bar taking time off from promoting *New Moon*, and yes, he is gorgeous). There is no 'Mama Shelter' sign outside the door - only a bored doorman - but once inside, they are everywhere. Starck has gone graffiti mad and covered the carpets, walls and ceilings in slogans such as "let's trash the place" and "can we hire a room by the hour?" The rooms are equipped with Mac computers which double up as TVs and the bar was heaving on a Monday night. Mama Shelter is trying to be très chic, and with Paris's most renowned live music venue, La Fleche d'Or, located directly opposite and with rooms going for €79, it gets my vote.

Last week, I went to Paris for a one night shopping extravaganza. Once we had arrived at Gare du Nord, I dumped my bags and headed straight for the Porte de Clignancourt market. It took a while to navigate my way through all of the junk and get

Fashion.

Seen on the S/S10 catwalks at Vuitton and Prada, make-up artists are proving glitter shouldn't be shied away from.

Tess Webb looks at the new glamorous eye, with a step-by-step guide. Keep it bold, strong and give glitter a chance.



1. Firstly, prep the eye. Apply a concealer to the eyelids, then, using a small brush, sweep a neutral shade (MAC Frost Shadow Nano Gold £11) across the entire lid, working the colour up underneath the eyebrows. To accentuate the brow line, use a highlighter pencil (Benefit's Mr Frosty £13.50) to draw a thin line just underneath the brow.

2. Using MAC Brush 213 (£13), apply the base colour to the lid. Purple (MAC Trax Eyeshadow £11) provides an alternative to the greys seen on traditional smoky eyes. Applying glitter can seem daunting, but simple Vaseline (99p) can be used as an affixer. After applying the Vaseline to the lid, using a small brush, apply the glitter (MAC Pigment, chocolate brown £14.) For a more intense look, simply add more glitter.

3. To provide a contrast to liquid eyeliner, gems can be used as a surprisingly simple alternative. Firstly, ensure the affixer (a good one is The Make Up Store's Blend and Fix, £15) is to hand by squeezing some out onto a surface. Using tweezers, lightly pick up the gems then dab the base into the affixer. Starting from the middle of the lash line, use the tweezers to hold the gem against skin until it sticks.

4. The key to any party eye is the good application of eyeliner and mascara. Using a black eyeliner, or black sparkle eyeliner, (MAC Twilight £12) start in the inner corner of the eye on the lower lash line and draw a line working outwards. If a winged eye is preferred, work the liner in an upward motion when reaching the outer corner. Mascara (Lanome L'Extreme £19) should be applied twice from the base to the tip of the lashes, using a zigzagging motion.

Ones to watch

WEBSITE: MODCLOTH.COM

ModCloth.com is having a romantic moment. Originally founded by a husband and wife team with a love of eclectic clothing, the website has taken off and gained two new coveted sections. Firstly, the unusual "Be the Buyer" initiative. Simply, fashion lovers can vote on potential new products: the one that receives the most acclaim is put into production. If you choose to vote, you'll receive an email so you can be the first to buy the item. Secondly, the pieces from the flattering and exclusive vintage section have been seen on the likes of Alexa Chung.

DESIGNER: SHAKUHACHI

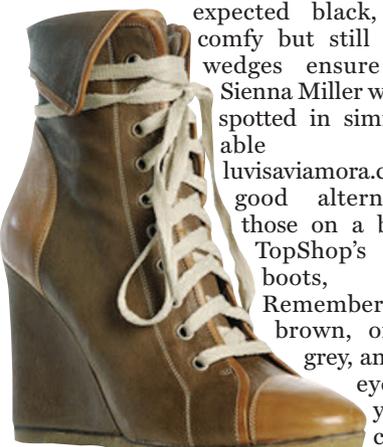
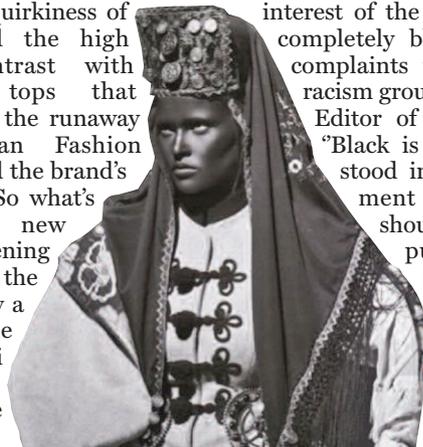
Like Sass and Bide before them, Shakuachi are making an impact all the way from Australia. Head designer Jessie White describes her inspiration as "creating clothes that stand out in details and quirkiness of shape," and the high waists contrast with structured tops that appeared on the runway at Australian Fashion Week proved the brand's credentials. So what's next? With new stockists opening in USA and the UK, it is only a matter of time before Shakuachi becomes synonymous with the hard-hitters.

MODEL: LARA STONE

Lara Stone. Supermodel. This title has been cemented in the past month, with a Vogue cover and the praise "the icon the fashion world would never have admitted it was waiting for." However, it was Stones' recent French Vogue shoot that has caught the interest of the fashion world. Painted completely black, the shoot led to complaints from the French anti-racism group SOS. Carine Roitfield, Editor of French Vogue, quoted "Black is the new black," which stood in contrast to one comment which read "readers should boycott Conde Nast publications." However, ground-breaking shoots that spark controversy often become revisited images, so the fashion world is looking to Stone to see what she does next.

TREND: LACE UP BOOT

We all go through the trauma of trying to choose winter staples: the coat, the boots... But by far the best approach to footwear this season is to think sporty, with an edge. The Chloé boots pictured stand out from the crowd as brown suede breaks away from the expected black, and the comfy but still noticeable wedges ensure comfort. Sienna Miller was recently spotted in similar (available from luvisaviamora.com), but a good alternative for those on a budget are TopShop's ABLE boots, £40. Remember: think brown, or possibly grey, and laces are eye-catching yet practical.



Arts.

Emma Rudeck interviews Grayson Perry about this year's RCA Secret Sale Show



This year marks the fifteenth anniversary of the Royal College of Arts' (RCA) Secret Show, which has been successfully following the same formula since its inauguration in 1994. The idea behind the show is simple. Professional artists and art graduates alike are asked to donate postcard sized pieces of artwork for the exhibition. Once the week-long exhibition is over, the postcards displayed are available to purchase in a secret sale, effectively a kind of fine art lottery. Registered buyers have the opportunity to purchase up to four original pieces of artwork at the standard rate of £40 each. The only rule is the artist's identity remains secret until after the postcards have been sold.

This year there were 2,700 individual pieces of art on display, all but 19 of which

were sold at the sale raising over £100,000 for the fine art students. All the proceeds from the sale go to the Royal College of Art students and previous artists have included Tracey Emin, Grayson Perry and Gerhard Richter, as well as fashion designers Manolo Blahnik and Sir Paul Smith.

The postcards, arranged in groups of 100, are displayed on a single wall and each assigned an individual display number, for the public's perusal. On first entering, the wall seems to be covered in indistinguishable squares, but on closer examination, the intricate detail and variety of the work quickly becomes apparent. Though each postcard is a piece of art in its own right, displaying them all together in one room enhances the striking effects of each individual piece.

The range and diversity of artwork on display is overwhelming. Despite artists only being able to submit postcard sized work, every medium and style of art is clear to see. This year's exhibition had everything from a traditional watercolour of poppies (No.749) to knitted cupcakes attached to card (No.1642) and even a postcard shaped piece of chipboard (No.2347).

The artwork on display reflected a multitude of meanings and messages. There were overtly feminist pieces, highlighting the male dominance of the art world; political postcards that criticised the Labour government and postcards that made reference to popular contemporary artists, such as Damien Hirst and Banksy.

One postcard (No.2401), which just stat-

ed in bold multi-coloured print: "The only work I'll sell this year", was an ironic reminder of the difficulties of making a living as a professional artist. Postcard No.920 had been cut to the shape of a market-style price tag and coloured luminous green with '£40' written on it, a reference to the selling price of the work.

Grayson Perry, winner of the 2003 Turner prize, and 'the nation's favorite transvestite potter' as one art critic described him, first started displaying work at the secret show three years ago, although he has never actually been to the exhibition.

Perry, who is currently taking a well earned rest from the nation's press, after launching his highly acclaimed Walthamstow Tapestry exhibition, spoke to *Nouse* about why he continues to participate in the show, explaining "it is a neat idea and I like the simple discipline of a postcard."

Although all work submitted must be displayed anonymously, Perry claims that he never attempts to alter his usual way of working, believing that it would be 'a shame' for someone to get an example of his work that does not resemble his signature style. Nor does he approach the exhibition with any pre-designed ideas. "Generally I just do a drawing that I would have done anyway in my sketchbook" although he admits that he tends to make the work "a bit more finished looking" before submitting it.

The way the sale of the postcards is conducted gives members of the public the opportunity to buy work by artists who would usually be far out of their price range. "It's nice that someone can own a piece of mine for a relatively small sum and it is for a good cause."

Although RCA Secret 2009 has ended, those interested in seeing the exhibition, complete with artists' names and display numbers, can go online at www.rca.ac.uk/secret.

Top: RCA entry (2009) Grayson and Perry

Lowenna Waters



creative freedom and expression of this medium. I did not, however, stay to do a Fine Art degree for one reason: contemporary art schools have lost their way.

They are preaching the doctrine of conceptual art, a movement pioneered by Duchamp in 1917, which eradicates skill from

"Conceptual art is the cult of the Emperor's new clothes."

art, creativity from art and most importantly beauty from art. It revels in the absurdity of modern life and celebrates all that is depraved, chaotic and meaningless.

I found this environment paralyzing. I could not bring myself to create ugly, meaningless works.

Beauty has an intrinsic worth. True artwork is created when someone has a concept personal to them and then utilises it to transcend its base form as a linguistic "idea" in

order to illuminate us to an ideal, to redeem the slice of the human condition it confronts us with, therefore meriting the term "art".

Essentially, with a lot of conceptual art pieces, there is no need for the actual piece, it can be thrown away and we will still be left with the same idea it has attempted to express.

These pieces require a large chunk of writing next to them qualifying their existence. They have no intrinsic worth.

I have noticed a movement in the media recently reflecting this doctrine of thought. There have been documentaries, articles and radio programmes all discussing the topic of Beauty and the lack of Beauty in modern art. It seems that modern art despises beauty.

It mocks it and revels instead in ugliness and vulgarity in order to shock the audience into giving it some attention. For example the works of Sarah Lucas, Tracey Emin, Gilbert and George, Damien Hirst and the Chapmen brothers; they all revel in the sordid nature of life without any attempt at enlightening the viewer or transcending the base reality.

However, a turning point in the huge billion dollar edifice that is the contemporary art market appears to have been reached. People simply refuse to put up with it anymore.

The lack of skill required to create a lot of the pieces that are highly inflated in value and that flood the art market coupled with the worst recession since 1929 have had a knock on effect.

This is exemplified in Hirst's new collection of Blue paintings shown at the Wallace Collection. He has disregarded his factory of minions churning out mass produced pieces and tried his own hand at painting. His pieces have been slated by the critics, deeming them to be worse than the attempts of a "first year" art student.

It will be interesting to see the knock on effect this has on the next decade of art, and of that of the fresh faced graduates who must try to respond and adapt.

Hopefully they will tackle this challenge and do so with an awareness of beauty and sense the opportunity that has arisen for a revolution in contemporary art.

Conceptual art is, in my view, the cult of the Emperor's new clothes. I attended Camberwell College of Art and Design last year and completed an art foundation course. I paint and have always enjoyed the

Arts in depth

Lowenna Waters talks to poet Caroline Ashley about her recent successes



I met Caroline Ashley as rain was pelting down the streets of Summertown, Oxford. Student bicycles glisten as I dash to the refuge of her door. Venturing inside I am offered a cup of Earl Grey tea, in a specifically chosen “half naked mermaid mug”.

We settle down to talk in a room filled with glass ornaments and jewellery hung from picture frames - mostly Pre-Raphaelite. I sense Ashley's strong aesthetic extends beyond the pages of her mysterious poetry.

It is her distinctive narrative voice and her strong sense of atmosphere that has recently seen her gain some very noteworthy praise, namely from Bernard O' Donoghue, an English Fellow at Wadham College, a senior member of Oxford University Poetry

Society and winner of the Whitbread prize in 1995 for his seminal work “Gunpowder”.

Ashley has been published in *ASH* - the Oxford Poetry Society Magazine, but by her own admission, “I've been much too windy in the past about sending work out, but that is changing.”

We both light a cigarette, and I ask her how she started writing. She originally wrote in prose, but found it tedious and soon realised it would take her “nine thousand years to write a novel, yet I carried over a desire to tell stories but this time using a thimbleful of words. I had some kind feedback suggesting my prose was poetical so I thought I would try my hand at poetry.”

That was 5 years ago, and she is now

receiving significant praise. She was recently published in *The Interpreters House*, an Oxford-based poetry magazine, and Merryn Williams, Editor, commented how “Caroline has an instantly recognisable voice. Her poetry admits us to a world of flower-maps, grey lakes, drowning girls and the occasional ghost, always suggesting a little more than it seems.”

I asked how she nurtured this distinctive voice: “It is not conscious, I'm out of my time in a way; I'm not very 21st century. I veer away from too much reality. I think it's a form of escapism. I know the literature I've enjoyed most is where I've escaped to another world.”

She continues, “I love the notion ‘more than it seems’ and strive to add layers to my work, like the ‘Magic Eye’ pictures when suddenly you see the 2 dimensional as 3 dimensional.” Ashley's poetry is ethereal, otherworldly; it transcends the mundane monotony of modern day existence.

Her poems certainly provide a refuge. For instance, she comments upon her poem *Flower-Map*: “This was a very personal piece. I had an image of a woman bowed over paper, writing in a cold month, conscious of her own stupidity. The muse, the doppelganger was me trying to reach a poetical part of myself, as rescuer.

“And I wanted to explore the language of flowers. ‘Zinnia’ means thoughts of absent friend. I meant this to mean ‘you, the reader’. I'm very interested in the concept of the wounded healer and people who can't heal themselves yet can heal others.”

FLOWER-MAP

**At my drop-leaf table
I am bent like a snowdrop over pages
of my February nonsense
with an alphabetic flower-map as guide.
I go from acanthus to bridal rose, yet no
further,
and long for my lost muse -
my doppelganger.**

**Her outline is obscure, which suits
my blurred imagination, her form
hidden in stoles of mist. Grey of eye
she's as inscrutable as a lake at dusk.
Close, yet ghost-far, her tracery clings,
leads me from clematis, wisteria, to zinnia.
As her face clears, we breathe together.**

Caroline's work has a painterly quality. One can imagine the scenes depicted in a magnificent Pre-Raphaelite painting. She tells me “I often start with an image. There are some poems that arrive at me and some I arrive at. The reason I write poetry is as a response to life. There is a lovely quote from

BITTERSWEET

**I hear the wheels before I see her
as metal winces over stones.
In her chair, her thick-smocked gown
stiff with pins and stitched with herbs
in the quaint style of a healer.
I, the sour scribe
in a daze at the crossways'
my dark ledger of Lost Loves
wedged under my arm.**

**The first faded entry
mourns a crippled gir
with her sorrow-poultice
and I, the bitter boy
who refused her balms
and her unbroken kindness
though I in truth was needful.**

**Can I help you? She says sweetly.
Then, sweeter still, Do I know you?.**

Leonard Cohen: “Poetry is just the evidence of life. If your life is burning well, poetry is just the ash.” She continues, “It's a way of seeing, like a butcher may look at a house with a red door and see it as a blood-coloured door.”

As O' Donoghue commented, “despite her innocent appearance, there is a deeply unsettling disquieting undercurrent in the poems. There is an awareness of tragedy, of suffering, of struggle, pain, and sorrow. She describes how she “leans towards the melancholic, the tragic. It interests me; I feel an affinity with it.”

“I recently wrote a poem about a character with a watercolour heart who can't write unless it's raining, and ‘water’ is one of my themes - from sea to a teardrop and everything in-between.” Caroline always writes in pencil with an eraser at hand and only uses the computer “for the poem's formal education.”

If she could choose, she would much prefer her work to be in calligraphy. “My hope is that people will take something away that they have not seen before.”

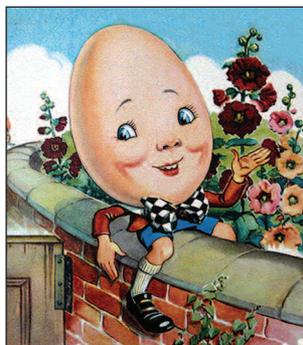
Up and coming events

Our pick of the Panto

I am sure all of you have been aching to fill the particular void that pantos have left in your life since last Christmas.

Worry not boys and girls, because this year Father Christmas is bringing us not one, but two major pantomime productions as well as the traditional Pant Soc performance. We must have been good this year.

The traditional tale of Prince meets girl is played out in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* at the Royal Opera House this year, opening on 11 December and featuring cast members from *Home and Away*.



Alternatively, if you're looking for something cheap and cheerful but lacking in Z list celebrities, there is always the reliable entertainment of Pant Soc. It's nice to have something you can count on, in these troubled times.

While *Nouse* and the society have been at odds in the past, tis the season so lets go

native and experience the wonders on offer at York. The hilarity kicks off early next term.

But our pick of the pantos has to be *Humpty Dumpty* at the York Theatre Royal, both written by and starring legendary actor-come-Panto Dame Berwick Kaler. In this bizarre twist on the classic nursery rhyme, an orphaned Humpty seeks to find his mother, whilst simultaneously trying to protect the tiny Kingdom of Pantoloon from the evil Eggula. It promises glitzy costumes and is well renowned for being the best in town. Also, how could you not find out what happens to poor Dumpty? *Humpty Dumpty* runs from December 10 to 30 January.

Christmas at Claridges

Claridge's Christmas tree, was designed by Dior Creative Director John Galliano, and, although more *Alice in Wonderland* than *Winter Wonderland* is sure to get you in the Christmas spirit.

The tree which can be found in the hotel's foyer, is a true work of art. Hunched over, gnarly branches outstretched, the ethereal tree appears as if shipped in from the set of *Sleepy Hollow*. The installation is lit from below which creates a dramatic and magical effect. The shadows dance on the walls behind and you feel like you're in another world

entirely. Hotel Manager Phillipe Leboeuf describes it as “another bold step in Claridge's history to provoke, confound and delight our guests.” The piece fits



Above: Photo by Dave M Bennett/ Getty Images

perfectly into its glamorous Art Deco surroundings complete with kitsch models of sleeping leopards, blue parrots and a unicorn.

However, like any work of art, it is not without its controversy. Following the unveiling of the commission last week, Galliano has been charged with ‘the kidnap of Christmas’ by various members of the press. The question remains: is it really fair to paint Galliano as the Grinch who stole Christmas? Or should he be praised for his creative Christmas spirit?

Art is designed to provoke a reaction and the best thing about this piece is that it is certainly different; his collaboration with Claridge's this year is well worth a look.

Music.

Estella Adeyeri interviews Wax:On guests The Count & Sinden about how it all began

The Count & Sinden are a DJing duo from London, recently responsible for tearing up dance floors just about everywhere. The two were already well-acclaimed before joining forces – chances are you'll have heard their work at any self-respecting club night. Sinden has remixed artists ranging from Björk, Basement Jaxx and Crystal Castles to name but a few. The Count goes by the name Hervé on his own, and alongside remixing artists including Depeche Mode and Bloc Party, he runs his own record label called Cheap Thrills (home of Fake Blood and more). Catching up with the Count/Hervé/Joshua, he told me how it all started out.

"I've basically been making music since I was a small kid. I started off playing drums and piano, then in my early teens I got an Atari computer and a keyboard, and started DJing when I was like 16." Like Graeme (Sinden), he was more into collecting music, getting into hip hop in his mid-to-late teens, and then starting to DJ.

"We had our own paths until we met one day in a mutual friend's studio, and he just said, 'you two should work together.' We got on really well, so I just said: 'yeah, let's do it.' He came round to mine to do a studio session, ended up staying for five days, and we did the first EP. It had *Beeper* as the B side - we wanted a kind of garage thing, but with a new twist. We thought 'oh, people won't buy it but we'll put it on there.' But that was the one people went crazy for."

Yes, they couldn't have predicted the phenomenal club success of *Beeper*, which became the party anthem of 2007 and scooped the International DJ Tune of the Year Award. Then last year, after signing to Domino Records, the track got reworked and re-released, featuring the vocals of rap mistress Kid Sister. "We'd been in contact with her for a while through A-Trak. She was just starting out with different beats and



stuff, and we got her on it and she did a really good job." This new version of *Beeper* proved to be a hit, reaching No.1 in the UK Dance Singles chart.

Since then, the duo have toured all over the UK and ventured to other parts of the globe, unafraid of putting together eclectic sets, and always leaving new fans in their wake. "When we play we're really trying to sew together a wide variety of music; it's not just like

we'll bang one kind of tune and then bang another kind of tune, we'll try and make it a flowing thing – not in a pretentious way – but in a way that you'll have different sections, and be entertained by different kinds of music rather than just one kind. I think it's more exciting, more like an event, an alive thing. This is our music, and we just try and get everyone involved in it really."

"We don't just wanna be two dudes standing behind the keyboards"

This year they released the massive tune 'Mega', and have mainly been working towards an album, though the project has seen its share of setbacks: "Obviously the album's been a long time coming. We've gone through so many phases with it and we kind of upset the label and everybody in management saying we don't want to do this, you know – we need to stay true to what we are. So we've gone back and done more stuff that we'd play in the clubs. That's really what we wanna stick to being – we don't just wanna be two dudes standing behind the keyboards with some wailing diva in front of us. We wanna be true to ourselves. I think we've been trying to do that, but we've been led a bit astray by thinking about playlists, and trying to get on radio, stuff like that. But now we're just trying to make the biggest records that people enjoy in the clubs, and hopefully they'll buy the album."

At Domino it seems that The Count & Sinden have at last found the creative freedom they craved. "You couldn't get more supportive than them, they've always believed in us." Their much anticipated album should see its release date around April next

year. "We're just rounding up the last few sessions of writing. We've done five new tracks, and I think we're gonna do a couple more." The album may see further collaborative efforts with other artists. "We've got some possibilities lined up, we've just got to wait and see how they pan out. It's quite difficult with collabs 'cause you do them and then obviously, over time people's albums come out and then they change their mind. I think we've lost four major artists through one reason or another, you know, us changing our minds about the beat, or them changing their minds about their vocals, or just disappearing or not being able to reach them. Incidents have been going on, but in a way it just makes you regenerate and rejuvenate the album. It sounds a bit of a silly cliché, but it's just all made the album better."

It would appear then that 2010 is set to be huge year for The Count & Sinden, as a pair and individually – Hervé will release a solo album next year, whilst Sinden will be launching his own record label. In the meantime, jungle infused single 'Strange Things' drops this week, and Hervé assures me that the video to B-side 'Elephant 1234' is not to be missed. If you haven't already done so, check them out.

Do you want to go and see The Count & Sinden live? The Warehouse Project coordinates a series of electro club nights from September through to New Year's Eve in Manchester's Piccadilly, and has already featured huge acts like Hot Chip and Erol Alkan. This Friday 11 December is the Warehouse Christmas Special, a sold out event where The Count & Sinden will play alongside other acts including Crookers, A-Trak and Zombie Disco Squad. For a chance to win a pair of tickets answer the following: What is The Count's solo alias?

Send along with your full name and contact details to music@nouse.co.uk

Future Sounds by Adam Bychawski

Predictions, they have a nasty habit of backstabbing you. After declaring your faith in a dead cert winner, they go and produce an album that sends everyone awkwardly distancing themselves (see Black Kids, Temper Trap, etc.).

So consider this column future-proofed with a disclaimer that it really isn't our fault if said bands disappear off the face of the earth post-recommendation. That said, if we call a winner, it was definitely us first. Being the end of the year, it seems like an appropriate time to place our bets for 2010, so in no particular order here goes:

Delphic are a Manchester four piece that pay homage to their Hacienda dance roots but revitalise them with a modern, electronic sheen. It's only a matter of time before some music journalist labels them un-Manchester and they go huge.

Debut album, *Acolyte* is released in January via Polydor. They've also been supporting techno godfathers Orbital, co-headlining the perma-chic French indie label Kitsune's UK tour and appearing on every-

one's favourite goblin Jools Holland's TV show.

Next up are **Copy Haho**, definitely the most exciting thing to come from Stonehaven, a small town near Aberdeen, Scotland. They sound a bit like Pavement and make catchy indie pop - so really something you've never heard before. But what makes them so endearing is the hapless uncertainty in songs like 'Wrong Direction' and 'You Are My Coal Mine', which don't seem to deter them at all from bursting out with happy melodic choruses. They're also playing Leeds' mighty Brudenell Social Club tonight. Hurry up and grab a ticket.

If you're looking for something more laid back, it doesn't get more chilled than **Washed Out**. Ernest Greene's bedroom synth-pop sounds like a Beach Boys cassette smeared with Vaseline and then played through cheap speakers. Think of blurry, sun-bleached surfer photos, and you're not far from what Washed Out captures. Greene's EP, appropriately called *High Times*, is on the shelves now.

The Drums might well be another indie band from New York, if it wasn't for their weirdly dislocated Manchurian miserabilia, of the likes of the Smiths, that they combine with fun, energetic LA pop. What follows should have been a disaster, but instead they've created straightforward but infectious melodies, despite being about frustration, longing and rejection.

Their EP is called *Summertime*, rather inappropriate looking at the bleak grey Yorkshire landscape, but let it take you to a happy place far away, preferably somewhere with palm trees. They're coming to the O2 Academy in Leeds next February.

Finally, **Gold Panda** is not the idol of a lost Chinese religion, but it is a 28-year-old London fellow named Derwin. What's startling is the sheer range of his music. His latest EP *Before* has everything from sombre floating piano, glitchy techno loops and even a hip-hop style 'aiiiright' sample. He's playing Fabric in London with Four Tet in January, so get on down. You got that? Now go make us proud, class of 2010.



Above: Copy Haho

The London Underground goes psychedelic

Tom Killingbeck chats to Invasion about the retro scene, wizards and other fun things.

London's love affair with the psychedelic has once again been rekindled. Not since the drug-addled excesses of the late Sixties and early Seventies has the town reverberated with the garish guitars, whimsical lyrics, and preposterous drumming. The freak scene is back in a big way, as a host of new bands embrace the heady Dionysian values of their forebears. The rut of identikit landfill indie that populated post-Libertines London has stirred a new breed of artists into challenging mediocrity, as even the most mainstream bands get in touch with their wild side. The Arctic Monkeys have grown their hair, and The Horrors have been critically adored for their krautrock-meets-psychedelia record 'Primary Colours'.

Leading this colourful new pack are **Invasion**, a three piece from North London, who bravely (some would say foolishly) combine vintage Seventies rock riffs with Motown soul, throwing in a touch of obscure Eighties metal for good measure. Marek Steven, founding member of the band, is as good a guide as any to the rumblings of the psychedelic London underground. An extremely busy man, he is also, despicably, a music journalist, while somehow finding the time to shoot 'just low budget' music videos for cult bands such as Hackney art-nutters **Comanechi**. With just a set up of guitar, drums and vocals, the amount of psychedelic funk metal racket the band kick up is quite amazing. As Marek admits, "the band evolved from another I was in where the bassist left and we just carried on". No great loss, as he



more than makes up for it with a huge, classic guitar sound, combined with riffs that dangerously will you to both dance and fight. Contrasting with the metal power of the guitarist is space-robed diva frontwoman Chan Brown (ex-Do Me Bad Things). Chan is a frontwoman in the classic soul sense, like Aretha Franklin if she'd lived on Venus for a couple of decades. Marek agrees that "Motown is just incredible" and it's this open-mindedness and willingness to experiment that separates the band from the hordes of 'generic' metalheads. While definitely retro in its themes (wizards, space, other metal

Marek Steven, Invasion's guitarist and DJ for Skill Wizard

clichés), new record 'The Master Alchemist' combines breakneck speeds (songs rarely go over the two minute mark) with megalithic riffs and gloriously powerful vocals. Recorded on analogue, released by This Is Music Ltd and produced by Simian Mobile Disco's Jas Shaw, it's like MC5 and Black Sabbath jamming with Etta James. In a good way. Perhaps that's why the NME has been so vocal about declaring them the future of metal, or perhaps it's because drummer Zel plays with her cymbals aflame.

Marek admits he was "surprised, in a good way", by the press' hype of his

band, pleased that "they've finally started covering heavier bands". Invasion may be the most successful of this new crop of bands, but a fertile scene is growing, which Marek has helped cultivate through his Skill Wizard club-night. Nights vary from "very popular" thrash nights (playing classic Metallica and Megadeth) to more cult-orientated psych and doom nights (playing everything from the Yardbirds to Electric Wizard), with the cream of the psychedelic crop being invited to play.

There are plenty of other notable acts on the London circuit that are helping raise psychedelic awareness. Marek recommends **Chrome Hoof**, a twelve piece inter-dimensional George Clinton style jazz funk metal orchestra adored by Klaxons. They recently nearly made it to Leeds but failed due to running out of money, thanks to spending it all on a giant Ram stage prop which fired lasers from its eyes.

Bo Ningen are touring with Invasion next year and are possibly the coolest looking band of all time - bell-bottom clad, Japanese psych warriors with hair as long as Rapunzel and a distinct lack of health and safety onstage. Marek also brings up progressive Hammond organ bothers **Diagonal**, who hail from sunny Brighton. Their potty live performances are balanced with consummate musicianship.

All these bands combine their retro influences with a truly modern mindset, experimenting with sounds in the same way as their Seventies heroes, and bringing a more acid-drenched shade of colour to the town's bounteous music scene.

Music Reviews



ARTIST: LIGHTNING BOLT
DATE: 3 DECEMBER
VENUE: LEEDS BRUDENELL SOCIAL CLUB
REVIEW: TOM KILLINGBECK



Two piece drum 'n bass rock juggernaut Lightning Bolt are in town and the air is heavy with the prospect of bleeding ears, rhythms only dogs can hear and widespread aural destruction. The duo have just released their fifth LP, *Earthly Delights*, and the audience is impatient to experience the new material in the band's infamous guerilla-style live setting.

Warming things up in style are the bizarre Liverpoolians a.P.A.T.T., a band of multi-instrumentalists dressed in uniforms that hint at mental institutionalism, who come on like the Sun Ra Arkestra doing battle with Mr. Bungle. Careering from one musical genre to another, their anti-hierarchical musical fondue is extremely appealing, both accessible and impertinent at once.

One second we experience a strange calypso, next a commendably bearded man is screaming urgently atop a speed metal gonzo beat. Rejecting the stage and per-

forming in the audience, the band is encircled on all sides by bodies, and yet this is far from a Rourke's Drift situation as they unleash wave upon wave of musical atomic bombs upon those gathered. The volume is bowel-shaking; Brian Gibson's bass soulfully yet brutally laying down extra-sensory funk rhythms, as Brian Chippendale, ex-world's fastest drummer, explodes with physical force, a whirling dervish in a bizarre Mexican wrestling mask. People are putting their fingers in their ears and running from the music, others completely entranced and dancing wildly at the super loud ear massacre.

This is a different frontier of rock 'n roll - stripped down, souped up and dangerous - junglist and hyper-dub rhythms played live. After the kaleidoscopic onslaught of physical noise those who fled are left to their shame, those who held fast doomed to an eternity of ringing ears.



ARTIST: MONSTERS OF FOLK
DATE: 17 NOVEMBER
VENUE: LONDON TROXY
REVIEW: EMMA RUDECK



Expectations ran high before Monsters of Folk took to the stage in London. But, by the time the first song 'Say Please' had finished, it was obvious they weren't going to disappoint. Comprising of M. Ward, Jim James from My Morning Jacket, Conor Oberst and Mike Mogis, both of Bright Eyes fame, the band is an impressive collaboration project of musicians who could all easily perform a headlining UK tour in their own right.

The set was truly epic. Lasting over two and a half hours, the depth and range of the music was exceptional. The band wove together songs from their recently issued album (also called *Monsters of Folk*) alongside a striking range of material from their respective backlists.

Songs the band had written together were more polished than their cover versions of older work. 'Dear God (Yours Sincerely, M.O.F.)', 'Man Named Truth' and the final song, 'His Master's Voice',

stood out as particularly good. But their selection of Bright Eyes covers was also well received. The haunting vocals of M. Ward and Jim James contrasted Conor Oberst's deeper, grittier tones, adding a new dimension to the previously familiar songs.

Audience interaction was minimal, limited to a few brief introductions to members of the band and the occasional mumbling of "Muchos gracias". With a less impressive performance, this would have been a real sore point of the night. As it was, it seemed insignificant that they barely spoke, the music doing all the talking.

The show ended with real energy and exuberance. Oberst jumped around the stage during the encore and mounted the drum kit before letting the piano roll off the side of the stage - the finishing touch to a compelling night. And if Monsters of Folk return to the UK, I'll be first in line to see them again.

Nouse Playlist

Alternative Christmas Songs by Estella Adeyeri

James Brown - 'Merry Christmas Baby': This Christmas will mark the third anniversary of the loss of "The Godfather of Soul" himself. This classy Christmas track is a festive reminder of the legendary entertainer.

Lady Gaga (feat. Space Cowboy) - 'Christmas Tree': "Light me up, put me on top, let's fa la la la la, la la la la." Yep, synth beats and numerous yuletide innuendos, courtesy of the Gaga.

The Ramones - 'Merry Christmas (I Don't Want To Fight Tonight)': Bringing punk rock to the holidays are the Ramones, in an unusually coherent moment for the group. Take two minutes for a festive headbang to this.

Death Cab For Cutie - 'Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)': A credible Christmas ballad here from indie favourites Death Cab.

The Knife - 'Reindeer': The Swedish outfit turn their moody electro pop sounds to more seasonal subject matter. Think soundtrack to a darker version of The Snowman.

Snoop Dogg - 'A Pimp's Christmas Song': Taken from the sadly overlooked album of 2008, *Christmas in the Doghouse*, here Snoop declares December 25th to be "a pimp's Christmas," as only Snoop could.

Film.

Michael Allard

Hollywood's portayal of the blind leaves much to be desired



The tale of the blind man pervades some of our oldest stories. In Greek mythology, the prophet Tiresias helps Odysseus on his long journey home, and warns Oedipus not to go down a road that ends with marrying his own mother; in Christian theology, Jesus' miracles include many blind men being given the power of sight once more.

Moving into the 20th century and the modern cinematic tradition, the idea of sightlessness paradoxically found a place in the most visual of media. One of Charlie Chaplin's greatest films, *City Lights*, is the story of The Tramp falling in love with a blind girl selling flowers on street corners, ending happily with the recovery of her sight. Ideas behind the logic of film had kicked off as a representation of both realism and fantasy – it's amazing that Chaplin took interest in the condition of blindness, but the curing of Virginia Cherrill's character comes across as an insulting celebration of an art form which she normally wouldn't be able to enjoy.

We saw an interesting portrayal of the blind last year, when Fernando Meirelles followed up *City of God* and *The Constant Gardener* with *Blindness*. The story upon which it was based was made readily available in Braille, and its author José Saramago was happy for it to be adapted for the screen as long as the characters had no names, and the city in which the story is set remained anonymous. Watching the film, that's the least of the audience's worries: when an epidemic of blindness spreads across society like wildfire, the first sufferers are quarantined, left to their own devices and find themselves in a nightmarish dystopia where humanity plunges into a Lord of the Flies-like hysteria. Disease spreads quickly, food shortages become widespread, and male population resort to rape and murder.

The National Federation of the Blind condemned the film's release, and the American Council of the Blind declared their 'outrage' at this allegory, stating that 'blind people do not behave like uncivilized, animalised creatures.' The concern is certainly justified in terms of how horrific this \$25 million film, that features stars like Julianne Moore and Danny Glover really is. But the irony behind the complaint, concerning an art form that the blind community is not expected to enjoy, creates a far larger ethical dilemma: is it really fair to film the 'experience' of a condition that can't really be re-created by one of its sufferers? Blind artists working in visual media have existed, but none were behind the making of this film. The problem is not dissimilar to issues raised whenever Hollywood makes films, for example, in countries rife with poverty, and expresses Western ideas rather than giving a voice to the poor who don't have the same means of expression. It's a privilege to be able to make, and to enjoy, cinema: it can tread on unfamiliar ground, but we must remember that no art is universally accessible, and that there's a difference between criticising cultural exclusion, and promoting it.

FILM: A SERIOUS MAN

DIRECTOR: JOEL COEN, ETHAN COEN

STARRING: MICHAEL STUHLBARG, FRED MELAMED

REVIEW: DUNCAN PELHAM

RUNTIME: 105 MINS



Critics and film students alike love to agonise over the Coen brothers' idiosyncratic films. With each Coen release, cinephiles pore over hours of footage, searching for imagery, clues, scholarly subtexts – only to have their analyses rubbished by the Coens' cursory shrug and insistence that their films simply 'aren't about anything, really'. But are we to take their word for it? After all, these are the pranksters who released a film (*Fargo*) that opened with the words 'based on a true story' that was anything but. And *A Serious Man* will be no exception to the fanboy theorizing: is this strange tale a profound meditation on existentialism? Or a modern-day retelling of the biblical tale of Job? Perhaps, but, more importantly, this is a Coen film: one about the fun that can be had in gently deriding everyone and everything, and, typically, arriving at a baffling message of life's futility.

A Serious Man tells the story of an ill-fated Jew and physics lecturer, Larry Gopnik, who lives in a bland, suburban Jewish community and is beset

by endless misfortune. His adulterous wife demands a divorce, his job tenure is on the line, he struggles with alienated children and a troublesome brother. Meanwhile, one of Larry's students is trying to bribe him for a pass grade while threatening to sue him for defamation. In a desperate attempt to make sense of it all and to be a 'mensch' – a serious man – Larry turns to his religion for answers.

Larry goes from Rabbi to Rabbi searching for meaning – and, to much hilarity, each Rabbi digresses, via irrelevant parables and perplexing imagery, from the question they quite clearly do not know the answer to. In *Hudsucker Proxy* we saw the brothers poke fun at corporate business; in *Fargo* at Minnesotans; in *Burn After Reading* at American narcissism; and now the brothers gently hide the Jewish culture of their upbringing. The humour may be too off-kilter to have audiences howling with laughter, but shrewd enough to have them smirking: be it family slurping of soup; or the paradox of a physicist teaching the principles of



uncertainty and yet seeking certainty in his religion; or the wise Rabbi dishing out advice cribbed from Jefferson Airplane lyrics. And the point, like so many Coen films, is that there is no point. Larry must accept that there is no real meaning.

However, the torture Larry's subjected to and his increasing spiritual desperation is, at times, almost intolerable to watch. This is truly a black comedy – the film is a concoction of bitter darkness and joyful mockery. But *A Serious Man's* characters are

drawn more finely than in the usual Coen comedies: the hyperbole-laden caricatures of *The Big Lebowski* or *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* are replaced with disturbingly realist brushstrokes. Broadway actor Michael Stuhlbarg gives an inspired, yet understated performance, imbuing Larry with a helpless sensibility. This time, the brothers sadistically and comically afflict their subjects, we come to care about these tormented souls, which, strangely, makes this one of their warmest features yet.

FILM: THE BOX

DIRECTOR: RICHARD KELLY

STARRING: CAMERON DIAZ, JAMES MARSDEN

RUNTIME: 115 MINS

REVIEW: LEV HARRIS



If you disregard his unremarkable and overly ambitious 2007 sophomore effort *Southland Tales*, fans of Richard Kelly have been made to wait for a follow-up of any note since his weird yet wonderful debut effort – 2001's cult classic *Donnie Darko*. In true *Donnie* style, his new feature *The Box*, adapted from the short story *Button*, *Button* by sci-fi writer Richard Matheson, imaginatively subverts numerous genres and narrative conventions, playing out in the style of a 1970's supernatural thriller with titbits of horror and sci-fi thrown in for good measure. The premise is intriguing: a couple receive a box containing a red button, should they press it, they will receive \$1 million but someone, somewhere will die. This moral quandary essentially centres around the idea of extraordinary things happening to ordinary people, while tackling big themes such as the nature of humanity, family and control.

Our protagonists (James

Marsden and Cameron Diaz) are pitted against the malevolent and unscrupulous Frank Langella and the story unfolds with an admirable tone of foreboding; Kelly's own style is imposed for all to see. And yet he becomes too wound up in his own hodgepodge of ideas. The tightly shot beginning soon gives way to melodrama and the overreaching sci-fi characteristics become less and less believable as the movie progresses. Mainstream audiences can only suspend their disbelief so far, and the unfocused ending leads us to wonder whether Kelly's fantastic debut was just a flash in the pan, as he continues to demonstrate a failure to fulfil his once bright potential.

FILM: EDEN LAKE (1998)

DIRECTOR: JAMES WATKINS

STARRING: KELLY REILLY, MICHAEL FASSBENDER

RUNTIME: 91 MINS

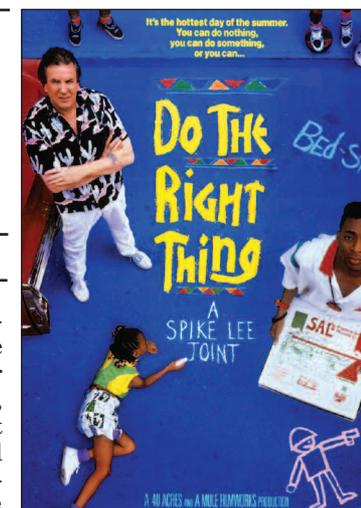
REVIEW: JAMES GILL



Knife crime; gangs; drugs; underage drinking; immigrants; the European Union dragging their feet; handing out abortions left, right and centre... Well, maybe not that last one. But even then, and in a genre noted for neither subtlety nor liberalism, *Eden Lake* is a film recognised more for right-wing politics than as one of the finest Brit-horrors of the last ten years. Which, frankly, is a damn shame.

Its plot is simple – hoodies go a-hunting – and its violence extreme (more than one person is doused in petrol and set alight), but the film is an education in suspense that many modern directors would do well to ponder. Prodigious amounts of tension are eked from the same hoary slash-and-run routines that can so easily make for a *Wrong Turn* or *House of Wax*.

Just as importantly, the film offers a surprisingly affecting emotional premise for its characters' actions and a roster of startling performances, further ele-



vating *Eden Lake* above simply pornography. It's only serious, but unavoidable defects are the genre clichés and the almost self-parodic finale – abandoning the sensitive approach of earlier scenes for an over-simplified, reactionary sound-bite.

Yet for the majority of its economical running time, *Eden Lake* frames as claustrophobic a nightmare as any of its horror forebears. Its unflinching gaze lends its politics an authenticity and urgency more disturbing than the violence itself. It is brilliantly crafted, explicit and ruthless; so much so that some may find themselves unable to watch to the end – not necessarily a bad thing. Disturbing, topical and terrifying in equal measures.

Food & Drink.

RESTAURANT: THE LIVING ROOM
ADDRESS: 1 BRIDGE STREET
PRICES: £9 - £20 FOR MAIN
REVIEW: PIPPA DYBLE

★★★★☆

**"Steak? Salad? Burger? Curry?
Fish? Lamb? Risotto? Light bite?
You name it, they had it."**



According to the Living Room website, the restaurant is 'chic, upbeat and welcoming'. They were entirely right.

Immediately, I was struck by the attentive, friendly bar man who recognised me from the night before! After having asked if I still had a headache, he advised my friend and I to try the classic mojito; a mojito it was.

As we sat sipping, I was suddenly aware that we were the youngest people in the room. It was a Friday night, a time for the 9-to-5-ers to enjoy the long weekend.

Yet this did not detract from the enjoyment of the evening, adding a sophisticated twist to the buzzing and vibrant atmosphere.

The barman informed us the steak and ale pie was to die for, but that the chips weren't top class, so we would have to wait and see.

Steph the smiley waitress showed us to our table overlooking the river. We ordered two bottles of wine: the house white and house red. Neither of these bottles were cheap at £13 and £18 respectively. However when they arrived, we were pleasantly surprised by the quality of the wine.

Being indecisive is not the greatest characteristic when faced with an extensive menu. Starters or no starters? Steak? Salad? Burger? Curry? Fish? Lamb? Risotto? Light bite? You name it, they had it.

After some deliberation, we

decided to go for two starters between the four of us: an antipasto platter consisting of Prosciutto ham, mozzarella, rocket, olives, baby tomatoes and baked bread, and ravioli stuffed with goats cheese in a tomato and red pepper sauce garnished with basil and mozzarella.

When the waitress came to take our order, the mains had only been skimmed over. She was extremely accommodating and took our starter order first whilst leaving us to ponder over the rest.

The starters were delicious. The antipasto was great for sharing, and what could have been a standard pasta had brilliant taste, and was a good size.

Leaving just enough time for us to appreciate our starter, inhale the atmosphere and enjoy the good wine, our mains arrived: Peking duck with pancakes, cucumber, spring onion and hoi sin sauce; beer battered Whitby cod and chips (the chips certainly exceeded the honest barman's expectations) with mushy peas and tartar sauce; pan fried seabass fillets served on a lemon grass, lime leaf, and bok choy broth; and the chefs special: chicken breast stuffed with mozzarella and spinach, wrapped in Parma ham on a creamy mushroom risotto garnished with rocket.

These four very different dishes were all exquisite and delicate in taste. The chicken was succulent, the fish cooked to perfection and the

duck oozing with flavour. Presentation was excellent, all served on stylish white plates and the portion sizes were hearty without being insultingly large.

Even though none of our meals were below £12.95, the quality and quantity of food made us more than happy to pay. Having said this, the meals came with no extra sides, which came at a dear cost of £3 extra.

After feeling full from mains, we decided to go for The Living Room's sharing board. The platter consisted of two of each: blueberry cheesecake, warm orange chocolate sponge, crème brulee, lemon meringue and winter berry Eton mess. Presented extremely well, they were all bite size portions. The chocolate sponge was a little disappointing, being quite dry and nothing special, but the other four desserts certainly made up for it - our favourite was the winter twist on a traditional summer, Eton mess.

The night had ended well. We reflected on the evening whilst listening to live acoustic music covers. The atmosphere was superb.

The Living Room was, overall, a fantastic restaurant. From the accommodating, friendly staff to the quality of food, the view over the flooded river to the presentation of the dessert platter, this restaurant hit the spot.

WINE R.J. Pringle

As the Australian wine connoisseur Len Evans so wisely said, "you can only have so many bottles in your life. Never drink a bad one". Although I firmly believe that when it comes to wine the emphasis ought to be more upon the drinking than the tasting, I draw the line at paying £6 for "expense-shredder's finest red" (It's always a clue when a wine omits both the country and the grape from the label).

I'm quite sure such wines provide the loosening of inhibitions necessary for a promiscuous night out. However, the sheer determination required to actually finish a bottle begs a level of concentration I am simply not willing to provide when embarking on the quest for relaxation. With this in mind and a devoted group of self-proclaimed experts in tow, I went in search of five reasonably-priced ways to enhance your pre-drinking experience.

2009 Neblina Carmenere, Valle Central, Chile (13%; £3.99 each for two, Majestic). Soft and sweet. Good if you're looking for something slightly different. Excellent strawpedoed.

2009 Southbank Estate Sauvignon Blanc, Marlborough (13%; £5.49 each for two, Majestic) "Classic Marlborough Sauvignon. Ripe gooseberries, Granny Smith apples and freshly mown grass on the nose are followed by the crisp, clean acidity and refreshing finish on the



palate that are the hallmark of this variety. Excellent with seafood and goat's cheese." (Majestic) Grass seemed a little fanciful, although by the second bottle we were coming round to the idea.

2005 Rioja Reserva Marqués de la Concordia (13.5%; £6.49 each for two, Majestic) Dark fruit, cedar and spice. Festive stuff perhaps even good enough to help you survive the ghastly ex-flatmate Christmas dinner you were bullied into attending.

2006 Familae Piccini Chianti Reserva (13%; £5.49 was £10.99, Sainsbury's, offer ends 15/12/09) Rich and fruity. Good with lamb. A bottle for that Sunday roast with the housemates, perhaps?

2008 Marquis de Pennautier Viognier, Vin de Pays d'Oc (13%; £4.99 each for two, Majestic) Grapefruit and apricots. Crisp and fresh.

PUB Richard Smith

★★★★★

Five star ratings can't be handed out like an RBS bonus, they have to be justified. Situated on Lawrence Street, The Rook & Gaskill is a drinking pub. No pool tables, no TV screens, no frills. That is why it's so good, it knows its place and it's happy there.

Crucially, what it does offer is a mellow, relaxed atmosphere and some of the finest ales Yorkshire can produce.

The name commemorates the last two men to be hanged in our fair city, Peter Rook and Leonard Gaskill, in 1696. As a free house, the pub can rotate its drinks, so every visit there's a different pint to try.

Usually, the logical next step from 'drinking pub' and 'finest ale' is usually 'anti-student', but the crowd in the Rook is diverse.

There are no intimidating regulars guarding the bar and just a smattering of tourists. The long haired, metal band t-shirt clad barmen are all welcoming and are always willing to recommend the latest tippie. The ceiling of the main lounge is clad in a mosaic of different beer mats, showcasing the pub's fine ale pedigree.

The number of ales on tap reaches double figures, ranging from the golden, crisp, gold



medal winning Harvest Pale to the dark and brooding Midnight Bell.

Ask for a pint of Carlsberg here and a steel toe-capped size 11 will be kicking you over the walls to Varsity and a life of characterless, saccharine pub meets bar meets food meets music, jack-of-all-trades mediocrity. There are also a couple of ciders, premium lagers and even a fruit beer, for those with more extravagant tastes.

Gallery and Ziggy's may have their charm, but this pub is really something. The Rook and Gaskill Inn is a truly refreshing change to the treadmill of university nightlife.

Catching up with friends over a truly original, locally brewed beer is, for me, one of the pleasures of student life, and the Rook and Gaskill is probably the best place to do it.

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Liam O'Brien

The newest legal drugs are just as dangerous, if less well known

As a new wave of legal highs takes Britain by storm, the tabloid press are waking up to easy stories of abuse

As someone who rarely goes outside, the internet is a valuable friend whose constancy and companionship have outlasted many transitory connections I made to the outside world. And, as those who have read my past *Nouse* stuff may know, one of my favourite pursuits is reading *The Sun's* marvelous website. Giving the hilariously obese specimens of our good nation a brief respite, the red top's current bugbear is the legal high.

Starting last year with videos of people off their faces on Salvia (a herb known to move those who smoke it to 'the subjective realm'), in the past couple of weeks reports have emerged of the adverse affects of Mephedrone, sold legally as plant fertilizer. A 14 year-old girl died after taking the drug with ketamine, and Durham police recently urged authorities to stamp out the drug's circulation after one unfortunate user elected to tear off his scro-

tum. He had believed, possibly after reading some choice passages of *La Nausée*, that centipedes had taken root in his genitalia.

Naturally, Mephedrone is all the rage in university

"The drug is said to emulate the effects of a mix of coke and ecstasy"

towns across the country. All of this is to be expected, but alarmingly the drug is said to emulate the effects of a mix of coke and ecstasy, as well as being dirt cheap and readily available. A quick Google search yields several sites selling the drug for the purposes of 'research'. The largest provider offers ten grams for £80, while a child-sized

half-gram is a snip at £7. By comparison, a gram of coke normally fetches £30-60 dependent upon region.

Though stripping one's septum with bastardised Miracle-Gro hardly represents my idea of fun, the craze scarcely comes as a surprise. Two years ago animal worming tablets were a popular option on the reveller's menu.

On the few occasions I crossed the threshold this term, Mephedrone abuse has been all too clear. Local nights at York and further afield in Leeds and Liverpool have seen young people dipping their keys into small, grimy bags of white powder. This year, those who don't see drug use as particularly harmful have been given ammunition with comments from fired drug advisor David Nutt.

However, Mephedrone provides such an easy access point to hard drugs that this may make steering clear a wise decision.

Jane Grenville



Fighting back against my critics

I have returned to the University media for the first time this year, in order to give those of you who are new a bit of an introduction to where I stand within the University.

As Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC) for Students, I sit on the Senior Management Group where I represent your interests in policy discussions, including budget negotiations, and set strategy for enhancing the student experience.

It's like cabinet government. The Vice Chancellor is the Prime Minister and the PVCs, like ministers, hold portfolios: Research, Teaching & Learning, Estates, External Relations and, of course, Students. Together with the Directors of operational sections we hammer out the future direction of the university and make sure that it stays solvent: we think about money. A lot.

I realise that's all rather factual. But you need to know these things to understand something about the issue of the moment, portering. Listen up to the position I've been put in: I've been called the 'PVC Against Students' recently, so I think I have the right to answer back.

Times are hostile to universities - there's plenty of warning signs that major cuts are coming. York's position is comparatively good, but we're tightening our belts to avoid catastrophic cuts later on. So we did

some hard thinking last summer during the annual budget round. Among the savings we agreed, a small proportion involved the re-configuring of porters' shifts. We did not, as some claim, "slash" portering. We decided to do four things: firstly, save money by reducing the number of managers, not porters. Then we chose to re-focus porters in local zones so they could get to know the students in their care, and also to move three porters into the security team to provide mobile support. Finally we decided to make the ratio of night porters to students more equal across campus. This meant changing night shifts, and no, I'm not deaf and blind - I realise that this is unpopular (although I have to say that little objection was raised when we consulted student leaders on this possibility last term). We're now looking at how the new system is bedding in, because we think it has some real strengths over the old one. I'm happy to take comments and suggestions on the specific email at: portering@york.ac.uk.

There is a statistic that may calm anxiety over safety. The ratio of porters and security staff to students at night (including non-residents on campus) is one to 500. The ratio of police to public in Heslington and Fulford at night is one to a population of about 10,000. Still think we're stingy on student safety?

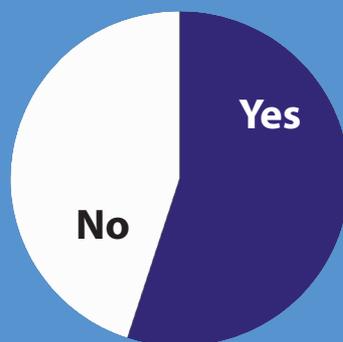
The Burning Question

This edition, *Nouse* asked:

Are you satisfied with the YUSU response towards portering cuts?

179 people voted, with the majority stating

Yes



98 people voted Yes

(55%)

81 people voted No

(45%)

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

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

Letters

It's too early for housing

Dear *Nouse*,

I'd like to articulate my frustration at how first-years have to choose their housemates for next year so very far in advance. Some of us might still be undecided about whether we could hack another year of the people we've been forced to live with in halls. The system seems a bit flawed - unless we've found people to socialise with from our course or societies, we won't be living with anyone like minded.

But all my housemates are talking about housing arrangements for next year before Christmas! So now I'm being forced into saying "oh I'd love to live with you" when I certainly don't mean it. But this is the only way to avoid being left alone. Should I be penalised for not wanting to go out clubbing every single week? What if I just want to stay in and read my novel?

Gemma, Alcuin First-Year

Portering is boring me

Dear *Nouse*,

I'm am sick and tired of hearing about portering. Nothing infuriates me more than hearing "old news", and portering has been done to death.

Portering cuts have happened. Get over it. They're probably not going to change, and nobody I know bothered turning up to the protest. Clearly nobody in the real world actually cares either.

It's sort of like saying fighting to keep the people at the tills in James Dining Hall is a worthwhile thing to waste time on. They're university employees, not members of YUSU who are actually elected by us. In case people haven't noticed, there has been an economic downturn and this is what's called making job cuts, not a social injustice.

Get over it. People care about portering because they're a fan of sentiment.

Anon, via email

YCD fever is taking hold

Dear *Nouse*,

I absolutely love York Come Dancing! I just want to express my adoration of this amazing chance to see campus celebrities in sexy-as costumes (although Ollie Hutchings will probably be covering his legs more than he would on a day to day basis...) while supporting charity at the same time.

Sometimes I feel that campus events focus far too much on drinking and there's not enough family friendly fun for those who aren't actually that keen on a VK Apple.

I can't wait for more events like this in the future. X-Factor York would be just about the best idea EVER to get the entire uni involved. So excited about tonight, I've really loved your blogging as well, I've been following it every week. An evening to remember? Hope so.

Alexis, James Second-Year

York is too healthy

Dear *Nouse*,

Don't you agree with me that there should be some sort of burger bar or vending stall on-campus? As much as I enjoy a weekly sandwich in the Roger Kirk Centre, sometimes I'm just craving a glorified artery clogging burger.

York is a bit too healthy for my liking. All we've got in terms of food is Costcutter, campus food outlets and a couple of vending machines. YUSU should send a survey asking us what we want, because they can do something about it, can't they? And they'd be able to make so much money out of students with the munchies.

The nearest we can get is the Courtyard, but I think an ideal location for this would be Vanbrugh Paradise. Instead of wading through piles of duck poo, we could enjoy a nice lunchtime snack. Yum yum.

Cornelia Collins, Derwent First-Year

The Acquaintance

with Poppy Babcock



It's all happening online. Whether it's student politics or student love triangles, it's all out there in the public forum. Which is, of course, where I would choose to conduct my personal business. Who is suddenly not listed as single, and who's informing the world that it's complicated? Men in drag, girls as slags, it's all there as photographic evidence of the debauchery. Maybe now's the time for a Facebook spring clean.

Oh the profile pictures, they are a changin'. With the winter wind has come a new lease of life into the York UK network, as college hopefuls cast their nets. College chair, welfare reps, social secs- you name it, I have it as a mutual friend. Acquaintance may be more fitting. Anyway, here they come, the puffed-up and infinitely self-sacrificing army of college candidates. The mind boggles at how many times, and yet each still so unconvincingly, the outline of "what it takes" can be re-jigged. To my knowledge, just a Facebook account and a less than flattering picture... preferably wearing some kind of hat. There are a few more imaginative ad attempts, which are so refreshing that I wanted to adopt them as my own dp. Does it matter if I don't know them, or do you think they'd be grateful for the free press? Secretly, I think I just want to feel like a campus celeb. Be part of all the glitz, and all the glamour.

With Christmas on the horizon in all its Coca-Cola Claus glory, reservations are being made and tables assembled for the long-awaited "End of Term" celebratory dinner. Friendship groups everywhere are faced with the time-old concern: just who makes the cut? Whose company can you stand for the duration of starter, main and possibly dessert? Is it the more the merrier, or quality, not quantity? If only that formula could be applied to the bedroom. But wait...perhaps?

Three's company, two's quite happy to be left alone. In what resembles a very small, very exclusive game of musical chairs, three campus hotties have been on and off each other's laps before the music's even had time to change. The main man and orchestrator of events, with the keen and piercing intellect necessary to pull it all off, has successfully juggled two beautiful gals before finally

making his choice. Alas, the lady left outside alone did not take the delivery of the final blow well; and, throwing dignity to the wind, she concocted what, in the circumstances, had all the makings of cunning plan. Not opting for a tug on his heartstrings, she decided to go for a tug of something else entirely. Proposing a ménage-a-trois to re-

connect them all again, she was met with a brutal rejection from both parties. Ouch.

York Come Dancing is back and for those of you who have yet to buy your tickets, here's a deal-clincher: Mr. York will be giving a performance. You aren't alone if this elusive figure has slipped beneath your radar; he does slip beneath an awful lot. If downing pints in record breaking time and doing press-ups in the blink of an eye weren't enough to catch your attention last year, he's back to dazzle in a performance of "American Smooth". One wonders how smooth he is ever going to be; perhaps a good place to start would be the chin. I may be alone in thinking this, but surely as a campus we should have selected a different criteria in the choosing of our male representative of campus royalty? Maybe setting the bar low heightens our collective self-esteem. Pint of skepticism, anyone?

Beware, beware: A Fresher is on the prowl. First spotted by a seasoned expert in wildlife and wild things ("Cor!"), it is certain to be found at all social events of the term. Most likely to be seen in tight, figure-choking clothes, it nests on the arm of some up-and-coming, well-connected campus somebody. It is recognised by its superhuman memory for names and pointless details, razor-sharp facial lines and lightening quick Friend Requests- even to those who have avoided an actual encounter. Those who have set their sights on domesticating this creature have all uttered the same cry: prepare to be disappointed. A specimen to be handled with extreme care... best bet to forego any handling at all.

In other news, the biggest change of all to take place this term: a new Nouse team stands before you. Let us all spare a thought for the fallen campus media mogul who has been heard waxing lyrical about how undeserved his reputation as a dick is. What on earth will he do now? Get on with his life and be successful, probably. If there's anyone looking for the up to the minute (literally) political news and analysis, look no further: a certain campus activist's profile page rivals the most topical and opinionated bloggers and provides heated debate via endless irritating updates. Get out more, guys.

TIM NGWENA'S BLACKBERRY as seen by Ben Gascoyne

1.12.09 10:12
To: president@yusu.org
From: campaigns@yusu.org
Subject: meetings

so many meetings! can't believe it.

see you later
jason

2.11.09 09:56
To: president@yusu.org
From: jcg2@york.ac.uk
Subject: RE:

Can you ask if it's okay if I dance? I want to break out some moves and reconnect with students. I feel that York Come Dancing is the best place to do it. Get back to me asap.

Thanks,
Jane

3.12.09 15:01
To: president@yusu.org
From: campaigns@yusu.org
Subject: RE: meetings

Look, that's not funny. I do need to go women's committee meetings. They're actually really interesting.

jason

4.12.09 22:46
To: president@yusu.org
From: chair@derwentcollege.co.uk
Subject: RE: Congrats
Hey Tim,

Thanks for the congrats and all, but when

do I get my gold card?

'Cheers,
Burts x

5.12.09 21:42
To: president@yusu.org
From: yum@yusu.org
Subject: RE: Cupid said

It's just a dancing partnership, nothing more. Me and Nathan are not going to be doing the horizontal tango anytime soon, promise.

anna xxx

6.12.09 20:10
To: president@yusu.org
From: lgbt@yusu.org
Subject: omg

That outfit is disgusting.

Peter x

6.12.09 20:22
To: president@yusu.org
From: l.bretts@yusu.org
Subject: RE: Shoes?

Dance like that at the Christmas party and it'll be a complete cracker.

punny is funny mate x

6.12.09 20:47
To: president@yusu.org
From: chair@alcuincollege.com
Subject: hahaha

those yellow trousers would look hideous on me too, don't worry about it!

7.12.09 9:34
To: president@yusu.org
From: e.scott@yusu.org
Subject: RE: LOL

very fucking funny. you weren't exactly michael flatley on the dancefloor either Tim. ur not lord of the dance, leave me alone.

7.12.09 10:56
To: president@yusu.org;
l.bretts@yusu.org; e.scott@yusu.org
From: lgbt@yusu.org
Subject: RE: RE: omg

i got da moves

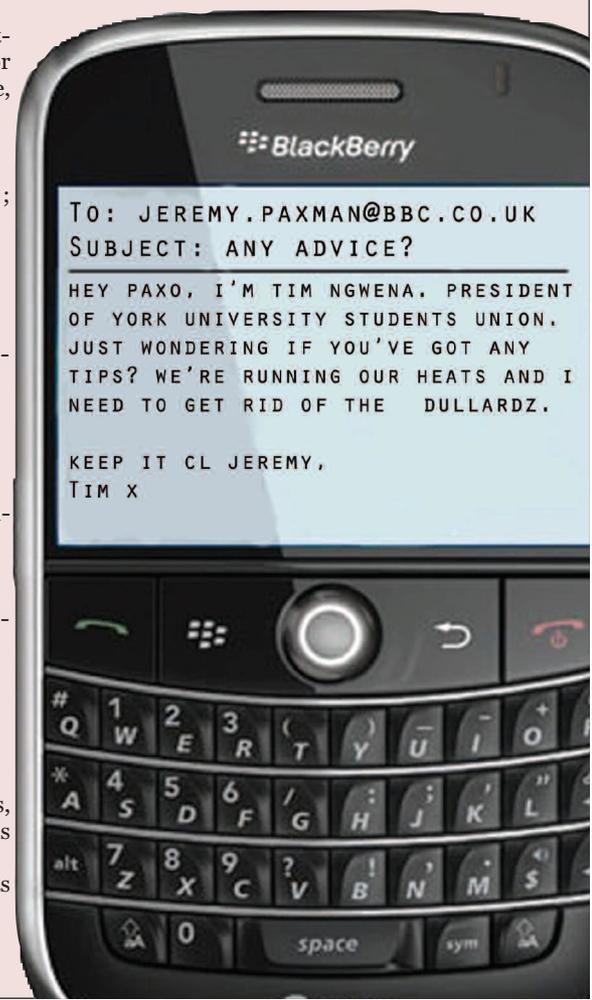
8.12.09 10:30
To: president@yusu.org
From: flirtskirt69@hotmail.com
Subject: come on tim

can't believe you didn't win, it's a complete travesty

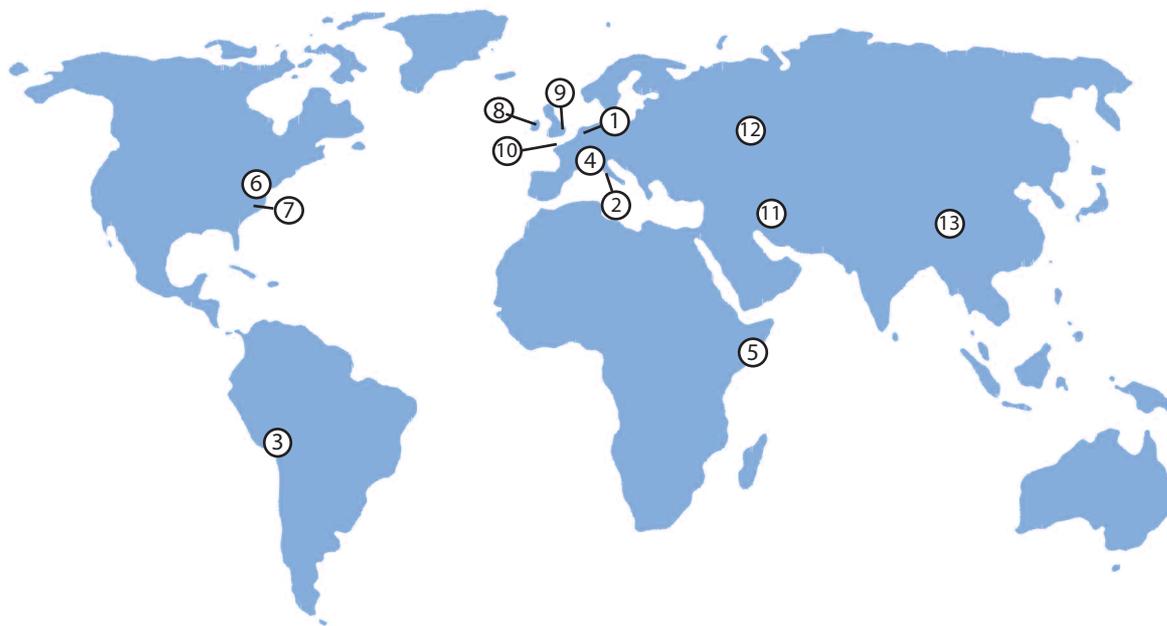
your outraged fan xxx

8.12.09 11:15
To: president@yusu.org
From: r.kinchin@yusu.org
Subject: merry xmas

the yuletide is comin & my arse is gettin fat, i hate soddin christmas, Santa is a twat. The credit crunch is on, & times r really hard, so u can consider this text, ur f**kin christmas card!!! merry christmas



Global Focus



1. COPENHAGEN, DENMARK-----
The UN climate change conference has begun in Copenhagen and is set to continue until December 18. The aim of the conference is to set new targets for cutting carbon dioxide emissions and to replace the Kyoto Protocol which expires in 2012. However, Barack Obama and Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the Danish Prime Minister, have agreed not to agree to a new agreement in Copenhagen.

2. PERUGIA, ITALY-----
Amanda Knox and Raffaele Sollecito have been found guilty of the murder of British student Meredith Kercher. Knox was sentenced to 26 years imprisonment, and Sollecito 25 years. Another man, Rudy Guede, was found guilty in October. Kercher, a Leeds University student, was murdered during a drug-induced sex game. The Kercher family was awarded 4.4million Euros in compensation.

3. LIMA, PERU-----
Four people were arrested in Peru on suspicion of killing dozens of people in order to remove their body fat and sell it for cosmetic use. The alleged murders mimicked a character of Andean folklore that roamed the mountains extracting fat from travellers. It was later revealed that the killings were fictitious, and the top organised crime investigator had misled the public. He has since been suspended from his post.

4. BERN, SWITZERLAND-----
A ban on minarets in Switzerland has evoked criticism from religious leaders worldwide. More than 57% of voters were in favour of the ban.

The Swiss people's party (SVP) put forward the proposal. Minarets are seen as a sign of Islamification that is seemingly unwelcome in Switzerland.

5. MOGADISHU, SOMALIA-----
22 people were killed in a suicide bombing at a hotel in Mogadishu. The dead included three Somali government ministers. The government has pointed the finger at Islamist insurgent group Al-Shabab for the attack. Al-Shabab have strongly denied responsibility. They claim it is a plot by the government itself.

6. BALTIMORE, USA-----
The mayor of Baltimore, Sheila

Dixon, has been convicted of stealing gift-cards that were intended for poorer families. She reportedly used the money she stole to buy a camcorder, amongst other items. The prosecutor in the case said it was "a sad day for Baltimore." He also praised the courage of the jury in finding Mayor Dixon guilty.

7. WASHINGTON D.C., USA-----
President Barack Obama has pledged to send 30,000 extra troops to Afghanistan to fight against the Taliban and help to secure peace in the country. Taliban leaders have responded saying they will match the troop surge with an increase in violence. NATO has also pledged to send an

extra 7,000 troops.

8. ANTRIM, NORTHERN IRELAND---
A convicted paedophile has been set free after it was decided that sending him to prison would put his health at risk. John William McConaghy weighs in excess of 30 stone. The judge in the case decided he would not receive the appropriate care in prison.

9. LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM----
A row has erupted between the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and the UK Government, which currently owns a 70% stake in the bank. The Government has attempted to restrict bonuses the bank can give out to its staff. Some

have suggested that the estimated £1.5 billion bonus pot could be reduced by £500 million.

10. JERSEY, UNITED KINGDOM-----
The infamous drug dealer Curtis Warren has been sentenced to 13 years in prison. He was planning to import £1m of cannabis into Jersey from Holland. Warren has previously featured on the Sunday Times rich list. Five others who were also prosecuted were given more lenient sentences.

11. TEHRAN, IRAN-----
Iran is planning to build ten more uranium enrichment plants. The move has angered the UN and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Iran has also stated that it will only reveal the location of the plants six months before they become operational. Further sanctions are likely to follow.

12. PERM, RUSSIA-----
Over 100 people have died in a nightclub in Russia. The deaths occurred when an indoor firework display caused an explosion. Most of the victims died as a result of smoke inhalation. A criminal investigation has now begun to find the cause of the incident.

13. XINJIANG, CHINA-----
Five people have been sentenced to death for murder and other crimes, related to ethnic riots in July. Nearly 200 people were killed during the riots. The confrontation was between China's Han ethnic group and ethnic Uighurs. Two more people were also handed life sentences.

www.nouse.co.uk/politics

Morality is not practicality: keep bankers' bonuses



**Kate Goligher
Tom Fisher**
POLITICS
EDITORS

RECENT MONTHS HAVE seen an anti-banking consensus emerge amongst the general population and the media. Bankers, and perhaps most notably their bonuses, have been implicated in the blame game currently being played out between banks, governments and regulatory bodies, in the wake of the financial crisis.

The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) has come under fire from the Government in the past few days for attempting to pay what are perceived to be 'excessive' bonuses. The Government currently has a 70% stake in RBS. Having received taxpayer money so recently, the decision to revert back to large bonuses is being seen as audacious.

In a similar case in the United States, leading investment bank Goldman Sachs paid 1556 members of staff bonuses in excess of \$1million. This was despite the fact it had received emergency funding from the American government.

Last week, Deputy Labour leader Harriet Harman said: "They already earn vast salaries and now they are threatening to resign if they cannot indulge in largesse and the distribution of massive bonuses to top executives across the piste."

On the subject of bank bonuses, Prime Minister Gordon Brown said that "nobody is being discriminated against, because every bank is having to follow these procedures". However, we believe restricting bonuses is idealistic and misguided. In the 'real world' not all banks have to follow this protocol and if Brown honestly believes this then he is deluded.

Limiting or removing bonuses is neither practical nor prudent. The consequence of imposing any kind of restrictions on bankers' bonuses is a 'brain drain' effect. This can occur between banks, as bankers will simply move to firms that are willing to pay them more for their skills. Those institutions not restrained by the hand of Government will poach the best talent. It can also occur on a national level. If countries impose strict guidelines on pay and bonuses, multinational firms will simply re-locate and re-distribute their operations elsewhere.

Following on from this, some would naturally call for internationally agreed regula-



Wanted Poster of Sir Fred Goodwin at Holburn tube station in London.

tory standards, but this is simply not a feasible option due to conflicts of interest between nations.

Tough regulations on bonuses could have drastic consequences for the UK economy, which relies on the financial sector to

provide both jobs and lucrative tax revenue. Many voters fail to realise the amount of capital that flows in and out of London on a daily basis.

What is the use in having the financial heart of the world when there is no blood coursing through its veins? Heavy regulation would cause the UK to haemorrhage the cash flows it relies upon so greatly.

Bonuses however should not be handed out as a right. They should be directly linked to a bankers' long-term performance and should not reward reckless risk taking. Any gambling element of banking should be minimised.

Alistair Darling, Chancellor of the Exchequer, said that "there are people who are too complacent in my view". Darling also stated that the banks "need to be brought down to earth".

We urge Darling to follow his own advice and not be too complacent with the UK economy, as going after the populist vote would be an all too easy mistake to make. Compromising the UK economy's most vital asset for increased political support would be an irresponsible decision. Although it may not be the moral option, bringing banks 'down to earth' may cause the UK economy to come crashing down with them.

Forgotten people of Bhopal still suffering

DAVID GRAHAM

Dominic Mantle
POLITICAL CONTRIBUTOR

A NEW REPORT by the Bhopal Medical Appeal (BMA) has found that groundwater in the Indian city of Bhopal is contaminated.

The new report investigates pollution levels in Bhopal 25 years after a gas leak in a pesticide factory. The toxic leak, which occurred on the 3rd of December 1984, killed at least 20,000 people and left many more chronically ill.

The contaminated water is regularly used for drinking and washing by around 30,000 people. Several contaminants have been found at levels far exceeding those given in World Health Organisation (WHO) safety guidelines. Amongst these is the carcinogen Carbon Tetrachloride. The quantities found were 2,400 times higher than the recommended safety level. The toxins found are known cause problems ranging from cancer to birth defects in children.

There is further evidence that contamination levels of water in the city are still rising as a result of industrial waste which remains on the site, continually seeping into the ground.

The recent findings correlate with the health of Bhopal's people. According to Amnesty International, 120,000 people are still suffering from chronic illnesses due to exposure on the night of the disaster.

A new generation is being affected by the continuing pollution of the environment, and



A warning sign from inside the abandoned Union Carbide factory in Bhopal India. The factory lies derelict 25 years after the disaster.

is being referred to as 'Bhopal's second disaster'.

As many as one in 25 babies in the area are being born with a congenital defects or will develop defects later in life. There are also notably high rates of cancer and tuberculosis in the area.

At the time of the disaster the pesticide factory was owned by Union Carbide Corporation (UCC), an American multinational. The gas leak has been attributed to negligence and lax safety precautions. UCC settled out of court, with the Indian Government paying \$284 mil-

lion to victims.

Union Carbide, which is now owned by Dow Chemical, sold its Indian subsidiary onto another firm in 1994. Following this, Dow rejects any further responsibility for com-

"120,000 people are still suffering from chronic illnesses"

pensating the current victims of the environmental pollution, or cleaning up the reported 8,000 tonnes of chemicals still in the factory.

While campaigners now say Dow is liable, questions must be asked of the Indian Government.

The Indian Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh recently mocked activists in Bhopal by picking up a handful of soil and saying "see, I am alive".

Broadcaster Jon Snow, who is the Patron of the BMA, said of this (with regards to this year's anniversary): "That's 25 years of evasion and denial from the parties responsible for this appalling crime. 25 years of struggle for justice on the part of the survivors."

Political
Edge



Peter Campbell

The fourth inquiry into the Iraq war started two weeks ago. The inquiry has a panel of witnesses that include Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and a host of advisors and insiders. Its televised hearings will continue into the new year. It is hoped that the resulting image will be the first clear picture of how decisions were made in the build up to the war in 2003. Given these resources, it is more than likely to succeed. Unless, of course, one man gets his way.

Gordon Brown has done everything in his power to cloud over the welcome transparency of the inquiry.

Last Thursday, it was revealed by The Independent that Brown has refused to change a previous agreement that allows Whitehall to veto which information it can give up to the inquiry for publication. Writing to Nick Clegg, the Liberal Democrat Leader, who raised concerns about the arrangement, Brown proclaimed that he wanted to grant the inquiry "full and unrestricted access to all Government information," but would not back down on the issue.

Clegg accused the Prime Minister of breaking his "promises

"Brown had previously wanted the hearings to take place behind closed doors, not in the sphere of the public and media gaze."

Homosexuals face execution in Uganda

Emily Foster
POLITICAL CONTRIBUTOR

A CONTROVERSIAL NEW law on homosexuality is currently under debate in the Ugandan parliament.

Homosexuality is already illegal in Uganda and the new laws propose much harsher punishments. These include a minimum sentence of life imprisonment for anyone found guilty of committing a homosexual act. For those found to be HIV positive or 'serial offenders', the death sentence can be imposed.

This legislation builds on a culture of homophobia and will serve to increase underlying prejudices by giving homophobes a legal basis for their viewpoints.

The law directly contravenes the UN Declaration on Human Rights as it impinges on citizens' rights to privacy by asking people to report homosexual acts. The failure to do so could result in a sentence of up to three years.

Many global organisations, such as Amnesty International, are



Ugandan's protesting against the introduction of the new law

calling for the legislation to be blocked. Stephen Lewis, a prominent Canadian politician, criticised the legislation saying it had 'a taste of fascism about it'.

Several countries have reacted to the proposals by threatening to cut aid to Uganda. The Government was defiant in the face

of this intercricism, saying that the legal process would continue uninterrupted.

These laws may seem extreme from a European perspective. However, the criminalisation of homosexuality in Africa is common, with as many as 38 countries having laws against homosexuality.

RIEKHAVOC

Links have been made to a US evangelical plot to change values in regions where homosexuality is accepted. Evangelicals are calling for a return to the early 19th century consensus where homosexuality was seen as a form of mental illness and treatment included the use of aversion therapy.

Some countries in Africa are more liberal in their attitudes towards homosexuality. South Africa is an example of this. It legalised same sex marriages in 2006. Several rulings from the Constitutional Court of South Africa have helped set a precedent in which homosexuality is slowly becoming an accepted part of South African culture.

Post-apartheid South Africa is a positive example to the remainder of the continent, proving how homosexuality can become an important part of society. Despite levels of equality falling short of Western expectations, South Africa has made huge strides relative to some of its African counterparts who seem to be moving in the opposite direction.

of full independence and openness" before the inquiry had even gotten off the ground. Add to this, the fact that Brown had previously wanted the hearings to take place behind closed doors, not in the sphere of the public and media gaze, and you start to get a worrying picture.

In this instance, I completely agree with Clegg. No-one should be fooled by the PM's talk of openness for the hearings when all of his actions so vividly display his objection to such transparency.

In the light of negative public opinion, with regards to the closed-door political system, he should not be pushing quite so hard for a policy of concealment.

Not wanting to sound like the infamous Guido Fawkes blogger, but what exactly is Gordon Brown hiding? He was one of those who was very close to the action during the build up to the war. Does he know something that he wants to keep hidden?

It is difficult to see how a mere politically embarrassing document could evoke such protectiveness. Perhaps he is hiding something he knows to be illegal. Rest assured, sooner or later the truth will emerge.



14, 42 or 365

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University of York Clay Pigeon Shooting Club



Sports Editor **Adam Shergold** spends an afternoon with one of York's newest clubs, who in just two terms have grown from humble beginnings to target national success. Photographs by **Justyn Hardcastle**

IT'S REMARKABLE how empowered you feel with a gun in your hands. The weapon is a thing of beauty, a sleek composite of twisted metal and polished chrome and, in just five minutes, it has become akin to an additional limb. The butt nestled in my shoulder, there is only one objective, one care in the world: a little clay disc no more than three inches in diameter.

"Pull!" comes the holler and with a faint click, the target floats down tantalisingly from the hilltop, catching the breeze to assume a new course every few seconds. My shot rings out into the Yorkshire countryside but the disc continues on its merry way, skimming mockingly over my head. "Oooh, it was just a fraction to the right," says Ryan Hartwell, the Club President and my tutor for the day. He's too kind, it probably landed somewhere near Beverley.

My efforts always seemed to be a little to the right, always off-target. I score zero hits from ten attempts. Zilch. Nul Points. Watching from a nearby hilltop, as the club's committee members effortlessly lay waste to several dozen clays in succession, is an unedifying experience.

Clay Pigeon Shooting will present a challenge to any York sportsman or woman, something out of the ordinary. The members defy any beginner to hit anything in their first couple of sessions. In just two terms, this new addition to the York Sport club roster has acquired a small and friendly following, practice diligently on a weekly basis and enjoys an apparently 'mental' social life. They also have their



The members of the University Clay Pigeon Shooting Club get in some practice at the Monckton Shooting Grounds on Wednesday

sights, if you'll pardon the expression, on challenging the established elite of university clay pigeon shooting competition.

That will be no mean feat: the likes of Cambridge, Oxford and Durham have been in existence for decades, competing regularly in events all over the country. Nonetheless, York will be hoping to make an impression in their first BUCS Championships, to be staged in February at the West Midlands Shooting Ground in Market Drayton, Shropshire.

For now, though, it's the

unfussy surroundings of the Monckton Shooting Grounds, a 30-minute drive from campus, that are the centre of the club's universe. With panoramic views of the surrounding fields and dales, the

'The members defy anyone to hit anything in their first couple of sessions'

venue is a mix of valleys and undulations, traps and towers catering for the various types of shooting.

Some of these structures can zip clays from heights approaching 50ft, a tiny black blip against the slate grey skies. In the distance, lurking tantalisingly in the December gloom is a Moto X circuit, but that's for another day.

Each participant, ranging from experienced marksmen to complete novices gets a dozen shots, with the traps and direction of clay launch varying each time. The idea is to replicate the test of a competition, where entrants are expected to hit targets floating towards them from all manner of

angles.

The club, which practices at the venue every Wednesday, are hoping to attract newcomers curious about the sport, with a view of driving down costs. Currently, there is a £15 annual membership charge, with each session also £15 for two hours. However, it's £15 well spent to try a sport which offers a challenge simply not available elsewhere in the York Sport roster.

Contact shooting@yusu.org for further information or visit <https://sites.google.com/a/yusu.org>

Leigh Clarke

Sports Editor



We can blame a lot of things on York Sport, the weather is not one of them

IT IS FRUSTRATING that this year's College League Competition has been so badly affected by weather. A number of mouth-watering fixtures have been called off with little possibility of being played unless the competition is extended well into the Christmas holidays. It is incredibly disappointing, especially as the league was building up to a tense climax.

My own disappointment will be nothing in comparison to that of Alcuin captain Miles McDermott, for whom each cancelled round signifies a blow to his team's chances of taking the title.

Yet to criticise York Sport's maintenance of the pitches is a cheap shot and entirely without substance. In the past few weeks, the north of England has experienced weather that has managed to submerge the entire town of Cockermouth and bring the Ouse's water level to somewhere in the middle of the Lowther. To complain about cancelled football amongst all of this is a little unrea-

sonable.

The hard work of groundsmen on the 22 Acres has been defended by York Sport and you have to feel sympathy for them. Watford, my local football team, had a Premiership football game against Wigan cancelled two years ago after the pitch at Vicarage Road became waterlogged. If it happens

'To criticise maintenance of the pitches is a cheap shot and entirely without substance'

in the Premiership, it's likely to happen in the College Football League.

It is true that the university first team suffer fewer cancellations than the college teams and there is no denying that some pitches on the field are of better quality than others. Yet last Wednesday every BUCS fixture on the 22 Acres was cancelled, the



SAM NEWSOME

pitches so bad that even Lacrosse could not be played. Again we can't blame the groundsmen. It's just a fact of life when living in England.

There is definitely an issue regarding the organisation of the

College League, especially considering this problem seems to occur every year. It is perhaps too ambitious to expect that games will be played every weekend throughout the first two terms, when pitches

are most likely to suffer from rain and the February freeze. Perhaps one official league should be played over the first two terms, allowing more time for cancelled fixtures to be replayed. Is this really necessary though? Derwent captain Dom Henney has said that although the first term's league winner is usually the team that is luckiest with cancellations, the competition is not devalued. It's just something that the players have to deal with.

With BUCS fixtures it could be more of a problem and last year the annual competition with York St. John, Varsity, was cancelled due to games having to be rescheduled. That was a real shame and it should be ensured that it does not happen again, by scheduling Varsity for a weekend or the summer term - possibly as a warm up for Roses?

As for now, we need to just accept that the weather is one of those things that can not be predicted or controlled. And with the coldest temperatures not even setting in yet, there will be many more cancellations on the way.



The Mixer

Pick me up Scottie: TM at York Come Dancing

Our Emily took time out last weekend from her post at the York Sport Complaints Deflection Department to take part in annual cringe-fest York Come Dancing and *TM*, naturally, had front row seats.

A scan of the event programme and things didn't bode well. Already installed by the YCD betting syndicate as most likely to land flat on her face, Scottie appeared to have been paired with a Draco Malfoy lookalike whose hair, like a Harry Potter spell, magically transformed from dark on the YSTV intro to slick blonde under the lights. They were also attempting the Paso Doble, billed as a tussle between bull and matador which ends frequently in murder. Apt, because it was murder to watch.

The only thing coming to a sticky end was Emily's layers of fake tan, which glistened on



a face of epic concentration. The steely features weren't enough as kicks were missed, flesh was exposed and steps were wayward in the 90-second burst of Europe's 'The Final Countdown' - frankly a terrible song to dance to. By the final, snail-slow lift, we couldn't wait for it to end.

Not that the performance warranted Malfoy's haughty comments afterwards. "I'm so proud of her," he smirked. "She's got through it, I know it was hard for her." How patronising.

Sadly, scores of 5, 6, 6 and 7 left Scottie at the back of the judges' minds and, in the absence of a miraculous RAG donation in her name from any passing millionaire, she was left to contemplate a sport that is maybe beyond her. Malfoy, meanwhile, has returned to another year at Hogwarts.

Dan Taylor's rugby ruckus

FORMER CAMPUS CELEBRITY, serial nouse.co.uk commenter and all round annoyance, Dan Taylor returned to York two weeks ago in order to play for Derwent in their college rugby grudge match against James. Appearing extremely fired up before, he was heard promising "revenge" for the 52-0 thrashing they had handed his side earlier in the year. Unfortunately things did not quite go to plan.

No, Taylor had to watch in horror as his side succumbed to another

annihilation - although this time only by a mere forty points to nil.

Easily the best moment came in the latter stages when Taylor went to pull his captain, and Derwent Chair, Joe Rankin out of a scrap. Rankin, either mistaking his team mate for a James player or acting on some inner grievance, came at him like Grace Fletcher



Hackwood on speed, fists brandished and eyes glaring. Soon Rankin realised his, ahem, mistake and the fight was ended.

Taylor was seen after the match kicking a post in rage. Bless.

College mystery man revealed

Last edition, *TM* exclusively brought you the case of the college football mystery man with the promise that our finest minds were on the case and would soon reveal his identity.

It has emerged that he is Mickel Grabarczyk or "Polish Mike" as he is affectionally known by his (many) team mates. Apparently stealing food from Derwent but possessing "a decent bike and pretty snazzy football boots" (according to Wentworth's Dan Horsfall) Mike

has definitely captured the imagination of the college football community.

He has even commented on the *Nouse* website*, wishing "wonwort" college "good luck on the pitch(football), cause they need it and cause i play one game for them". He finishes with the bold statement "bay the way this site is own me really good money for all this!!". *TM* can't help but agree.

*Note: The comments were probably not written by Mike.



Top of the league

Despite drawing with Vanbrugh in a mudbath last week, James are still the team to beat in this year's College Rugby. The indignity of this result, the first time anyone has dared venture into James' defensive third for several months, has raised hopes that 'common' colleges can actually beat them.

On the up

Vanbrugh had a difficult start to their campaign, but have since improved. Wins against Goodricke-Langwith-Wentworth (like the Lions but shit) and a stunning draw with James mean they are no longer THE league whipping boys, just one of the league's whipping boys.

Relegation Zone

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. Derwent, once the high flyers of college rugby, found themselves victims of a humiliating 40-0 defeat to arch rivals James. A college state of emergency was declared and captain Joe Rankin was banished to the land of far far away (Langwith).

College players speak out as rain halts play

JUSTYN HARDCASTLE

Following the postponement of two rounds of College Football fixtures, the state of the 22 Acres pitches has again come under scrutiny. **Jake Farrell** reports.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL captains have criticised the quality of pitches on the 22 Acres and the organisation of the Autumn League after the cancellation of three rounds of fixtures through poor weather. The possibility has now been raised of the league being extended beyond the end of term in order to be completed.

Alcuin skipper Miles McDermott questioned how the University team were able to "play more or less week-in, week-out on the same bit of grass separated by a few hundred metres." He also criticised York Sport's commitment to the league as a whole: "How is pitch maintenance time divided? York Sport seem to want to bury their heads in the sand."

Full programmes of fixtures were postponed last weekend and on November 2nd and 29th, meaning an

extra round of games to clear the backlog will now have to be scheduled for December 20th, two days into the Christmas break.

Last week, all BUCS fixtures on the 22 Acres were called off after it was determined that the pitches were too waterlogged for any sport to be played.

The situation has been greeted with frustration by the captains of sides chasing the title and could mar the finish of what has otherwise been a compelling and competitive league.

Derwent captain Dom Henney, who derided the thought of playing so close to Christmas as "stupid", said he: "wouldn't expect anyone to stay specially for an extra game after term has officially ended. I believe most teams will struggle to get an eleven."

McDermott has also

been vocal about the system used to decide fixtures, and the possible advantage that it has handed to his team's rivals.

He said that Halifax, the current leaders, have enjoyed a favourable run of games, having faced none of their main rivals so far: "They have certainly had an easy run to the top of the table. I am told that this year the fixture system has been redesigned, so in the second term I will be expecting to see a different set of fixtures. Whether someone at York Sport can be bothered we shall see."

Halifax are top of the College League with ten points, while Alcuin are second with eight. Alcuin's fixture on the 29th would have been an opportunity to overtake their rivals, had it not been called off.

Henney echoed

McDermott's concerns regarding the fairness of the fixture system but denied that this lessened the appeal of the college league: "The first term's winner in particular is generally the team that got luckiest with the fixtures they actually played, but it doesn't make it a farce."

Responding to the criticisms about the playing surfaces, Emily Scott, the York Sport President, said: "The groundsmen work tirelessly to enable as much sport as possible to be played."

"Evidently, after as much rain as we have experienced in recent weeks, drainage becomes an issue and pitches become unplayable. This is not just to protect the pitches... but, more importantly, to protect players from the increased risk of injury."



The End of Term Report

As the year comes to a close, so too does a term of BUCS league action. **Leigh Clarke** and **Adam Shergold** look at a selection of York clubs and assess how they have fared so far

FOOTBALL

How have they done?: The firsts and thirds have enjoyed brilliant starts and sit second in their respective leagues, within striking distance of the championship. The seconds are doing even better; they sit top of League 5B and have yet to taste defeat. New coach Peter Renton has definitely had a positive influence.

What next?: Sustaining this excellent form is the number one objective. There's very little to improve on and if UYAFC end the season without any silverware it would be a travesty.

Star Player: Dan Cox (8 goals) and Connor Brennan (6 goals) are the hottest strikeforce in university football. The firsts have been further boosted by goals from midfield and even Chris Grayland at centre-back.

They say: "I'm over the moon with how things have gone this term - both on the pitch and off it," said Greg Gardner, the President. "Last year it wasn't until the New Year that we got our first win. This year - we're flying."

If they were a Christmas song: "All I want for Christmas is you" - and promotion.

RUGBY

How have they done?: Pretty well, all things considered. Newly promoted to Northern Conference 1A after last year's unbeaten season, the men's team were defeated in their second match against Sheffield Hallam. They recovered well to win their next four games, although a loss two weeks ago away to Leeds Met has brought them slightly down to earth.

What next?: Currently six points behind leaders Sheffield Hallam with a game in hand, a strong second half of the season and they could be looking at promotion. Even if their form is not sustained, they have consolidated their place in the division and can therefore be very pleased with a successful campaign.

They say: Alex Redshaw: "We know we can do well in this division. This team has a lot of potential."

Christmas song: "Fairytale of New York" - Drunken, violent and rude, but brilliant all the same.



FENCING

How have they done?: The women have been exceptional, winning all six of their fixtures to finish top of division 1B. The men's team have recovered well from an early loss against Hull to move top of their table.

What next?: The women will have to compete in a play-off with the top team from Northern Conference 1A (likely to be either Bangor or Liverpool) and after a promotion play off with the bottom team from Premier North. If they win both they will play in the Premier division next season.

Star Player: Two: Louise Highton and Katherine Gracey both joined the team this year and have been the main reason for the team's success. Both regularly compete in international competitions and the former is ranked 28th in the country for Epee.

They say: Captain Kat Chzhen: "Fencing is a fun individual sport but can also be played as part of a team. There are plenty of competitions to attend all year round, and there is a great social aspect to the club."

Christmas song: "Merry Christmas Everybody". The women's team have Slade most of their rivals.

HOCKEY

How have they done?: The men's firsts and seconds remain plagued by relegation anxiety, though the women's firsts look well-placed for a promotion push and the seconds are safely in mid-table.

What next?: The men's teams need improvement quickly to avoid another flirtation with the drop in the New Year, while the women need to find that little extra to challenge for honours.

Star Player: Newcomers to the team have excelled, including Henry Mellor, Matt Foakes and James Branton. For the women, the old guard of Andrea Pisesky, Imy Eldergill-Storm and Laura Pepper have stayed brilliant.

They say: Rob Newton, Male President: "We have a new coach starting in Roz Ramzi and I'm confident he can turn our fortunes around. He's what we've been missing."

Christmas song: "Mistletoe and Wine" - like relegation, it has a nasty habit of appearing every year.



NETBALL

How have they done?: There have been mixed fortunes for the teams so far. The firsts have found the going tough in League 4B but, despite currently lying bottom, a couple of wins could transform their season. The seconds and thirds have excelled and are in contention for promotion.

What next?: In a close division, the firsts need a couple of results to go their way to kill off relegation worries, starting against Newcastle this Wednesday. The seconds also need to beat Newcastle this week to keep alive their promotion push, while the thirds must overcome Sheffield Hallam to stay in touch with the leaders.

Star Player: Goal Keeper Jenni Williams and Goal Defence Sarah Smith make a formidable rearguard partnership.

They say: "We have the best defensive record in the division, but we haven't been getting the results," said Liz Cowell, the President and firsts' Centre.

Christmas song: "Frosty the snowman" - it's bloody cold in that tent.

SQUASH

How have they done?: After being promoted last year to Conference 2B the men's team have struggled with the step up in quality and are currently bottom. They've had to cope with losing key players to other commitments and, despite having lost four of their five fixtures so far, have been involved in some tight encounters. The women's team have fared better: they are second in Conference 2B having only lost twice.

What next?: Survival is the priority for the men and their next two games against Sheffield and main relegation rivals Leeds seconds are crucial. The women's team could push for promotion but only have two league games remaining to do so.

Star Player: Calum Fraser, men's number one and captain, rarely loses and has played some excellent squash so far this season.

They say: Paul Atkinson: "There's a good club atmosphere, but we need to kick on."

Christmas song: "Last Christmas" - things were looking much better.



The Mid-Term Report

A look at how York's leading sports teams are faring as their BUCS Leagues reach the half-season mark

CLUB PROFILE >> P19



Waste land: York's sport is washed out

COLLEGE FOOTBALL NEWS AND COMMENT INSIDE

SAM NEWSOME



Futsal firsts sparkle in second regional heats of National BUCS Championships

Henry Cowen
DEPUTY SPORTS EDITOR

YORK'S FUTSAL firsts got their season back on track with two wins in the second regional heats of the BUCS Futsal Championships. Victories against the University of Manchester and Edge Hill seconds gave York six points and put them in a commanding position in Group D.

In the first heats earlier in the month York had struggled, losing to last year's national finalists Stirling 5-3. This time, playing at home, they were in excellent form, putting seven goals past Edge Hill, against whom they could only manage a draw in the first round.

In the first game, a late Dom Henney goal gave the team a crucial win against Manchester after they

had surrendered a second half lead.

The side performed well as a unit but captain Jack Crane singled out the performances of goalkeeper David Ambrozejczyk and newcomer Ashley Daly.

York got underway against the University of Manchester in what was described by club President Ambrozejczyk as a "must win game". It was the visitors who started off the better of the two sides but some nice work by debutant Daly set up skipper Crane to put York 1-0 ahead.

It was then all the home side with Henney and Danny York both being denied by the Manchester stopper. Just before the interval a controversial award of a long penalty, for four fouls in the half, meant the away side equalised and

THE RESULTS

York Firsts 3
Manchester Firsts 2

York Firsts 7
Edge Hill Seconds 2

the sides went in level at the break.

Minutes into the second half York were once again in front. A good save from the keeper went out to Matt Stopforth who converted easily from close range. With York 2-1 ahead, and time running out, it looked as if they would take the points. Yet disaster struck when, straight from a kick-in, Mohannad Nasr squeezed his shot in at the

near post.

York kept pushing however, and with the clock ticking Henney turned in the box, following a great ball from Ambrozejczyk, and stuck it away to give York their first win in the championships.

York's work was by no means done, as soon after they had to go up against Edge Hill seconds. The home side were guilty of starting slowly and only five minutes in Edge Hill were two goals up. York did not panic and at the break they managed to run away into a 4-2 lead, with a brace each for Henney and Crane. The second half was much the same with York clearly the better side; another goal for Crane - securing his hat-trick - alongside efforts from York and Daly finished the rout.

Captain Jack Crane said the

victories were no more than the side deserved; "It's a credit to the players for all the hard work they've shown in training, it's clearly paid off".

Daley was awarded Player of the Day by his colleagues and it was richly deserved, performing tirelessly and being a rock at the back when opposition attacks dared to threaten. York will look to continue their good form when they resume their campaign in February with games against Manchester and Stirling determining whether they go to the National Finals.

The seconds were less fortunate in their matches today, beating Liverpool 6-2 but losing 6-3 to Edge Hill's first team. The team, mainly full of newcomers to the sport, have yet to win this year.

The New Sharp Shooters

An insight into one of the newest arrivals on the York Sport scene, the Clay Pigeon Shooting Club, as they strive to gain recognition in the national arena.

CLUB PROFILE >> P17



Comprehensive online coverage of University and College Sport

This week's highlights include in-depth half-term reports for Football and Netball plus the very best of Wednesday's sports fixtures. Plus, announcing the arrival of Park Life, Nouse's brand new football blog, with weekly comment, debate and analysis from our team of writers.

www.nouse.co.uk/sport



News and views in *The Mixer*

Emily Scott takes to the dance floor, Dan Taylor returns and the case of the college football mystery man is finally solved in our off-beat round-up.

THE MIXER >> P18

