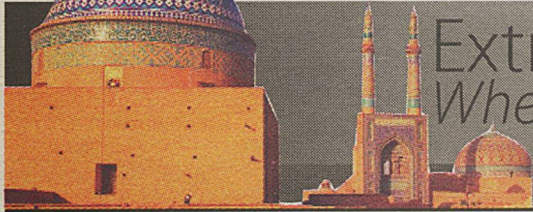


The Beaver

1 May 2007 Issue 664 The newspaper of the LSESU



Extreme Holiday 2007 Where Angels fear to tread

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Bright Eyes interview

PartB 4-5



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What happens if terrorists attack?

■ LSE FALLS SHORT OF SECURITY RECOMMENDATIONS
■ IF A BOMB GOES OFF IN THE OLD THEATRE... IS LSE READY?

Sidhanth Kamath
Executive Editor

LSE has been carrying out emergency simulation exercises to prepare for disaster scenarios, one of which involves the School falling victim to a terrorist attack.

Following the July 2005 terrorist bombings in London, School authorities decided to set up a small emergency management team (EMT) to deal with any similar incident at the LSE. Members of the team were required to have specialised knowledge, of LSE buildings or IT systems, for example.

On 19 September 2006 a simulated exercise involving an explosion at the School was carried out. The scenario involved a public lecture by a prominent Middle Eastern politician being disrupted by a chemical explosive device going off under the Old Theatre stage at 1730 hrs. The speaker is fatally injured by the attack, and there are serious injuries to audience. Further devices are suspected and the police close off Aldwych and Kingsway and evacuate buildings.

The exercise, a part of LSE's Common Initial Emergency Response Procedures (CIERP), was attended by a specialist security consultancy firm as well as a representative from Westminster Council's Emergency Planning Unit. It was carried out in a 'desk-top' format, without a full enactment of an emergency, to "minimise disruption to the School".

A full report was submitted to the School by the consultancy firm, Safety Improvements and Training Ltd., on 10 October 2006, but progress has stagnated since. Minutes of a Security Advisory Group meeting held on 6 March this year detail: "A report on the recommended changes to CIERP has now been submitted to DMT [Director's Management Team]... If DMT approve the recommendations, training will need to be delivered," indicating that over five months after the exercise, changes have yet to be implemented.

The main criticisms in the report include the unsuitability of the current LSE control room to deal with real crises, and the communication struc-

ture involved, which was extensively reliant on mobile phones and failed to meet requirements of interaction between the incident site and the control room. Other issues like post-event trauma amongst staff and students also need to be planned for, but both the School and the Students' Union already have established counseling services.

The control room used for the exercise was dismissed as "totally inappropriate" by the report, especially since it had chairs but no table, no computers and only one fixed landline phone. Emergency control rooms are required to have several telephone lines, adequate data access points, access to television to monitor developments, emergency lighting with a backup power source, white boards and flip charts and controlled access among other features.

The report also suggested that LSE incorporate two separate control rooms, and the School is still in "discussions" to decide where these locations will be.

»6

EDITORIAL COMMENT: PAGE 11



Photograph: Liam Chamberlain

Panic sets in as exams loom

Virginia Tech tragedy hits home for alumna at LSE

Laura Deck
News Editor

Students throughout Britain were shocked and saddened by the murder of 31 students and staff at Virginia Tech University on Monday 15 April, and for Virginia Tech students and alumni at the LSE, the massacre was particularly tragic.

Barbara Ghielmetti, a Master's student studying Economic History at the LSE, graduated from Virginia Tech in 2005. Ghielmetti spoke with *The Beaver* about her experience being abroad at the LSE during the tragedy.

Being far away from her undergraduate university in Blacksburg and her hometown in northern Virginia was difficult as news broke of the

shootings. "I probably would have gone home if I didn't have exams," she said, but added that "it is probably better just to push on." Ghielmetti said that she plans to return to Virginia Tech for homecoming and an alumni weekend this year.

Ghielmetti, being a native of the Washington, DC area, was also affected by the terrorist attacks of September 11th,

when her neighbour was killed onboard the plane that crashed into the Pentagon. The massacre at Virginia Tech felt like "another 9/11" as her native community was again hit hard by a national tragedy.

She was contacted by three major news organizations in London to comment on the shootings, and she agreed to do a live interview with Sky News. Breaking news about the iden-

tity of the shooter and of the victims came in during the interview.

On first seeing a photo of the shooter Seung-hui Cho while on live television, Ghielmetti said, "I was really angry. How could someone, a peer, dare do this to Virginia Tech, my school, my home away from home for four years?"

The identities of the victims, along with photographs,

were also released for the first time while Ghielmetti sat in the Sky News studio. "You see these young people in their prime, and you think 'that was me heading off to school six years ago'" she said.

Cho mailed photographs and video to NBC studios in between the two shootings on 15 April. He used the post office that Ghielmetti used

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PartB: Food & Drinking



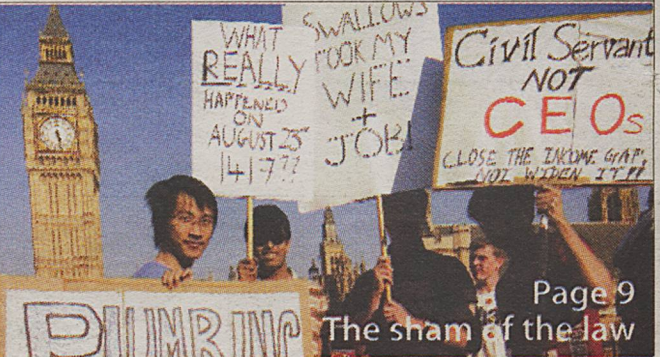
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Lincoln's Inn Fields

Features: Women at war



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The right to fight

C&A: Mass Lone Demonstration



Page 9
The sham of the law

NEWS 4 LSE RAISES EXTREMISM CONCERNS 5 LSE TWINS WITH AL-NAJAH IN PALESTINE 7 WORRIES OVER STUDY DRUGS

Rumours of Mugabe's daughter at LSE ; Three Tuns security under fire; No living wage for Halls' security staff; Anti-semitism on UK Uni campuses?

In other news

HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS

HIGHER EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT

Number of chairs up 63% in decade Competition is forcing universities to offer more professorships and improve pay. Tony Tysome reports

Career opportunities for ambitious academics are brighter than ever as the number of professors in UK universities continues to rise steeply, new figures show.

Over the ten years up to 2005-06, the number of full-time professors in the sector climbed by 63 per cent to more than 15,500, while the proportion of academic staff in full-time professorial posts rose from 7.5 per cent to 9.4 per cent.

EducationGuardian

Woman, 88, caged in Oxford animal lab protest

An 88-year-old woman will dress up as a prisoner and sit in a small cage in Oxford today in protest at animal experiments being carried out on a macaque monkey at Oxford University.

Joan Court from Cambridge, who plans to fast during her two-day protest, is protesting during World Week for Animals in Laboratories.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

UNIVERSITY VARSITY

Cambridge scientists fighting the fat

In a first for the UK, a centre for the study of obesity will open in Cambridge this October. The Centre for Obesity and Related Metabolic Diseases will work to bring crucial research findings "from lab to bedside".

The opening has been announced by the Medical Research Council (MRC) and the centre will be the first of its kind in the UK. It will work in conjunction with the existing Epidemiology Unit to "accelerate the conversion of research findings into better treatments for obesity-related diseases".

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

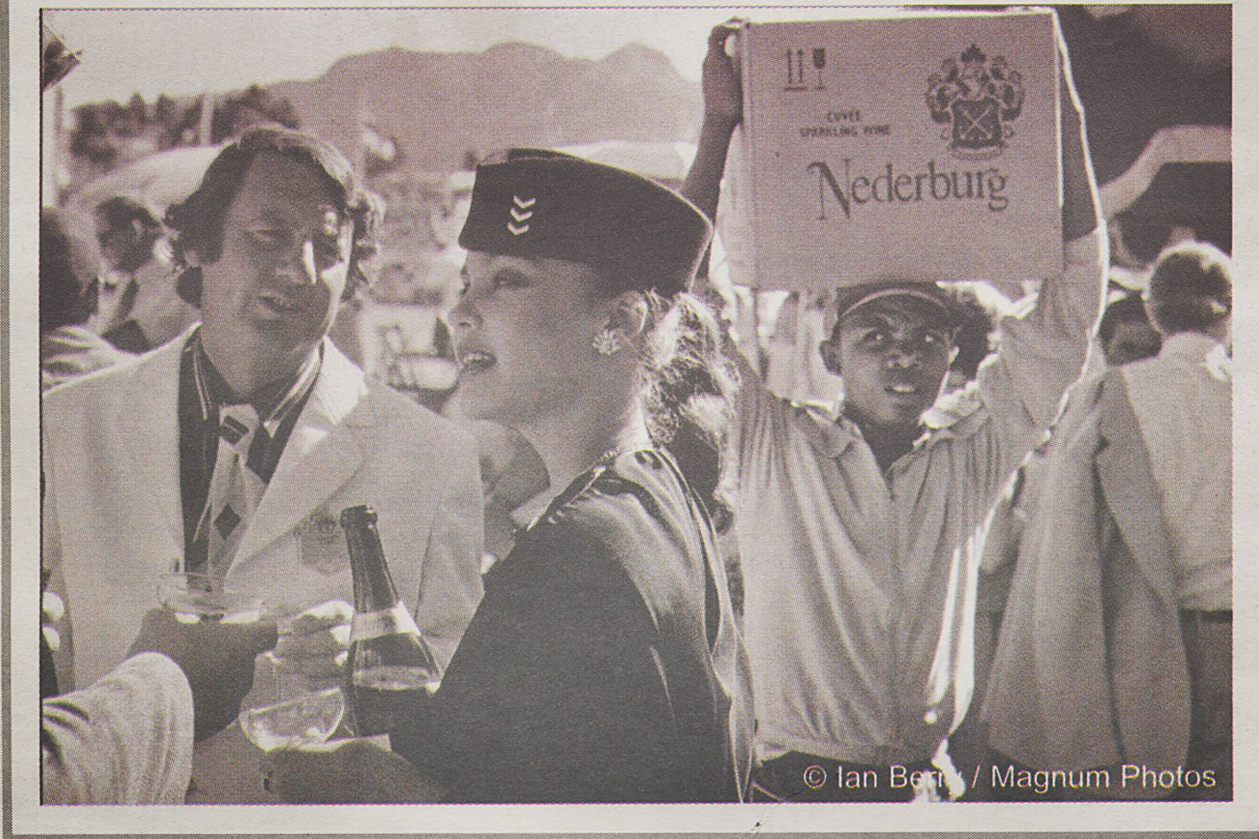
NOUSE York graduate among Iran captives

A University of York graduate was among 15 Royal Navy personnel seized and detained for 13 days by Iranian authorities who accused them of "invading" Iranian waters.

The 15 British personnel were released on April 4 2007 when in a surprise move Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced their release as a "gift" to the British people for Easter.

Royal Marine Captain Chris Air graduated from York in 2003 with a BSc in Chemistry before joining the Royal Marines in August 2004.

Picture of the week

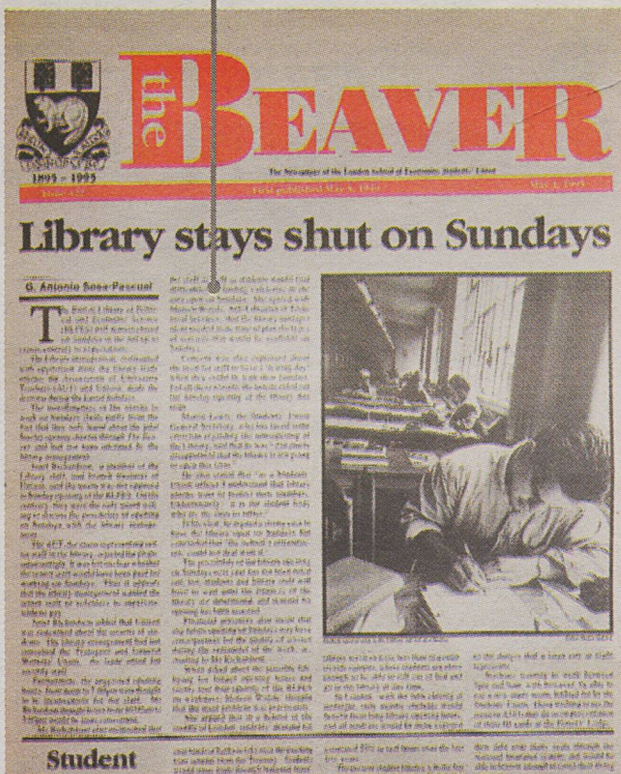


© Ian Berry / Magnum Photos

On Tuesday 1 May 2007, Ian Berry will give the second lecture of the Magnum Photographers Lecture Series in aid of charity PhotoVoice at the Royal Geographic Society. PhotoVoice's mission is to bring about positive social change for marginalised communities by providing them with photographic training so they can advocate, express themselves and generate income.

Please send your submissions for 'Picture of the Week' to photos@thebeaveronline.co.uk to be featured here

“The British Library of Political and Economic Science will remain closed on Sundays in the run-up to exams, contrary to expectations. The unwillingness of the unions to work on Sundays stems partly from the fact that they only learnt about the pilot Sunday opening scheme through The Beaver and had not been informed by the library management.”



This week in 1995



If this is you, email secretary@thebeaveronline.co.uk for your prize

NEWS IN BRIEF

LSE University Challenge team decided

The LSE's team for University Challenge - the prestigious BBC general knowledge quiz for university teams - was selected in Week Ten of last term. The team of Chris Payne (captain), Chris Coleridge, Marianne Fairthorne, Dorian Nightingale and Nathan Capone (reserve) was chosen after a live play-off final in the Old Theatre, hosted by Howard Davies.

The team now faces an interview and a written test to determine if they will qualify for the recorded rounds of the competition. If successful, they will play their first match of the competition in the second week of June.

Business Society goes to China

The LSE SU Business Society organised a ten-day trip this Easter to some of the top finance organizations in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Renowned for being the financial hubs of Asia, the LSE team visited prestigious international institutions in the cities such as Deutsche Bank, UBS Wealth Management, KPMG and Hong Kong Stock Exchange amongst others. With co-sponsorship from Merrill Lynch and Contact Singapore, an intense schedule of events resulted in some LSE students being offered internships and graduate jobs on the spot.

The thirty-two participants spent their days attending various panel discussions, networking opportunities, case study sessions, company presentations and Q&A sessions.

One of the project aims of this recruitment initiative was for students to "alleviate the misperception" that top financial opportunities are only available in the City of London and Wall Street. There was high competition for the participants of the trip - with a selection process that included sifting through application forms and CVs.

Aldwych Subway calls it quits

The much frequented Subway sandwich branch on Aldwych has packed up shop and moved all the way to Kingsway, a few feet away.

Following the closure of Benjy's, the Subway will now occupy its space.

LSE students will now be faced with the difficult choice of which Subway on Kingsway they prefer. Approximately two blocks closer, the new opening will likely hold greater appeal.

Some students have spoken of a "Kingsway curse" following the fate of Benjy's and the indefinite closure of Kantan. Whether or not the latest addition to the culinary diversity of Kingsway will meet a similar fate remains to be determined, but for now LSE student concern at learning of the Aldwych closure can be pacified knowing it hasn't gone far.

SU leads in Sudan divestment

STUDENTS LOBBY FOR LSE TO ADOPT A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT POLICY

ROLLS ROYCE PLC ANNOUNCES WITHDRAWAL FROM SUDAN CITING HUMANITARIAN CONCERNS

Laura Deck
News Editor

LSE students held a protest yesterday prior to a meeting of the School's Council, to pressure them into adopting a socially responsible investment policy.

The event featured a "lie-in" in which students lay down to represent the people killed in the Darfur region of Sudan.

The goal of the participating students was to get a resolution passed in Council that the LSE should not be funding companies that are complicit in genocide.

The Sudan divestment campaign recently made major progress when British firm Rolls Royce Plc announced on 18 April that it would "progressively withdraw" from Sudan, citing "increasing international humanitarian concerns."

On 27 April major Conservative and Liberal Democrat MPs also expressed public support for Sudan Divestment UK which has campaigned throughout the UK for companies and universities to divest in Sudan.

The LSE Students' Union was one of the first Students'



Protesters in New York City lobby for Fidelity to divest in Sudan

Unions to join the campaign. Unions from Cambridge, Liverpool, and the University of London followed suit.

29 April was declared the "Global Day for Darfur" by campaigners, and a protest was held in Whitehall with repre-

sentatives from the LSE SU present.

LSE SU Treasurer Joel Kenrick told *The Beaver* that

he estimated that the School had approximately £73,000 invested in Rolls Royce through a tracker fund, demonstrating that the School's investments were not currently socially responsible.

The School has called an urgent meeting of the Investments Committee to be held on 10 May to discuss the practicalities of socially responsible investing.

LSE Director Howard Davies and Director of Finance Andy Farrell told Kenrick that they agreed that the LSE should have some form of socially responsible investment policy, and they were prepared to start looking into how it could be done.

Farrell reported to Council that the LSE was currently developing a socially responsible investment policy.

The 'lie-in' was inspired by a movie in which students collected millions of paper clips to symbolize all of the people killed during the Holocaust. A Facebook group called 400,000 Faces promotes a similar concept of gathering 400,000 photographs of people to represent all of the people killed in Darfur in Sudan.



Union Jack

Jack didn't get time to report on the last UGM before the holidays due to, well, the holidays. His readers didn't miss much: honorary studentships got distributed between SU officials so full of themselves and their incestuous camaraderie that they were blind to any critique raised about why they even deserved them.

Last week's UGM was a joke equalled only by the amount of work put in by the Sabbs since the start of the Easter holidays. Funny enough, it is when the UGM is in quarantine that all the Sabbs find the time to do their reports, maybe because they like being held to account by a crowd made up only of their most faithful admirers. Jack thinks the UGM in the Summer Term should be held in the Library, with one of the Seven Dwarves on each floor counting votes.

Not having any histrionics of any sort to report on this week, Jack thought it would be more entertaining for the average reader if he talked about how lazy our Sabbs have been. Or rather how lazy our Sabbs are, given the fact that they still have another academic term in office, a fact that appears to have been conveniently forgotten by our elected representatives.

So what is this term going to be like? Jack doubts there is going to be any last minute fulfilment of electoral promises. After all, if nobody is here to report on how badly they do, nobody is here to sing their praises anymore, so doing anything useful would be, well, useless. Jack thinks this last term is going to be reminiscent of Just-Can't-Dewji-It trying to put up a banner: a long, tedious, embarrassing, time-wasting process.

To be fair, even if Jack hasn't been amused by the work done by our princely-paid Sabbs, he's been entertained by how they did it. Starting with Tam-pon's problems with rousing himself in the morning. Fair enough, even Jack has problems waking up from time to time. What Jack has never done, however, is walk into the Dam next door, scared by a fire alarm. Jack knows, because Jack is a gregarious and hard-working animal, that the fire alarm sounds every Thursday morning before Tam-pon pokes even a toe out of bed.

In other 'news', Dewj-bag is really proud of his new mock exam scheme - three hours being an invigilator, sitting, not doing anything; a task his hobby as communication officer has prepared him for well. And Snow White has finally got new blinds in her office - rumours has it that the entire Media Group was peering in on her tending to Ali Baba's welfare in her office.

So this is it for this year... Jack wants to thank all the Hacks for giving him endless reasons to lose his faith in fair politics, real issues, and (almost) his sense of humour. Which isn't to say he didn't have fun laughing at all of you; he just wishes you spent a little more time laughing at yourselves...

Security staff in halls don't receive living wage

Fatima Manji

Despite LSE's recent commitment to becoming a 'Living Wage employer,' *The Beaver's* investigations reveal that security staff at halls of residences continue to be paid below the recommended amount of £7.05. Like cleaners, security staff at halls of residences are not directly employed by the LSE, but supplied by private companies. Almost all hall security is provided by Magenta Security, who pay their staff an hourly wage of £6.31 for twelve-hour shift work.

Speaking to *The Beaver*, a number of halls security staff expressed discontent over their low pay, particularly since cleaners have now been promised an increase in wage following a high profile Living Wage campaign. One member of staff employed by Magenta said he had been working at a particular hall for "over five years" and had seen no increase in pay for his experience. The only increase was a rise in 31 pence earlier this year that was granted to all security staff at halls of residences regardless of experience.

Another security guard argued that it was particularly unfair that "reception staff are paid £10 an hour for doing the same job", and that security staff at "larger halls such as Bankside and High Holborn have a more difficult job, yet are paid the same amount as those in smaller halls." Several security staff also stated that since they have no direct contact with the LSE, there is no forum to address any grievances. They were also unaware of any union representation

Code	Description	Amount
Normal	324.00	324.00
Rate		£31.00
Holiday Taken	0.00	
Remaining	0.00	
Net Pay		£20.87

The pay slip for a member of the security staff at an LSE hall

being available to them.

The issue of security staff pay is the latest in a series of grievances over staff pay for the LSE. Previous issues have arisen over overtime pay for catering staff and especially cleaners' wages, which have been the focus of a high profile Living Wage campaign with heavy student involvement.

When asked for comment, the Human Resources department of the LSE said they could not provide any information, since the staff were not directly employed by LSE, and the department was not responsible for negotiating contracts with any security companies.

Daniel Peppiat, a representative for the local UNISON branch, suggested that since security at residences "tend to be agency staff" and not directly employed by the LSE there were issues with unionisation. Speaking to *The Beaver*, Peppiat argued that these members of staff "can be legally unionised, but not necessari-

ly recognised for negotiation", since the School is not the employer.

It is likely the School will be forced to address this issue, having committed to becoming a 'Living Wage employer'. Matthew Bolton, organiser of the London Citizens Living Wage Campaign, said that London Citizens are working closely with the School, to help them implement the Living Wage. In particular, meetings have been conducted with Andrew Farrell, the School's Director of Finances and Facilities. Bolton stated, "We are helping to put [the School] in touch with PWC [PriceWaterhouseCoopers] who have good experience as a Living Wage Employer and can provide the needed expertise for the Estates department of the LSE. He added that committing to being a 'Living Wage' campus "includes everyone" and therefore the issue of security staff at halls must also be addressed.

EDITORIAL COMMENT: PAGE 11

Wikipedia sparks Mugabe rumours

Michael Deas
Senior Reporter

After a Foreign Office minister mistakenly confirmed rumours that she is a registered student, LSE was forced to issue a statement denying that the daughter of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe is a student at the LSE.

The speculation arose last month when Conservative MP James Duddridge asked Foreign Office minister Ian McCartney in Parliament whether he could confirm if Bona Mugabe was a student at the School. The minister initially confirmed that she was but the Foreign Office later issued a correction, saying the minister had 'mis-remembered an earlier briefing.'

The claim first appeared on Wikipedia, an online encyclopedia anyone can edit, in November. The anonymous author of the entry claimed

that Bona Mugabe's details could be found on LSE's e-mail directory. The entry has since been removed by staff at the LSE.

The controversy has prompted the Foreign Office to extend a travel ban on Robert Mugabe to prevent any of his family from travelling to, or studying in, the UK. The original ban was introduced over allegations that Mugabe's government was intimidating members of the opposition and preventing democratic change.

An LSE spokesperson said: "We would not usually comment on any individuals, students or otherwise. However, given the press speculation, a statement has been issued."

Bona Mugabe would not have been a novelty at the LSE; other offspring of current or former heads-of-states to study at LSE include Chelsea Clinton, the daughter of former President Bill Clinton and Saif al-Islam, son of Libya's Muammar al-Gaddafi.

Photograph: Corbis



Mugabe's daughter was rumoured to be attending the LSE

Prayer room under scrutiny

WORKING GROUP TO EXAMINE RAMMELL REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Chris Lam

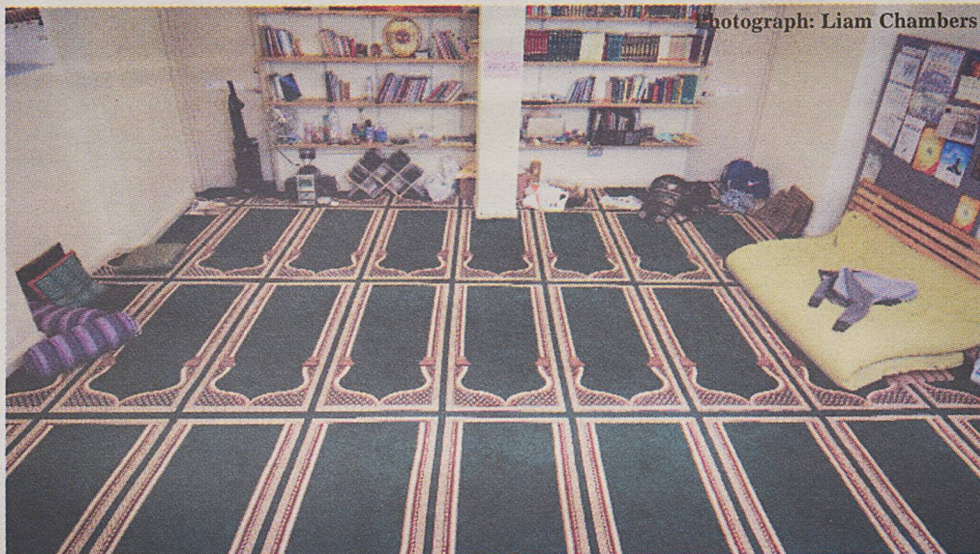
The Rammell Report has prompted the School to establish a Working Group to consider the impact of the Rammell recommendations on tackling extremism and to recommend what in the report is acceptable to LSE.

The School said that an audit of the current policies and procedures was carried out and the Working Group concluded that "although for the most part the School's current procedures were more than

“Through a relocation, worries of underground and hidden extremist activities are likely to be alleviated

Shanela Haque
SU Anti-Racism Officer

adequate to cover the scope of the Rammell recommendations, there were some areas that needed some revision.”



Photograph: Liam Chambers

The prayer rooms on campus are located in the basement of King's Chambers

The Group includes officers of the Students' Union (SU).

The security and use of the prayer room was one of the areas highlighted. A 'code of practice' for the use of the prayer room that will apply equally to all religious groups within the School is currently being drawn up by the Reverend David Peebles.

The prayer rooms are located in the basement of King's Chambers.

SU Anti-Racism officer Shanela Haque believes that it is partly the lack of visibility of the location of the prayer rooms that has led to fears that it could be targeted by extremists. She felt it has also led to the "ghettoisation of Muslims on campus".

Haque said: "Rather than to solve this problem by relocat-

ing the rooms to a more visible location, which would also encourage people of other faiths to use it, the School has so far chosen to ignore it."

"Through a relocation, worries of underground and hidden extremist activities are likely to be alleviated."

The School is also drawing up a revised policy for the booking and use of LSE rooms by societies.

Both of these policies are set to be discussed at the next meeting of the Working Group, which will be chaired by School Secretary Adrian Hall.

SU Islamic Society President Mustafa Davies told *The Beaver* that the Rammell Report was not supported by many of LSE's Muslim students. Davies thought it was important for the discussions

at the School to be "transparent so that we know what's going on and to avoid any possible misunderstandings."

In November 2006 the Minister for Higher Education, Bill Rammell, published guidance to help HE providers to tackle violent extremism on campus as reported by *The Beaver*.

In a joint statement, the NUS, UCU, Unison, the Federation of Student Islamic Societies and the Equality Challenge Unit said "Any implementation should recognise that demonising Muslims is unacceptable and dangerous."

"Students and staff should be assured by their institutions that there is no intention of adding to a climate of Islamophobia."

Three Tuns security falls short

Rajan Patel
Ruchika Tulshyan

Security in the LSE Students' Union's (SU) Three Tuns Bar does not meet the benchmark recommended by the Metropolitan Police.

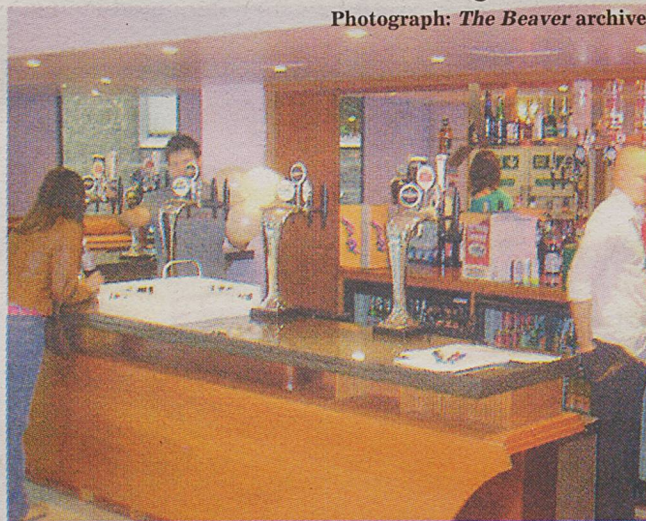
In areas such as staff training and till positioning, the Three Tuns would fail to meet the Metropolitan Police's "Crime Prevention and Effective Management Checklist" applicable to all licensed premises in the City of Westminster.

The "minimum" requirements for CCTV systems within Westminster borough state that "all 'entry' and 'exit' points must be monitored by a camera that records every person entering in any light conditions to a minimum standard of 'frontal' identification."

SU Treasurer Joel Kenrick, confirmed that all entrance and exit points to club nights – such as Crush – were monitored by CCTV in accordance with the recommendations of the Metropolitan Police. He added that under the advice of the police, an upgrade of the CCTV system (from nine to sixteen high-resolution cameras) is currently in progress.

However, the Crime Prevention Checklist advises that tills be positioned "so staff face customers", which is not the case in the Three Tuns.

In cases where customer-facing tills are impractical, the installation of a security mirror



Photograph: The Beaver archive

The Three Tuns Bar continues to be a favourite of students

is recommended. A representative of Insight Security, a private security firm, said, "In a pub, security mirrors would give practical help in monitoring customer movement and detecting shoplifters. If staff can't face customers, then having a mirror in place is a very good idea." No security mirrors are in place in the Three Tuns.

In response Kenrick said, "The fact that the Tuns is a horse-shoe shaped bar negates the need for a mirror."

The bar is also required to provide "staff training to resolve identifiable risks" according to the City of Westminster Statement of Licensing Policy, but does not currently carry out any comprehensive training procedure.

A member of the bar staff confirmed that there has been

no training for staff to recognise aggressive or suspicious behaviour.

"No training is provided in this category. It is mainly the bouncers' job to deal with any inconveniences of such a nature. Of course it is often the staff that points out such incidents and call the bouncers," said the employee.

An audit performed last summer by the Westminster Police Borough Licensing criticised the recording of incidents, "The Incident Log in place is totally inadequate," and also recommended that operating procedures include keeping records of CCTV tapes for 31 days.

However, SU authorities confirmed that an Incident Log is now in place.

Other recommendations

made in the audit included: "Do door supervisors (bouncers) attend staff training days?"

Currently, bar staff for the Three Tuns have no formal training sessions. As a result, a bartender commented, "there are some people that know the Tuns inside out and others that just know the basics."

Crime prevention literature

“There are some people that know the Tuns inside and out and others that just know the basics”
Three Tuns bartender

is also a minimum. However, flat surfaces within toilets have been kept to a minimum, reducing the likelihood of potential cocaine consumption.

Despite potential security issues, all students surveyed outside the Three Tuns by reporters felt that the bar was a safe and secure environment. The same sentiment was echoed by a member of the bar staff.

Anti-semitism report refuted

Erica Gornall
Senior Reporter

Last month, an all-party parliamentary report on anti-Semitism concluded that politicians were "very worried about Islamic anti-Semitism on campuses," prompting debate at universities across the UK.

The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported that Vice-Chancellors have been told to report anti-Semitic statements and speeches and to help police collect evidence to prosecute Islamic extremists who are "stirring up hatred of Israel".

Some in the LSE Students' Union (SU) have voiced concern and disappointment at the media reports and the proposals to single out certain groups when discrimination is meant to be universal.

SU Treasurer Joel Kenrick said that he is concerned that linking anti-Israel sentiments with anti-Semitism is dangerous and will prevent free speech.

"The mistake that a lot of these articles make is to equate anti-Israel feeling with being anti-Jewish, which it is not. It is really important to make that distinction," he added, "otherwise legitimate debate about the future of Israel and Palestine can be closed off by calling them anti-semitic," Kenrick said.

The parliamentary report comes after many media reports that Professor Anthony Glee of Brunel University discovered that up to 48 universities have been targeted by extremist Islamic groups such as Al-Muhajiroun.

The LSE was mentioned alongside Imperial College, Oxford and Cambridge as being the main campuses that had been infiltrated.

However, according to a senior LSE SU official, presence of such groups has actually disappeared since the 7/7 London bombings in 2005.

Such claims by Professor Glee have been received with scepticism by the LSE SU, and

have caused disappointment that the media have targeted 'Islamic Societies'.

"[The Islamic Society] has never been extremist," said SU Education and Welfare Officer Alexandra Vincenti.

"The Jewish Society and the Islamic Society constantly

“[The report] is completely unhelpful and whips up a fierce suspicion where there need be none

Alexandra Vincenti
SU Education and Welfare Officer

work together on things like the Holocaust Memorial Day and these reports keep coming up, citing LSE as an example. It is completely unhelpful and whips up a fierce suspicion where there need be none," she added.

Monitoring and reporting on speakers and students has raised the issue over free speech.

"Individuals can and do hold extreme views without espousing violence, an LSE spokeswoman said, "but the School has not and will not tolerate the incitement of social, racial or religious hatred, or the advocating or glorifying of the use of violence."

She continued: "As far as we are aware, having checked with security staff and at a senior level, there have been no official complaints to the School of anti-Semitic behaviour or extremism on campus over the last year."

LSE at Model United Nations in Geneva

Ruchika Tulshyan
Senior Reporter

A group of LSE students spent a week in Geneva discussing and debating international politics at the World Model United Nations 2007 (WorldMUN), an annual conference to simulate the United Nations organized by Harvard University.

The conference was held in the diplomatic quarter of Switzerland with almost 1,700 delegates from over 40 countries in attendance.

The LSE delegation was organised by the LSE MUN Society Officer, Jonathan Cheng.

Cheng told *The Beaver*, "I knew it would be a great MUN experience as it's the world's biggest MUN conference outside of the US and it's only right that LSE has a delegation."

The sixteenth session of the

World MUN included simulated committees such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Human Rights Council (HCR). LSE delegates represented Venezuela, Malta and Guatemala in the committees.

The World MUN follows a strict Rules of Procedure, adapted from the United Nations General Assembly and LSE delegates viewed the conference as an opportunity to explore the world of international diplomacy. First year LSE student, Subash Viroomal was awarded for his outstanding diplomacy skills representing Venezuela at the WTO session.

While committee sessions were held at the International Conference Centre of Geneva, LSE delegates said that the highlight of the week was having the closing ceremony at the prestigious United Nations Assembly Hall of Geneva.

An-Najah University twins with LSE SU

Meryem Torun

The LSE Students' Union (SU) has officially been twinned with the Student Council of a Palestinian university in Nablus, An-Najah National University.

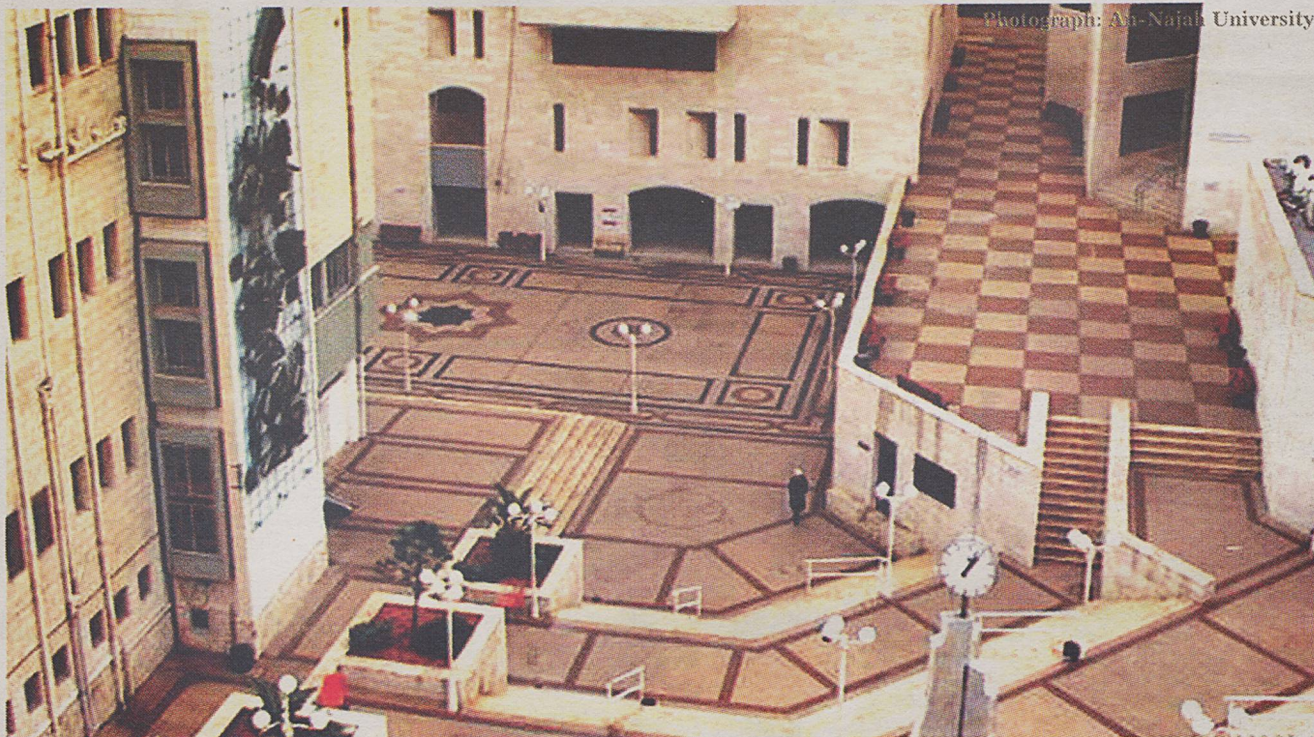
An-Najah was chosen by

The LSE SU is sending a very powerful message to oppressors that violations of the right to education will not be tolerated

Ziyaad Lunat

the Twinning Taskforce that was recently mandated by a Union General Meeting (UGM) to select a university to twin with.

An-Najah is one of the largest Palestinian universities. It was founded just thirty years ago in the Northern West Bank region, is currently attended by around 10,000 students.



The LSE Students' Union has forged a special relationship with An-Najah National University in Nablus

SU Treasurer and Twinning Taskforce Chair Joel Kenrick told *The Beaver* that two universities were considered, Bir Zeit University and An-Najah. Kenrick said that An-Najah was selected "firstly because it was felt that that LSE and An-Najah would mutually benefit more from the linkage, and secondly An-Najah were very keen to turn the twinning into a real institutional relationship."

The official twinning process was initiated with a formal written request sent by the SU General Secretary

Jimmy Tam, to the PR director of An-Najah. A letter of response was then received from the President of the An-Najah Student Council as an official confirmation of the agreement. Under the Constitution of the SU, the twinning arrangement will last three years after which it can be renewed.

According to the text of the letter received, the An-Najah Student Council "voted unanimously in support of this twinning initiative". The student council is also due to form

a twinning committee that will coordinate the activities with the LSESU, with representatives from the council as well as the PR Department and the Office of Academic Affairs at An-Najah.

There is due to be a variety of joint programs as a result of the twinning initiative. Kenrick said that he expected educational, cultural and practical exchanges to come out of the relationship.

Tam agreed, commenting that twinning offered a good opportunity to learn more

about the situation in Palestine for students.

Kenrick said that a scholarship for a Palestinian student might be considered in the future, citing the British Chevening Scholarship available to Palestinian students at Edinburgh University.

Dr Saed Abu Hijleh, the PR director of An-Najah, is set to visit the LSE for a twinning ceremony on 15 May. He is a Palestinian human geographer and currently works as a lecturer of political and environmental geography at An-Najah

university as well as coordinating its international relations and PR.

Dr Saed will meet with the members of the Twinning Taskforce and the future SU Executive officers in a twinning ceremony.

The UGM motion passed earlier in the year to set off the twinning process, was put forth to support the Universal Right to Education being denied to Palestinian students as a result of military action in Israel.

It noted the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights' statement that "Everyone has a right to education." Advocates of the twinning argued that that right was being denied to Palestinian university students due to Israeli occupation and military action in Palestine.

Amendments to the motion proposed that the LSE twin with both a Palestinian university and an Israeli university. The amendments failed to gain a majority vote, and the original motion passed without any changes or additions.

The motion finally passed after a 'card vote' was held to confirm the number of votes for and against the proposal.

Ziyaad Lunat, the proposer of the motion, told *The Beaver* that he thought that "the LSE SU is sending a powerful message to the oppressors that violations of the right to education will not be tolerated. We hope that we can strengthen our solidarity with the students of Palestine with a programme that includes academic cooperation, cultural interchange and practical support."

1967 sit-in remembered

40 YEARS LATER, LSE SOCIALIST SOCIETY MEMBERS RE-UNITE

Joel Kenrick

Veterans of the militant 1967 LSE student sit-in revisited the Old Theatre on Friday 20 April to mark the 40th anniversary of the sit-in.

They also gathered to celebrate the life of Basker Vashee, a key figure in the student movement who died in 2005.

Basker, who studied at the LSE from 1966 to 1969, was horrified when LSE appointed Walter Adams as its new director and helped to publish the LSE Socialist Society's 'Report on Walter Adams' in October 1966, accusing him of failing to stand up to Ian Smith's racist regime in Rhodesia.

When the appointment was confirmed students organised a demonstration in the Old Theatre, and the School later suspended the then presidents of the Students' Union (SU) and the Graduate Students' Association for their part in the demonstration.

This caused Britain's first ever militant sit-in on 13th March 1967 when 400 students occupied the LSE calling for their reinstatement. On 15th March several students began a hunger strike which lasted five days, until Director Sydney

Caine agreed to lift the suspensions.

Friday's meeting heard from speakers including Professor Lord Meghnad Desai, Alex Callinicos, professor of European Studies at King College, Chris Harman, editor of *International Socialism*, Lindsey German, Convenor of the Stop the War Coalition and many other former students who were involved in the 1967 sit-in.

Current LSE students Laura Paskell-Brown, chair of the LSE SU Socialist Workers' Student Society, and Joel Kenrick, SU Treasurer, also addressed the meeting, drawing comparisons between the 1967 protests and the campaigns this year over both the re-appointment of Sir Howard Davis and the controversial appointment of Peter Sutherland as Chair of LSE Council.

Despite high fees and the abolition of grants resulting in the pricing out of many students, Kenrick told the meeting that LSE students were still active in the fight against oppression wherever it occurred, citing the successful campaign for a London Living Wage for LSE cleaners and the recent decision to twin with An-Najah University in Nablus as examples.

BP Board of Directors under fire

REPORT CLAIMS BOARD FAILED TO "EXERCISE EFFECTIVE SAFETY OVERSIGHT"

Michael Deas
Senior Reporter

A report by the US Chemical Safety Board has claimed that the British Petroleum (BP) Board of directors, including LSE's next Chair of Council Peter Sutherland, must take responsibility for BP's Texas City refinery disaster that killed 15 people.

Windows were shattered as far as three-quarters of a mile away and a further 180 people were injured when chemicals at the plant exploded in March 2005.

The Chemical Safety Board's study concludes that the accident was the result of fatigue caused by long working hours, cost cutting on safety and the failure of BP's Board to 'exercise effective safety oversight.'

The refinery's training budget was halved over the five years to 2004 from \$2.8m to \$1.4m and its 28-person staff was reduced to eight employees.

The BP board ordered that costs be cut by 25 percent. BP allowed staff to work 84 hour weeks, and workers at the centre of the accident had worked 12 hour shifts for over 30 days. As well as increasing training, the report suggested a limit on the number of hours worked in order to reduce fatigue.

In 2004 BP were accused by the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of 38 people of



Work conditions at a refinery in Texas City are in question

multiple human rights violations in Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project involving including claims that landowners were misinformed about their legal rights.

Last July BP made a multi-million settlement with Colombian farmers who alleged that the company benefited from harassment and intimidation carried out by

Colombian government paramilitaries guarding a BP pipeline.

It's about time that big corporations were held responsible for their crimes the same way ordinary people are

LSE staff member

BP's Chairman Peter Sutherland was appointed as the new Chair of LSE Council and Court of Governors, the School's governing bodies last year. He will take up the posts in January 2008.

One LSE staff member, commenting on last month's report, told *The Beaver* "Its about time that big corporations were held responsible for their crimes the same way ordinary people are."

LSE's emergency response

CONTINUED FROM
FRONT PAGE

There have also been preliminary talks to share an Emergency Management (EM) centre with other London universities; Birkbeck School of Pharmacy and the University of Westminster have expressed an interest.

The response of individuals during the exercise was deemed commendable: "All parties approached the exercise with professionalism and an appropriate amount of realism;" however, the report also stated that staff were unclear of their precise roles, and that the EMT should formalise the roles of EMT members, their deputies and other staff, in a document which can then be distributed.

An additional weakness was the use of the media: "The press would be a vital partner in such an emergency...[it] could be used to communicate information to general public and staff; however the press were viewed as a negative part of the emergency."

A further recommendation was the implementation of a Gold, Silver and Bronze system to facilitate the flow of information, a system which emergency services such as the police currently use. Gold members of the system are typically senior management who take the role of strategists; Silver members consist of experts from various divisions within the business and deal with tactics; and Bronze members are the operative 'do-ers' of the structure. It is understood that the School has provisionally set up such a system.

A spokesperson for the LSE confirmed that "some deficiencies were identified by this exercise and by the power outage incident last term and these are now being dealt with."

DISASTER SCENARIOS ENVISAGED BY THE SCHOOL

Scenarios printed here were extracted directly from LSE Emergency Planning documents

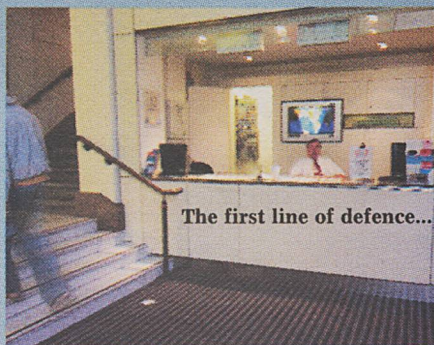
Catastrophic: An extremist detonates a small but lethal device in the Underground Bar during a packed Crush event on a Friday evening in the summer term. No senior staff are on site and Security and Student Union staff have to deal with the immediate aftermath. The Emergency Services arrive quickly but there is widespread confusion and panic. By Monday it is evident that three students have been killed and several seriously injured. However, the Underground Bar itself is largely free of damage and can reopen for minor but necessary refurbishment upon the conclusion of forensic work in about two weeks time.

People: There is an Avian Flu pandemic that has started in the Far East. Within a month (February) it has spread world wide and has now taken hold of the London population. In line with Health Protection Agency predictions, 20-25% of staff and students are affected, albeit not concurrently. At the peak period, which lasts around two months, 15% of staff and students are ill. Staff with sick relatives and children to care for (some schools are closed) swell the numbers of those missing. On the advice of the local Health Protection Unit, who are acting upon guidance from the Health Protection Agency, and in view of the relatively small number of deaths nationally (c50,000), DMT decide that the School should continue running as normally as possible.

Sajjan Gohel, a terrorism and security expert and director of London-based think-tank Asia-Pacific Foundation told The Beaver that he believes that the risk of a terror attack on LSE is limited: "The closest example was the crisis in Beslan, Russia, when school children were being held as hostages by Chechen terrorists. "In terms of being a target,

the LSE would be no different to any other university in London. What is important to remember is that the university has an international reputation where world leaders, visiting dignitaries, respected authors and high-profile figures in the world of commerce have come to speak. The university also has students from all over the world. For these reasons there

Gradual: A female student is attacked and robbed outside a School hall of residence during the Lent term. Two weeks later another student, this time male, is attacked and robbed on Houghton Street. Finally, just a few days after that a member of staff is brutally beaten up on Kingsway after leaving a public lecture in the Peacock Theatre. The events do not appear to be related but have created substantial negative press for the School over a period of weeks. Admissions have fallen, attendance at public lectures is down substantially and there is a considerable feeling of fear amongst the staff and student body.



Premises: A fire starts in the basement of the Old Building after some students, retreating from the rain to have a crafty cigarette, carelessly discard it. The incident occurs very early in the morning, on a term time weekday, and few staff or students are inside. Security personnel, on hearing the fire alarm, call the Emergency Services in accordance with procedure. Staff and students are safely evacuated and the CIERP is instigated via an immediate telephone call to a Gold Team member.

They want to inflict a large number of fatalities. So wherever and in whatever location or building they can do that, they would want to. It does not have to be where a statesman is giving a speech even though it would be seen as a logical target."

He drew attention to the fact that the July 7th terrorist attacks took place in London during the G-8 summit in Scotland, and that the most obvious place or time for an attack could "actually be a red herring".

Gohel also highlighted the importance of communication and evacuation as key factors in the event of an attack.

Responding to queries about why the exercise was carried out without a full enactment even though the academic term had not begun, the LSE spokesperson said that, "much can be learnt from desk-top exercises while minimising actual disruption to the working life of the campus. We carry out fire drills to ensure students and staff know how to evacuate buildings on campus in an emergency and students and staff would follow instructions from fire wardens or security personnel depending on the appropriate response."

In response to queries on whether less student-friendly security systems were necessary, Gohel said he believes the current threat to daily life is "very serious and strong enough for us to accept that our way of life will change...However, it would be a huge tragedy if an institution of higher learning would be turned into a prison. I do not believe that the time has come for measures like compulsory ID card checking, turnstiles in all buildings."

Professor Conor Gearty, a human rights expert at the LSE, agreed with Gohel on the issue of implementing security systems such as turnstiles in all

buildings, stating: "The threat of criminal violence is one that needs to be reduced by a variety of means without damaging disproportionately the civil freedoms and political freedoms of those who live here. As a type of criminal violence, terrorism is no different."

Gearty also drew attention to the lack of information released by authorities: "Risk of terrorism is a dangerous subject - the authorities assert risk but then deny the obligation to provide further information. There is a risk certainly as there is a risk of other kinds of serious crime, but we should not allow fear to destroy to our way of life."

It would be a tragedy if an institution of higher learning were to be turned into a prison

Sajjan Gohel
Security expert

A spokesperson for the Metropolitan Police said that there were no plans to work with universities to prepare specifically for terrorist threats in the near future, but that the force retains a 24-hour on-alert team of "highly trained officers who are regularly involved in training exercises and are able to deal with a wide range of potential situations or threats". She refused to comment on specific procedures or the risk that London universities currently face due to the sensitivity of information.

"How could someone, a peer, dare do this?"

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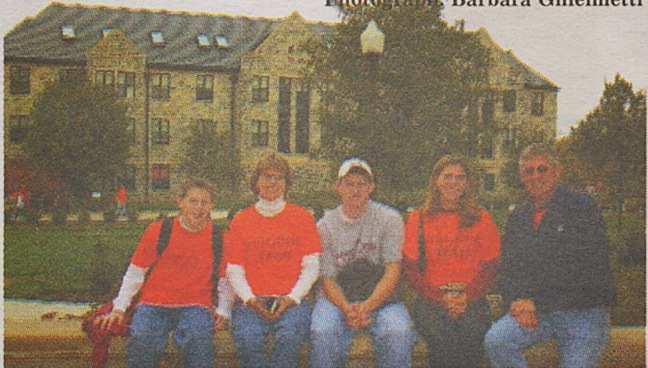
when she was at Virginia Tech. Shesaid that the decision by the media to play Cho's video was "tragic for the victims' families" but she added that "everyone would have demanded to see it if it hadn't been released."

"No one checks their e-mail at 7 am in the morning," she said about the university's attempts to notify students and manage the situation.

Who would want to go to school in a prison?

Barbara Ghielmetti
LSE student and
Virginia Tech alumna

Photograph: Barbara Ghielmetti



Ghielmetti (second right) and her family showed school spirit on the Virginia Tech campus in 2005

Ghielmetti said that the campus was intended to be open and part of the Blacksburg community. "Who would want to go to school in a prison?" she asked.

She added that gun control was an issue that was raised by the shootings. "The debate can occur, but it shouldn't diminish the tragedy. I don't think it would happen here [in London], that someone would do this, people don't have the access [to guns]."

LSE research student and security expert Sajjan Gohel agreed with Ghielmetti. "The Virginia shootings were something unique to the environment of the US," Gohel said. "It would be difficult to imagine that happening in the UK, as gun laws are far more stringent, particularly after the Dunblane massacre in Scotland, when on 13 March 1996, a gunman shot dead sixteen children and one adult and then killed himself," he added.

Gohel acknowledged that the LSE is not invulnerable to attack, however. "British universities need to revamp their security structures to be better able to deal with the diverse threats of terrorism rather than



Two students sit outside the crime scene at Norris Hall at Virginia Tech following the shootings

any other type of perceived threat," he said.

Ghielmetti added that the media focus on Cho's ethnicity was unnecessary. "No one wants to be stereotyped. Koreans shouldn't be worried. Everyone knows it was one deranged person, regardless of colour or origin. One crazy, crazy person."

Students at the LSE have joined other university students in the United States and around the globe in mourning

the 31 students and staff murdered.

Education and Welfare Officer Alexandra Vincenti said, "The Students' Union was deeply shocked to hear about the shooting at Virginia Tech on Monday 16 April. Students should be able to study free from any concerns about their safety. We send our deepest sympathy to all of the students at VA Tech."

A spokesperson for the LSE said that "most students and

staff would agree that the Virginia Tech shooting was a terrible and shocking tragedy."

A minute-long moment of silence was held at the start of the Union General Meeting last week, and a book for students to write their personal messages of condolence to Virginia Tech students will be located in the Quad until Friday 11 May. The book will then be sent to Virginia Tech with a letter from SU General Secretary Jimmy Tam.

Driven to drugs?

■ CONCERN RAISED OVER USE OF DRUGS AS STUDY AIDS

Kevin Perry

Many students may be turning to drug use, both legal and illegal, to help them cope with the stress of exam revision.

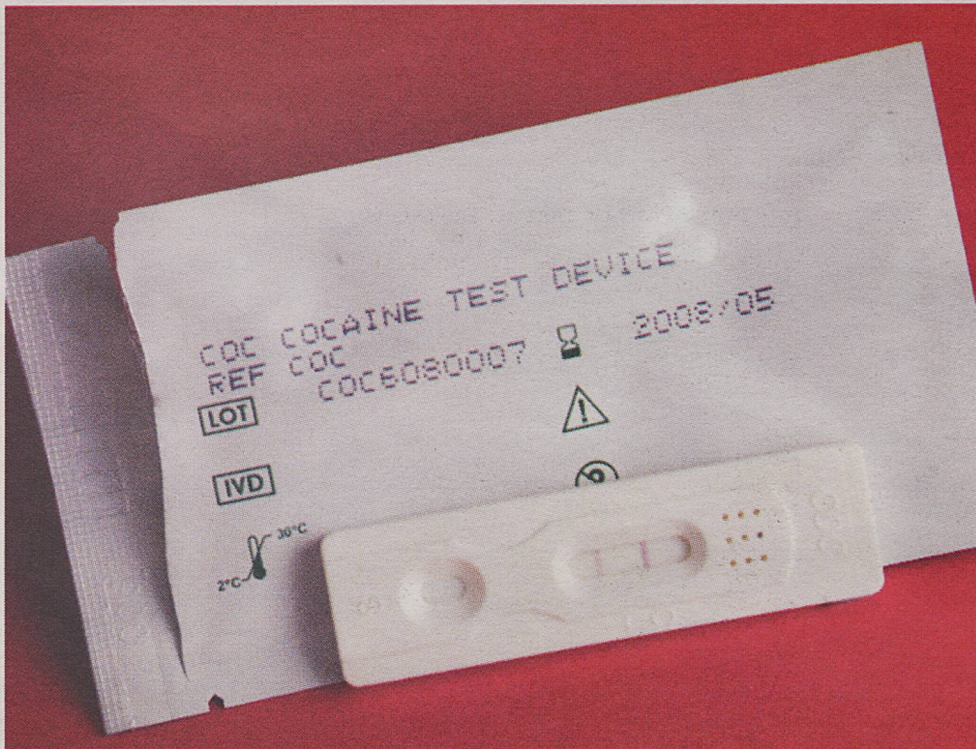
One student, who preferred not to be named, told *The Beaver* that they have used cocaine to keep them awake and aid them with their revision, but further investigation by *The Beaver*, including random drug testing, suggests that the problem is not widespread. However, many others are taking prescription ADD drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall, with use particularly prevalent among American students.

However, the relative difficulty of obtaining these drugs in Britain means that use is less widespread than on American campuses. One student told *The Beaver*, "After being at school in the States I found that students at the LSE seem to be a lot less dependent on prescription study aids."

This tendency is particularly concerning given the lack of knowledge many students have about harmful side effects.

Abuse of Ritalin can lead to loss of appetite, dizziness, headaches and psychotic episodes, while overdosing has been known to induce comas. Overdosing on cocaine can cause convulsions, heart failure and death.

SU Education and Welfare officer Alexandra Vincenti said she'd never had anyone using cocaine as a study aid speak to her, and that she "doubts it's a big problem". Furthermore, she was shocked that students would consider using prescrip-



A coke test conducted by *The Beaver* displays a negative result

tion drugs as a revision aid: "I've never even heard of anyone taking Ritalin to help them study."

She stated that she was more concerned with the excessive consumption of caffeine. She said that students tend to turn to "Red Bull, Pro-Plus and coffee".

Caffeine, seen by many as harmless, also has serious side effects. Anaphylaxis, caused by a cerebral allergic reaction to caffeine, causes the brain to enter the 'flight or fight' mode, which manifests itself in hyperactivity, anxiety and an

inability to focus. This is particularly ironic considering that many students use caffeine in an attempt to stay focused on revision.

Vincenti added that the Students' Union offers support to those experiencing stress in the run up to exams: "My advice would be that it's better to tell someone early than to resort to stronger and stronger drugs. Obviously cocaine would be an extreme example."

"I'd advise them to see their doctor. While exam stress may be part of the reason for taking drugs, the student's health is

the priority. I'd also advise them to seek counselling, and I can make counselling appointments for people if they are uncomfortable doing it themselves."

She also recommended speaking to personal tutors, although, if illegal drug use is involved, then Vincenti describes this as "more of a grey area... Because it is technically an offence to take drugs at school, the tutor may feel that they have to report the student to the school."

LSE report outlines "jobless generation"

Patrick Cullen
Senior Reporter

LSE's Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) and the Prince's Trust have released a report detailing the effects of a "jobless generation of young people" upon the British economy.

Approximately a billion pounds is lost to youth crime annually, while educational failings are costing the economy around £18 billion every year.

The report's authors, Sandra McNally and Shqiponja Telhaj of CEP, told *The Beaver* that "The report was based on our original research," and that the Prince's Trust had provided "personal case studies" and information about the Trust's activities.

McNally confirmed that the report, funded and commissioned by both the Trust and the Royal Bank of Scotland, was written without interference from either party.

Both authors were "entirely happy with every aspect of the published report".

Unsurprisingly, such dramatic findings – £19 billion is worth the equivalent of 16.25 percent of the UK's 2006 GDP – have grabbed the attention of the media, particularly with the Chancellor coming under fire in recent weeks.

McNally said that "The report got a lot of attention.

Some of the reporting was quite sensationalist though – and not accurate ... it is wrong to add up all the costs together and claim that the cost is equivalent to a 1 percent reduction in income tax. Our report does neither of these things."

Despite this inaccuracy, Telhaj said, "I am very happy with the media coverage, since [the report] was covered by the most important newspapers in the country."

Both McNally and Telhaj argue that the government should take the report's findings on board along with "all the research of CEP", underlining the fact that "the social exclusion of young people creates a huge economic cost to ... society."

McNally went on to say that "there needs to be interventions to try to address the issues faced by young people who face 'social exclusion'."

He added that more resources are needed to tackle the issues raised in the report, adding that "perhaps this needs to be financed by an increase in taxation", before criticising the reluctance of politicians to consider tax rises.

A spokesperson for the LSE said that the LSE's own efforts to tackle the problems of the social exclusion of British youth includes "about 200 student volunteers who help raise aspirations in around 27 primary and secondary schools in central London each year".



CEP and the Prince's Trust: hand-in-hand

Fabricated Facebook scandal

■ STUDENT LOAN PETITION'S CLAIMS UNFOUNDED

Rajan Patel
Senior Reporter

Facebook groups encouraging students to sign up to a petition against a so-called "student loan scandal" have been criticised by the Student Loans Company (SLC), the body which administers student loans in the UK.

The petition, which has already received over 60,000 signatures, states that student loan repayments are deducted each month from graduates' salaries but are "not knocked off the balance of the loan until the end of the year".

It concludes, "Paying a full year of interest on the full balance which had gradually been paid off adds hundreds [sic] of pounds of unnecessary interest. The payment should be deducted monthly as it is paid."

Ian McLaren Thomson of the SLC said, "We are not at all pleased that one person's misunderstanding has led to so many others being misinformed," he said. "If there was the slightest chance that the petitioner's point was accurate – even in part – there would be good cause to be worried. It is, however, fundamentally wrong."

Nicholas Barr, Professor of Public Economics at the LSE and an expert on student

finance, was also quick to reassure students that the system is "fair to borrowers" and that "students are not ripped off".

Barr added, "In saying that students are not ripped off two points are noteworthy: (a) the government does not hang on to the money but passes it on to the SLC month by month as soon as it receives it; and (b) the SLC calculates interest on the basis of repayment flows over the year."

The government has also issued a similar clarification and their response to the petition has already appeared online.

An article exposing the petition's error appeared in the *National Student* three weeks ago. The findings of the article and the government's response to the petition have sparked increasing criticism of the petitioners on their Facebook groups. In the words of one poster, "This whole thing is crap. A basic Google search will uncover the truth."

When contacted by *The Beaver* the creator of one such Facebook group acknowledged that, in light of the government's statement, the petition's claims seem to be "unfounded". Numerous graduate students have checked their statements and verified that the SLC's calculations appear to be correct.

One LSE student said, "Initially I did sign up to the



[Join this Group](#)

[Report Group](#)

petition...I was convinced at the time but only because like many people I just read through it quickly. Now I don't think it makes a lot of sense.

People are forgetting that there probably is a practical reason for them being informed annually about how their loan has been credited."

Davies to take sabbatical

Michael Deas
Senior Reporter

LSE Director Howard Davies has been awarded a three month paid Sabbatical leave of absence worth £55,000 as part of his re-appointment package.

Davies will take three months off at the beginning of summer term next year, and will use the time to write a book.

Teaching staff are entitled to one term of sabbatical leave for every eight terms served. However, some students have expressed concern that as Davies is not a part of teaching staff, a paid sabbatical is inappropriate.

Davies told *The Beaver*, "For academic staff a Sabbatical is a right, at the rate of one term for every 8 terms worked. When I take a term off, which will be the summer term to minimize the impact, as that

is a quieter period for the School, I will have completed 14 terms."

Asked if the sabbatical was intended for purposes of academia, or as a reward for good service to the school, LSE Chairman Lord Grabiner, refused to comment.

He did however, tell *The Beaver*, "I think pretty well everyone involved with the LSE rightly holds Sir Howard Davies in the highest possible regard. The position is that over many years Directors who have been granted and have accepted an extended or additional term of office have been awarded a sabbatical."

Davies is the first LSE Director without a teaching background to be awarded a Sabbatical, however, and Lord Grabiner, told *The Beaver* the sabbatical had come about during negotiations over Davies' re-appointment as a result of "express agreement between me, on behalf of the LSE, and Sir Howard."

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

c&a@thebeaveronline.co.uk

It has been an arduous yet fruitful journey for *The Beaver* office animals and in the last issue of 2006/2007, it's time to take stock and celebrate their efforts

The Beaver Report



Sidhanth Kamath

So here it is, the customary end-of-year appraisal from the outgoing Executive Editor of *The Beaver*. Except for one slight difference. Instead of predictably ranting on about our successes I also want to appraise some of this year's failures.

Don't get me wrong; this has been the most successful year the paper has enjoyed by far, both as the school rag as well as an institution of this renowned university. Circulation has gone up by 50% (last year we struggled to distribute 3000 copies, now we push 4500 with ease). Revenues have doubled from last year. For the first time in history *The Beaver* made a meaningful contribution - unfortunately my degree discipline does require me to equate meaningful to bank notes - in cash to Raising And Giving (RAG) week, the princely sum of one thousand fine Sterling pounds. We did our first (and much delayed) survey of the LSE populace, to gauge and understand our readership's views on the paper; an issue of prime importance for any media outlet. We began sending staff on

proper training days. We stopped working on antiquated equipment and thereby stopped playing scrabble in the dark in the New Theatre at 3am on a Monday morning while waiting for a free computer to finish pages. We've even introduced double-sided printing in our office. Oh yeah, and we also found time to launch a website.

Views communicated in the paper have been disputed, more so than ever before, be it through feisty Collective meetings or sarcastic letters to the editor, criticising, censuring (not censoring, though this is attempted by other quarters), and castigating. These are sometimes wholly valid, sometimes laughably dismissed.

Indeed I have often heard to lament the fact that my sense of professionalism prevents me from explaining to most complainants how trivial, inaccurate and unbecoming some of the criticisms are. At the same time, sticking some of the funnier complaints on Beaver office walls brings welcome laughter to our confined workspaces.

But most of all these herald (no pun intended) a newspaper editor's dreams coming true (especially in this age where *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, the *Financial Times* and *The Economist* are sold at ridiculously cheap

prices in the SU shop, and *The Wall Street Journal* is distributed for free); an increased readership that are not only reading the paper fully but also actively engaging, criticising, commenting and occasionally appreciating.

On a different note, Director Howard Davies dramatically accused the paper of lying at a Union General Meeting (UGM), after an article querying the amount School officials were spending on flights abroad, and highlighting some discrepancies between average flight costs and School expenditures. He even saw fit to elevate the dispute by adding his grievances into a global email sent to all 8000 students.

Yet all figures in said article came directly from the School, who staidly declared to *The Beaver* that Davies spent £3000 on a flight to India. So who is lying?

The next day an email floated into my inbox from Davies' assistant: "The question was why the cost was £3000+, when they could find a BA flight for £1500. I've been asked to clarify to you that part of the additional cost was due to the fact that this was not a straight London - India return, but also involved internal flights." Well that was exactly the point we were making - some of the figures

didn't make sense, unless of course Davies was indeed flying first class. He could have easily explained that to us in the UGM instead of making a scene, yet he chose histrionics.

Moving swiftly on, where do I think we fell short? Let's start with our much-criticised perceived lack of objectivity and allegations of us failing to make a stand on some issues. Opinions are always an area of contention. For instance, regardless of how high an article ranks on an objectivity index, there will always be a portion of the populace that will be dissatisfied. But we aren't indulging in some bizarre popularity contest here. Articles will inevitably carry some vestige of the views of the individuals that penned them. We have made a conscious effort to move away from individual opinions, to write the news, and not be the news this year. Indeed, individual editors have felt forced to resign their positions on their paper because of our attempts to move toward greater objectivity; evidence of our commitment towards that end.

How do we decide what is big news? A question that is not easily answered. Sometimes the story speaks for itself, at other times we need to make tough calls. We do get it wrong sometimes,

perhaps too often. And what of the quality of the actual writing? Yes, it is indeed frequently erratic. However, what people often forget is that the paper is entirely run by a team of volunteers. Many are new to the LSE and have never written an article before, therefore the quality of their writing is on the lower end of the learning curve. But should we turn these away in our quest for perfect articulation? Hardly. I will be the first to admit quality of writing in the paper is sometimes poor, but through training and a culture of continuous improvement we can rectify this.

The number of people working for the paper has trebled this year; the prime factor behind our successes

Did we go on about security issues too much? Perhaps, but those articles criticising hall security have now spurred the School on to do a full security review in halls. And given that one in three students in London is a victim of crime at university, we did feel a responsibility in ensuring that the School pulls up its socks over issues like security.

Not keeping a closer eye on what the four Sabbatical Officers do for their £23,000 a

year also ranks high on my list of disappointments. Looking out of my window I can see the offices of two of these specimens. One works quite hard. The other? Not so hard. How many days of holidays are these individuals allowed and how many do they take, what hours are they required to work and what time do they really show up to work, the list is long...£23,000 long. Next year hopefully *The Beaver* will keep closer tabs on these politicians.

And finally, what kind of a year was it for *The Beaver*? A foundation year. A year where we laid down the infrastructure needed to become not just a quality paper but a fully-fledged media organisation. There have been a lot of ambitious projects this year that have not been finished. Nevertheless, it is important that we had the vision to start them. Somewhere down the line in a few years, a future Editor will hopefully have the luxury of finishing off these ambitious undertakings.

And our biggest success? The people. The number of people working for the paper has trebled this year; the prime factor behind our successes. Thank you to all of you. There is no need to mention names, you all know who you are. Each and every one of you has contributed immensely to the paper and when the first batch is dumped in bins on Houghton Street on Tuesday mornings, it is you who should look to it with pride and hopefully think, "I helped make that paper what it is".

The deadly allure of social web services veil many unseen dangers, and users risk compromising privacy and manipulation of their personal information

The lives of others



Zhuang Li

Web 2.0 sites have become so prevalent today that they are beginning to shape our social behaviour in cyberspace. Social web services and websites of this immensely interactive genre like Facebook are, nevertheless, posing a serious threat to our privacy.

Once you've registered with Facebook, a fairly detailed picture of you begins building up promptly; from basic personal information, to interests, favourites and calendar events; limited only by one's imagination. Its extensive collection on users' data is highly evident and deliberate. What I'm more surprised about is the constant increase in the number of my Facebook buddies who're keen to update their profiles on a regular basis - one week is too long, 24 hours is perfect. It is as mind-boggling as it is amazing. These addicts love it so badly. However, people usually don't spend sufficient time to read the accompanying privacy policies before rushing into experiencing the benefits of socially-intensive websites. As a result of such often overlooked rashness and recklessness, big headaches lay ahead

of us.

For instance, if I know your name and happen to overhear something interesting about you, it is now easy to track you down despite not knowing you personally, as long as you have an account on any of the popular social web services. This is quite similar to what I came across on the television drama series *Prison Break*. Agent Mahone's divorce information had been made available to anonymous visitors of the website *PeopleTrak* together with both addresses of him and his ex-wife. The

screenwriter isn't making something surreal as we can right now achieve nearly the same easily in reality by a few clicks. Technology is a devil, indeed.

There are more threatening scenarios. Facebook offers users a function to tag friends in both notes and photographs. In this case, some information about you which you'd never volunteer on agreement may, at the discretion of others, be released to the public. It'd be even worse if the tagging work is done collaboratively (distributed intel-

ligence?). Any user-generated updates relating to you thus have a possibility to end up with a gossip among people who've seen it, not necessarily your "friends". I am bewildered that none of Facebook's current privacy policies can tackle this intractable problem. The more we get involved, the more strangers can get to know about us. Consequently, the more vulnerable we become to being manipulated. Knowledge is power and IT a formidable weapon, but neither is under our control. The threat will certainly have pro-

found social impacts on our life, or even ruin it. It's only a matter of time. People may argue that in the UK, there is the Data Protection Act 1998 to protect us. However, this is not the case as the vast majority of social web services in question are based in the US and the only US legislation concerned with the notion of privacy is the 4th Amendment to the US Constitution 1791. Which is really a long time ago.

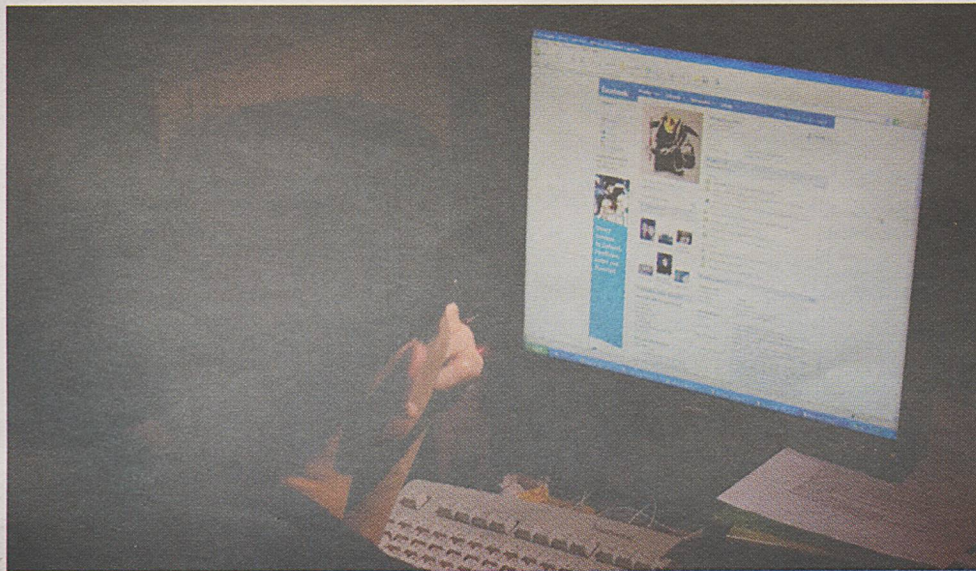
Knowledge is power and IT a formidable weapon, but neither is under our control

Our social relationships in real life are inevitably represented in cyberspace and Facebook will make things more problematic. All kinds of personal activities and behaviour on Facebook are being very closely monitored and logged. Facebook is also collecting our personal information from external sources, such as blogs. As long as you enter the URL, the Facebook system will keep itself synchronised on your behalf. These updates will be displayed shortly to our "friends" among networks we're associated with via the controversial "News Feed". It'd be possible for others to extract information about us simply out of curiosity. All they need is an e-mail address. Although privacy settings on Facebook are able

to block unauthorised direct access to our profiles, anonymous users are still able to utilise the "View Friends" function to have an overview of our social network and find out who we are eventually. It is a total nightmare.

In addition, Facebook is capable of observing and analysing differences between updates of an individual profile rather than merely telling people it has been changed. Everything is examined, especially regularly edited favourites such as music, TV shows and movies. The scope and speed of Facebook's data pattern identification is rather surprising and I can hardly imagine the consequences if the system is equipped to conduct multi-dimensional assessments across various sections of individual profiles and perform data-matching afterwards. Will we then be "naked"? I believe that this powerful engine will eventually deliver the same as Google Zeitgeist does; produce statistics reflecting social trends. I have no doubt that our private information will have contributed to this data matrix project, without us receiving any kind of remuneration.

These infringements on our privacy will ultimately lead us to commit "account suicide" out of fear. And in case we regret deactivating our accounts, Facebook provides one-stop facilities for our "resurrection". Facebook's retention a full copy of our profiles makes this rather simple. The devil that is Facebook is for certain; undeniably so.



COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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Political activism can also be about fun and games and especially so when the government makes a mockery of our rights to freedom of expression

The sham of the law



Chun Han Wong

The five weeks of Easter break were drawing to a close, and the gloom and doom that were the examinations beckoned. Yet on the afternoon of the eighteenth day of April, a small band of LSE upstarts strode purposefully down Whitehall, ignoring curious looks and disapproving stares, intent on their objective. The wild blue yonder extended for miles in the cloudless London skies and bode well for the two and a half hours of political activism that lay ahead. Fighting through the swarm of rush hour traffic, the brave band marched before the imposing façade of Westminster Palace and into the lush greenery of Parliament Square.

The iconic banners and symbolic displays of the ongoing peace protest by Brian Haw marked the spot. A good fifteen minutes remained before Big Ben struck five. The group settled quickly into their corner, unveiling their placards in wait of the hour.

"What's your protest about?" A teenage boy, no more than fourteen, whose T-shirt proudly bore a collection of peace badges came their way, curious about the contents of the placards.

"Civil servants, not CEOs. Reminding the government that they serve the people and

not run a company." One answered. "What REALLY happened on August 23rd, 1417?" quipped another.

"So what did happen?" the boy continued. The reply drew a burst of laughter. "All the witnesses are dead! Coincidence?"

...any law that means we can get arrested over a cake, we must play with

The bells sang right on cue at 5 o'clock. Cue the placards, which rose straight into the air, each proclaiming an individual stand, statement or cause. The mass lone demonstrations had begun.

The ludicrous nature of this exercise, which takes place every third Wednesday of the month from 1700 to 1930hrs, somewhat belies the serious ends it seeks to achieve. Freedom of expression is what is at stake, ever since the passing of the controversial Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (SOCPA) in 2005. Sections 132 to 138 of the Act requires any demonstrator who wishes to demonstrate within 1km radius of Parliament Square to apply for permission six days in advance. Created in an apparent attempt by the government to evict the celebrated peace protestor Brian Haw from Parliament Square, the law

has not only failed to achieve its veiled objective, but also places restrictions on our right to freedom of expression. What good is a demonstration if the people in power are not able to see it? Why should we be barred from spontaneous protests?

Mark Thomas, comedian and avid political activist against SOCPA, drew public attention to this ridiculous piece of legislation with a string of individual political protests. On a recent BBC Radio 4 show, Thomas relished in revealing the lighter moments in the enforcement of SOCPA, including an incident in which his friend was threatened with arrest over a cake she had at a picnic. What made it culpable? It had the word "PEACE" iced upon it; ergo a political cake. And Thomas' conclusion? "...any law that means we can get arrested over a cake, we must play with." One man, one placard, one cause requires one application form. The name is mass lone demonstrations. The game is overwhelming the Charing Cross Police with a hailstorm of application forms, highlighting the absurd redundancy of the law.

So began the monthly staple of individual political demonstrations. Six days before the third Wednesday of every month, activists and common citizens who care about their civil liberties descend upon Charing Cross Police Station, submitting

forms for individual protests. Come the big day, anything between 50 to 100 individual demonstrators would congregate before Westminster and bay out their support or disapproval over a myriad of issues and causes. "More pies for everyone!" "Train line for the M25!" "Free Palestine!"

Wasting police time by inundating them with extra paperwork is a common accusation levelled at these demonstrations. Indeed, that is our goal. The police themselves were not in favour of the act when discussions were made in the Commons; it would only create more

unnecessary red tape. A police officer told Thomas at a demonstration, "Frankly, I agree with you, we don't need it (SOCPA). We've got enough paperwork as it is, why do we need more? I support what you're doing." Nevertheless, when lobbying through MPs fails, as the logical recourse to the system would have us do, it is imperative that we take action. Through causing bureaucratic mayhem that would result from the enforcement of SOCPA, it is hoped that Parliament is forced to deal with the faux pas and repeal the law.

Political activism doesn't

have to be the grim business that people make it out to be. Besides the hardcore activists, the SOCPA activists included a young family of four, a motley collection of spirited teenagers out for a laugh, middle-aged professionals off from work and even the odd retiree with an axe to grind. The serious face of the matter at hand did not prevent us from making a merriment of a political protest; games of cat-and-mouse, rest and relaxation in the evening sunshine, singing and being merry. All in the name of our civil liberties.

For more information on the mass lone demonstrations, see www.markthomasinfo.com



People should be apprehensive about the future when royal soap operas take precedence over the humanitarian crises and political quagmires in the media

A conflict too far...



Sadia Kidwai

On 14th April 2007, the citizens of this great country (and beyond, no doubt), drew a collective intake of breath. The worst had truly happened; Kate and Wills had split up. Naturally, the world was abuzz with questions and newspapers would stop at nothing to discover the truth.

The fairy-tale couple were no more and the 'new Diana' was a snort.



Reports have emerged since that William felt too young to commit to marriage. Sources close to Miss Middleton say that it was Daddy Charles who forced the young lovers apart. Others are saying William just enjoyed the bachelor lifestyle far too much.

How many of us remember that 42 people died in Karbala in Iraq that very same day?

But the whole situation really begs the question; who on earth cares?

Well as it turns out, quite a lot of us. Unsurprisingly, the split made headlines on the usual gossip websites and magazines, but it was the BBC's news coverage that truly stunned me. A full few minutes was dedicated to the Royal break-up, complete with interviews and analyses by so-called 'experts' - one might have thought that it was a slow day for news, that perhaps nothing 'interesting' or newsworthy was happening in the multiple conflict zones around the world.

How many of us remember that 42 people died in Karbala in Iraq that very same day? The BBC certainly didn't forget, and in their sympathy dedicated a whole twenty second scrolling headline casually announcing the deaths to the world - while the 'Royal Experts' busied themselves in arguing over whether Kate would be returning to her job at Jigsaw, following this monumental crisis.

Have we become so desensitized to death and horror that the love life of a pair of polo-playing upper class brats now takes precedence over the loss of 42 innocent lives? Some might argue that escapism is necessary to stay sane in this mad world, which is fair enough. I'm not saying that we should spend our days perpetually bemoaning the suffering of the homeless men along Embankment. And anybody who has known me for five minutes knows I have a slight addiction to Facebook. But too much escapism does not breed a healthy society; it breeds political and social apathy.

It is true that sometimes the horrors of our world are too much to take. It is difficult to feel true empathy for the suffering of people who live

thousands of miles away, who do not share our language or culture, and consigned to mere figures in the back of a history book. But we are not incapable of empathy; as our responses to the tragedy that occurred at Virginia Tech have proved. Almost everybody was disturbed by the prospect that a person growing up in the Western world could commit such atrocities, that our fellow students could have lost their lives in such a way. Why does this affect us more than, say, the bombing of a school bus in Palestine or any other 'third world country' for that matter? In the case of Virginia Tech, it was too close to home. The prospect of a classmate turning on you in such a way was something tangible, something we could understand, and something we thought could happen to us, whereas living in a country that is inherently anarchic is something we just simply cannot relate to.

Ignorance is no excuse. We can distract ourselves for as long as we like but it won't stop the death toll from conflict zoning. Every year on Holocaust Memorial Day we swear that we will never allow the repeat of genocides such as the Holocaust, or those in

Rwanda and Bosnia. Eventually, ludicrous as the concept may seem to us now, we will be the ones who suffer; one of these days it may be our country that suffers from sectarianism, anarchy or even totalitarianism. Regimes such as these only emerge when the masses are apathetic, or when they allow themselves to be fooled by rhetoric and propaganda, or in our case, sedated and distracted by the false consciousness that the tabloid and reality television culture offer. One day it may be us who are denied our fundamental human rights, and that day we will wonder why nobody else in the world sits up and takes notice of our suffering.

Maintaining our power and rights as a citizen in any society can only be ensured when we remember our responsibilities; whether we criticise the government, invest in humanitarian causes or speak out against the atrocities occurring across the globe.

This is not a morally self-righteous rant against those who read gossip magazines; I address this article to myself before anyone. Yet so long as we concern ourselves more with Preston and Chantelle, or the latest episode of Wife Swap, instead of actually campaigning to change the world, it seems inevitable that humanity will continue on this downward spiral of self destruction.



COMMENT & ANALYSIS

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C&A: Response

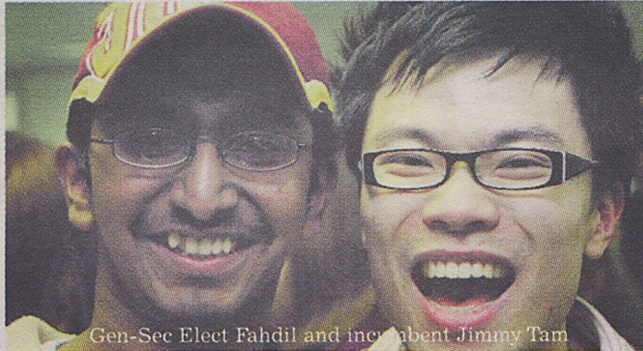
The rat-race to the big time



Chris Lam

In response to criticism made regarding the news article on "racial politics" on the front page of issue 662, the allegations of racism *The Beaver* reported were made by Bakeer Markar, and not *The Beaver*. In the second part of the article, allegations are made by two separate witnesses, and again, not *The Beaver*. *The Beaver* made every effort to show you that each allegation had been re-butted, and in the first case that the complaint had been withdrawn.

The article was laid out, with the bare facts, for you to draw your own conclusions, as it should be with the news section. It was interesting to see people's interpretations on the whole racism debacle, and dis-



Gen-Sec Elect Fahdil and incumbent Jimmy Tam

Racial issues has permeated the nature of political posturing in the Students' Union, and perhaps more sensibilities need to be exercised

appointing that some people automatically believed the article to be jumping on the racism bandwagon. Given that *The Beaver* made out that this was not the case in both the article and its editorial, made it more so.

Any number of theories could be placed on why Bakeer Markar put in a complaint of racism against Ali Dewji. It might well be that Bakeer Markar genuinely felt wronged by Dewji who did after all insinuate that some of his supporters who were "brown" would vote for him no matter what, since he himself is "brown." After all his campaigning; and those promises to represent every student, and his supporters from all sec-

tions of the Union and many different backgrounds; it probably would have come as a shock.

Bakeer Markar undoubtedly was upset; he went on the record several times with *The Beaver* to say that he felt Dewji was being 'racist', and that he even felt like pulling out of this year's elections. Is Dewji racist? Was he being racist with his comments? Probably not, on all counts, and his comments themselves weren't. One thing is for sure, he was definitely being patronising, but some might say we're all used to that by now.

There was another half to the article though. These were allegations for Bakeer Markar himself. They were about the alleged "Chinese army" comments by Bakeer Markar towards Meng's Chinese supporters. As one student pointed out, had George Meng, the election candidate in question, been black, it could have been all so different.

And I can tell you that I felt pretty patronised too, when Bakeer Markar came up to me whilst I was interviewing him for *The Beaver* and said several times that he wasn't being racist towards my

"community". I do look Chinese, in fact I am of beautiful Chinese origin, and quite happy to be too. However, I was born and bred in London, had two, maybe three friends of Chinese origin before the age of nineteen. Most of my friends are not Chinese and my girlfriend is half-English,

To say that race does not have a part in why people vote would be so fundamentally patronising to anyone who reads this

half-Indian. I went to an all-boys and mostly white private school and I, rather ashamedly, can't speak Chinese. I probably should put that complaint of racism in right now because I am not easily a member of the Chinese 'army'...eh sorry, community. And I remain a little bit annoyed. But I'm sure I'll forget about it soon.

Finally, if Communications Officer Dewji didn't think that his comments were racist (and they weren't), then he should have said so, and not weaselled his way out of it. The fact is

that he meant what he said. However, saying that a member of a community will get his vote from his own background of fellow nationals is usually an in-joke to be had amongst one's own community - funny sometimes and not so funny other times. However it is a joke that has probably some basis in truth. To say that race does not have a part in why people vote would be so fundamentally patronising to anyone who reads this. Of course it does. Whether we should be happy with that - is open to debate.

On a side note, Bakeer Markar also asked me, "is this journalism... getting answers from people?" Yes it is "mate." It is *The Beaver's* job to hold you, and your new colleagues to account.

I worked at *The Beaver* for over a year, and have become well and truly 'learned.' I've concluded that some of the people who are involved in SU politics often have an ugly side (non-physical description) and are also very bizarre. Elections do have the reputation of bringing out the worst in people and the weasels. We should not be too hard on them, just yet. I really do hope that if they make it to power in the real world, that they learn to think about other people too. Or it won't be long before they hurt someone, for real.

Of Union and legacy



Ali Dewji

Two issues ago, Sanj Krishnan wrote about the dichotomy at the heart of the Students' Union, a conflict he dubbed 'the Kenrick-Sullivan debate'. The question is a valid one: what is the SU's purpose? Are we a campaigning organisation, that takes political action on behalf of a broadly united constituency, or are we an association, intended to serve its members, that focuses on implementing practical, student-oriented policies? In one form or another, I have grappled with this dichotomy throughout my four years of involvement with the LSE Students' Union.

My first and best involvement with the Students' Union was through the Debate Society. I made my deepest friendships there, and debating has been a source of tremendous joy and intellectual development for me throughout my time at the LSE. If the point of the LSE is to 'understand the causes of things', then nothing is more productive towards that end than fostering intelligent discussion among students, and encouraging them to consider different points of view about complex political issues.

Students' Union politics is not everyone's cup of tea; a boon to the far left and bane to the apathetic and misrepresented majority

My second involvement with the Students' Union has been through SU politics, first as a fierce critic, then as a frequent candidate, and finally as a Sabbatical Officer. The first thing you notice when you get involved with the SU is that the UGM and the SU Executive are deeply unrepresentative of the average LSE student. Although at home I work for a socially-liberal, centre-left party, around SU types I have always been branded a Tory, because SU politics is so massively tilted to the left. The problem, in a single word, is keenness. Given that such a small group of students actually participate in the process, it becomes easy for a minority to dominate simply by turning up and being keen. So keen in fact they put off everybody else from participating and preserve their monopoly. This is as true across the UK as it is at LSE,

The UGM and the SU Executive are deeply unrepresentative of the average LSE student

and the result of this extreme left-wing dominance is that Students' Union is now notorious for being unrepresentative of the vast majority of students in the UK. For left-wing partisans, this is in some ways ideal: it grants a very narrow political agenda that would otherwise have only a handful of supporters a virtual monopoly on the official voice of all students in UK. But for the rest of us, the situation is one that marginalises our views and results in the SU adopting positions on political issues that are wildly unrepresentative of the opinion of its members.

In his abortive bid for General Secretary, Joel Kenrick made an impassioned plea for active, campaigning unionism. His speech was

hailed by a segment of the UGM audience, who believe a renewed commitment to active unionism would increase participation in the SU and improve its relevance to students. Would it? Perhaps if the campaigning was done on an agenda that did in fact have broad student support. This of course, would look nothing like the socialist/green agenda. The grim reality for the green/socialists is that were the Union as representative as they wish it to be, they would quickly find themselves on the same lonely fringe of political opinion that they occupy in real life.

During my time in office, I had to switch from being a fierce critic to an SU-defender, as is unfortunately necessary when you try to change things from within. To those who remain critics, I sympathise greatly. But I encourage you most of all to throw your hat in the ring and try to make the changes you want made, and to

turn up at the UGM and demand them.

I have tried with my focus on students before politics to show what can be achieved if we approach the provision of activities and services to students with the same dedication and zeal that others demonstrate for political causes. I have fulfilled my promise to societies: to advertise their events, hang their banners, and raise their sponsorship revenues. I have left the SU with better handbooks and wall planners and a better website. I hope that my efforts with the Global Cup and SU Mock Exams will be continued after I leave, and will serve as a reminder that it only takes new ideas and hard work to do a lot of good for students.

Most of all, I hope that the people who have stood with me throughout this entire rollercoaster, Ross, Matthew, Ahmad, Alexander and Zoe, and all the people who voted for me back when I was just an outside candidate without a hope, know how deeply grateful I am for their support, and are proud of what I have done with the opportunity that they gave me.



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The Beaver is available in alternative formats.

The views and opinions expressed in *The Beaver* are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the editors or the LSE Students' Union.

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

The Beaver

Established 1949 - Issue 664

c&a@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Letters to the Editor

The Beaver offers all readers the right to reply to anything that appears in the paper. Letters should be sent to thebeaver.editor@lse.ac.uk and should be no longer than **250 words**. All letters must be received by 3pm on the Sunday prior to publication. The Beaver reserves the right to edit letters prior to publication.



Unflattering report on LSE emergency procedures...

...reveal the lack of readiness of the School authorities to deal with crises

The tragic school shooting in Virginia a fortnight ago appears distant and of little concern to the LSE. Nevertheless, it highlights the need for crisis management within university authorities worldwide. In the light of an assessment made of the LSE's emergency response capacity, it is plainly apparent that the School's emergency procedures leave much to be desired. While campus shootings are by no means common in the UK, a wide spectrum of unconventional threats and crisis scenarios still pose a serious risk to the unprepared.

From deadly epidemics to terrorist bombings, major fires to power outages, the possibilities are endless. Indeed, it is unrealistic to expect the School to have contingency plans in place for every eventuality. The threat level facing the LSE appears to be minimal, and it is probably cost-inefficient and disruptive to institute an impenetrable security structure in an urban university like ours. However, it should not be too much to ask, for the School to have a versatile and efficient crisis management team, well-equipped to provide immediate and decisive command and control over any situation. Thorough planning, well-drilled procedures and regular training exercises with the various emergency services are vital prerequisites for an effective and operational contingency scheme.

Yet, if the external assessment is anything to go by, the School is still far from attaining a reasonable crisis management capability. While preliminary steps have already been taken towards this end with the Common Initial Emergency Response Procedures (CIERP), a sense of urgency needs to be injected into this effort. A wake-up call has come with the cost of 32 innocent lives. A commitment by the School towards the prevention of a similar catastrophe would bear far greater meaning and value than mere gestures of sympathy and condolence. It is imperative for the entire School, staff and students, to be prepared, in the victims' memory and for our own sake. For readiness is our only protection.

Hall security staff are underpaid...

...and the School needs to make good on its commitment to the Living Wage

The security and safety of students, as much as their health and well-being, are fundamental concerns of any university. Affording quality pay for quality protection of LSE halls of residence should be high on the priority of the School. It therefore appears ironic that while cleaning staff are well on their way to receiving living wage, other providers of a basic and vital service are still being paid wages below the recommended rate.

Hall security has come under heavy scrutiny in the past year, especially in the wake of security lapse exposés by *The Beaver*. The inherent inadequacies in certain hall security systems need to be addressed; Bernie Taffs, head of LSE security, was recently asked to carry out a full review of hall security. In light of the low pay for hall security guards, in relation to part-time student receptionists who earn nearly £4 more for performing similar duties, perhaps one should not be surprised at their low morale. A poorly motivated and underpaid workforce can hardly be expected to perform to the best of their abilities, considering that the £6.31 they earn per hour is their livelihood; not spare cash for the likes of students that they protect.

The School has already made a major step in the right direction with the revision of cleaners' wages. However, true commitment to the Living Wage across the School appears lacking. The School appears to take a reactionary stance regarding the issue, instead of being proactive in the revision of employment contracts and making good on its promises. Further progress towards the eventual goal of becoming a 'Living Wage' employer can be and must be made, if the School is to stay true to its Fabian roots; for the progress of society.

"ended less"

Dear Sir

I refer to Kevin Perry's article on Tibet in March 13th's *Beaver*, in which he says: "The Chinese government itself claims that its right to 'ownership' of Tibet is based on the historical relationships between its Manchu rulers and Tibetan Lamas. To claim that these ancient influences give a modern legal right is simply as absurd as the British rolling into Washington DC and declaring the Declaration of Independence null and void or Silvio Berlusconi arriving at London to declare that the Roman Empire is back up and running again". (page 19)

Since he describes the influences as "ancient", I cannot help wonder if he has any knowledge about when England and Scotland began to unify under the rule of a single Crown. The ruling of the last Manchu emperor ended less than 100 years ago, and both of the two subsequent republics of China inherited the sovereignty of Tibet. Unlike the US case, Tibet did not declare independence before 1950, and I do not know any international organisation ever considered it as an independent political body. Unlike the Roman Empire case, China has always existed as an independent, unified sovereign state, and there is a clear, uninterrupted connection between China ruled by Manchu and China today. It is very different from the relationship between Roman Empire and Italy today. China's sovereignty of Tibet is no less solid than Italy's sovereignty of Sicily. Neither the revolution which got rid of the old empire in the early 20th century, nor the civil war between Communist Party and Nationalist Party in the middle of the century granted any sovereign right to Tibet, just as the replacing of John Major by Tony Blair as PM did not grant Scotland the right to independence. China's sovereignty on Tibet may be controversial, but certainly not absurd, or, at least not absurd as Mr. Perry's illogical argument (not to mention his funny "fact" that in 1949 Tibet was independent in law).

Q. Cao

"turn fosters"

Dear Sir

In response to the article noting Professor Barr's new ideas for student finance, I would like to argue that students from low income backgrounds are already favoured enough via government schemes and university bursaries, whilst those from high income families can fund themselves without government intervention. Indeed it is those who are stuck in the middle who need more help.

I am from one of the so-called Northern comprehensive schools which are drastically underrepresented at the LSE, perhaps if Professor Barr could examine a financial situation

like my own he would reformulate his ideas into something more appropriate to achieving his aim of attracting more people into education post 16. Firstly, I am unable to claim the full student loan, but my parents do not earn enough to top it up personally, also I am not eligible to receive the £1000 grant offered to those from low income families by their LEAs, and my parents earn over the specified amount thus disqualifying me from means tested bursaries and LEA contributions towards fees. This means that the financial support I get does not even cover my rent let alone fees, text books and living expenses, I work throughout each holiday and during term time to support myself by making up the shortfall that occurs owing to me being in the middle class.

In contrast, those who are supposedly trying to attract into education from low income backgrounds receive all the financial help I am ineligible for, meaning often they have sufficient income not to have to work. This in turn fosters a culture of dependency on the state that is undesirable and is unfair to students such as myself who may compromise their academic work by trying to earn enough money to get by on. What's more, a student in my position but subject to top-up fees would have an even greater debt whilst those from a working class background would not have to pay anything as their fees are paid by the LEA.

In conclusion, loan interest rates should not be raised at the expense of the middle class in order to give the working class a free ride into university education. It seems that Professor Barr has overlooked the hardship already faced by the very people he claims are reaping the 'perks' of the current system. It is dangerous that people like this are making decisions about OUR finance, instead those involved in higher education reform should consult those involved directly, the students themselves.

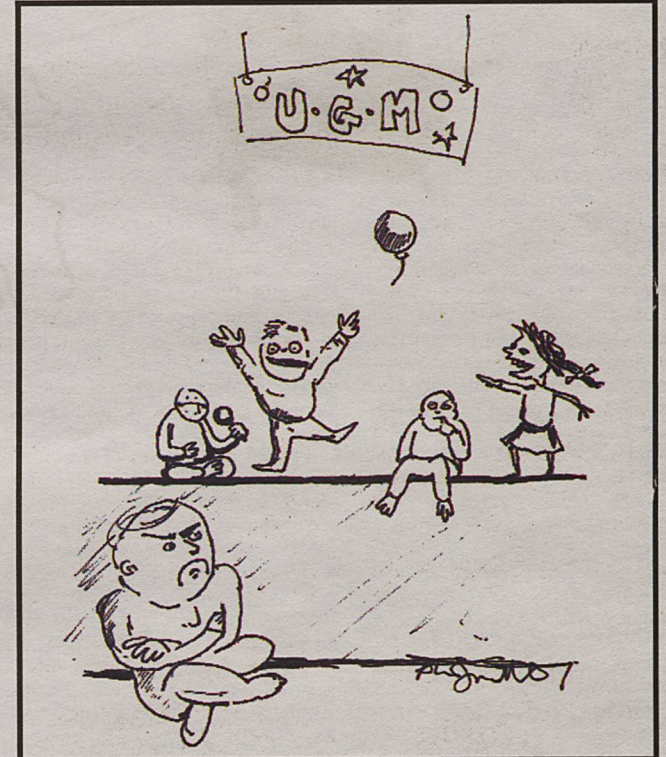
Sauraya Chantler

"kids size"

Dear Sir

I'll be frank with you. I'm disillusioned with the student union. So are many others. And it's time someone settled the score with the big chieftains of student life at LSE.

I haven't been to many UGMs. In fact, you could probably count my attendance on one hand. But without exception, when I did in fact show up I was faced with a display of rhetorical flourishes and waffle all too common in politics. In reality, the Students' Union is comparable to the proverbial playground where kids size up their toys (I could engage a more lewd metaphor, but I trust you get the picture). That is, instead of actively seeking to improve "student welfare"; which is a rather diffuse term to start off with, they hone their antics and take to the stage with the sole inten-



tion of advancing a personal agenda: to be heard and recognized. If you take the time to notice, discussions never centre around students themselves - which by the very nature of a students' union, they should. No, far more "progressive" items take the forefront, like Palestine and the environment and other non-issues. Instead of continuing my diatribe, I'll be succinct. Do your job and stop inventing mandates.

Bengt Nilsen

"no support"

Dear Sir

It was disappointing to see barely a mention of the SwD race in your coverage of SU elections. So, to compensate... This year, two candidates stood for the role of Students with Disabilities Officer - Shayaan Afsar and I. This was the first time during my life at the LSE (my third year here) when there's been more than one candidate who cares deeply about the issues.

As pledged, I will work hard at: raising awareness of the wide-ranging discrimination that students with disabilities face both here at the LSE and in society, and publicising resources available to help you if you have a disability/wellbeing issue. I'm working with Shayaan and other students with disabilities, the SU and the Disability and Wellbeing Office to achieve these things.

One pledge was to create a "one-stop-shop" website. Until I've found a suitable package/website template, you can read what I'm up to on my new blog: <http://lse-sw-d.blogspot.com> I aim to hold a meeting before this term's Disability Consultative Forum (4pm, Wednesday 9th May) - please visit my blog or email me for details.

My weekly surgery during the Summer Term will be 11.30am-12.30 on Mondays in

"so long"

Dear Sir

Sorry to be so long in getting back to you. Thank you for the copy of *The Beaver*, which I enjoyed. I can't imagine how long it took to write all that text. Many thanks also to Alex, who made me look like a piece of weathered walnut!

Gerald Scarfe

A Letter from the Editor

Dear Sirs

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the editors of the paper, as well as the remarkable team of volunteers who have worked tirelessly all year to put *The Beaver* out every week, even in the exam term.

Your hard work have truly made *The Beaver* the quality publication that it is, and I would like to sincerely thank you all for your efforts this year.

To those who are leaving, all the very best for the future. To those who are staying on, I believe the paper is truly in capable hands, and I wish you the very best of luck.

Sidhanth Kamath
Executive Editor 2006-2007

EXTREME Holiday 2007



This year, you might want to destress after exams, but then again you might want to visit some of the exciting locations you've learnt about in International Relations this year. As usual, *The Beaver* staff have selflessly skipped class to bring you the lowdown on the most extreme locations to spend your holidays.

The Beaver's intrepid travel writers are: **Marjan Sharifi, Nina Hamedani, Zhu Song and Alexandra Robehmed.**

Most of them survived.



IRAQ

Lonely Planet says "It may be down right now, but this picturesque country's not out for the count."

The Beaver says, "Not out cold yet? Give it a couple more surges and we'll see where we are."

Iraq comes with the most severe travel warning of all our extreme destinations. This has been the fourth year of American and British (and other) presence in the country. Last April, events seemed hopeful, full of promise. The new President had finally come to an agreement with the Shi'a candidate to form a government, this in the wake of exacerbated sectarian bloodshed. But Iraqi independence was still a tentative issue, particularly when the much anticipated September 2006 operational command handover to the new Iraqi army was delayed. On November 5th, after two years of being on trial, Saddam Hussein was found guilty of crimes against humanity and sentenced to death. The world watched as a defiant Saddam was hung on December 30th, and images of him being taunted in his final minutes were the source of much condemnation. The past year has seen continued, seemingly incessant, sectarian violence and insurgent bombings. In order to try and combat this, George Bush announced a new 'surge' strategy in January 2007 - sending 20,000 more US troops to Baghdad. A UN figure was then released, estimating that more than 34,000 civilians were killed in Iraq in 2006. Most recently, a bomb exploded inside a supposedly secure area - in the Iraqi parliament, at the heart of the new fragile government, a wake up call to the sheltered new democracy and the US administration.

This destination is just beyond extreme - it's suicidal. Firstly, it's impossible to actually get there by air - it's hardly on BA's destination list. In fact, your best bet is to go via armed forces transport. For the intrepid explorer who actually makes it within the borders, you will be met by a fascinating country, steeped in a rich history of past civilizations, but one that's facing worsening sanitation and water cleanliness issues. Those are the least of your worries however - trying to see the sites, like the spot where the statue of Saddam stood that was symbolically toppled by the joyous, liberated masses, will be nearly impossible, as movement is severely restricted by violence. In fact, *The Beaver* recommends you just go and live on a camel farm in the countryside, rather than try to dodge bombs in Baghdad. We also wish you luck!



COLOMBIA

Lonely Planet says, "Begging to be discovered, Colombia's got everything but crowds."

The Beaver says, "Begging to be discovered, it may be, but the reason for the lack of crowds? Colombia's the kidnapping capital of the world."

And there are many other good reasons not to go to Colombia. For one thing it lies between the far more appealing destinations of Venezuela, home to international funnyman and sometime president Hugo Chavez, and Ecuador, gateway to the Galapagos and more turtles than you could ever hope to shake a stick at. Colombia is also, famously, the 'kidnap capital of the world' and every weekend there are more murders in the major cities of Medellin and Cali than the entire country of Norway manages in a year.

There is also the small matter of the civil war which has seen no less than two separate Marxist insurgent groups (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia Ejército del Pueblo, FARC and Ejército de Liberación Nacional, ELN) waging war against the government for the past four decades. Although the situation has improved somewhat in recent years, large swathes of the country remain under rebel control and there is still a considerable risk of violence associated with the country's coca growing industry, not to mention the disappointment that, despite an estimated national annual yield of 545 metric tonnes of cocaine, the demands of supplying the vast majority of the world market leaves precious little for domestic consumption.

That said, Colombia is widely reputed to be the friendliest country on the continent and probably the only place in the world you can holiday on a coffee plantation. So if you're feeling lucky, or the idea of several months forced marching through the jungle appeals, a trip to Colombia may be just the thing you've been looking for.

If you make it through kidnapping, civil war, murder and mayhem, the Gold Museum in Bogotá has an extraordinary selection of pre-Hispanic goldwork - the biggest in the world - and together with other pottery, stone, shell, wood and textile archaeological objects testify to the life and thought of different societies which inhabited what is now known as Colombia before contact with Europe.



Lonely Planet says, "Kevlar vest: o
The Beaver says, "Have a good time"

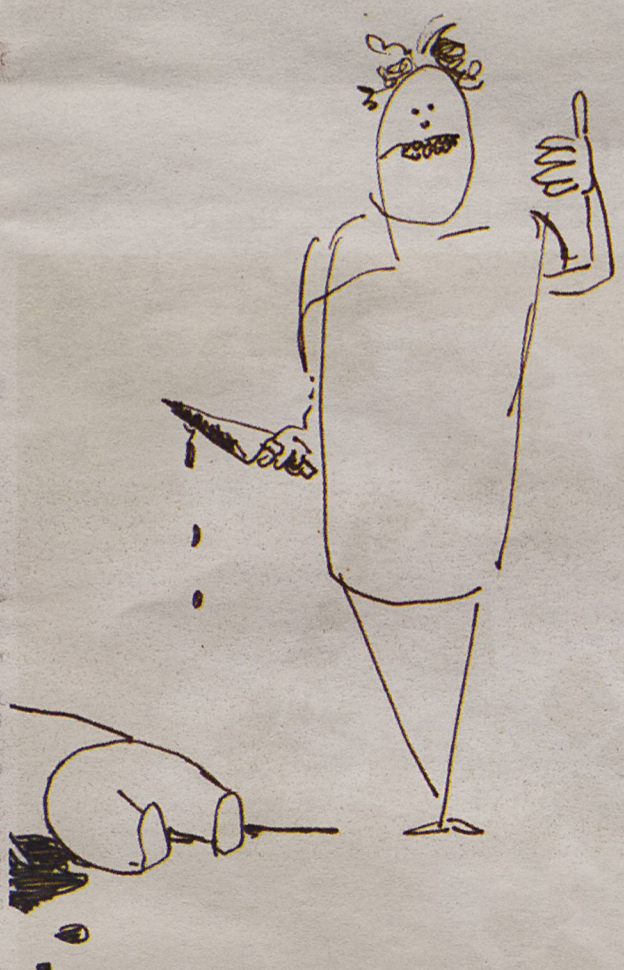
Somalia is an interesting country transformed into a socialist state after his overthrow in 1991. Astor to find in this troubled nation 'failed state'.

March and May 2006 saw the w alliance of Somali warlords fought (UIC) controlled the capital, and be government engaged in peace talks forces to help support the government terror. Mainly Ethiopian troops sta their last stronghold, Kismayo.

The President was finally able being the target of Somalia's first k then in February the UN Security months. Yet still the fighting con gunfire, as pitched battles between was described by the Red Cross as

The Beaver would like to second troubled and divided nation with your wardrobe - some Somalian Hargeisa, and the hidden gem, Las art paintings. These, along with th

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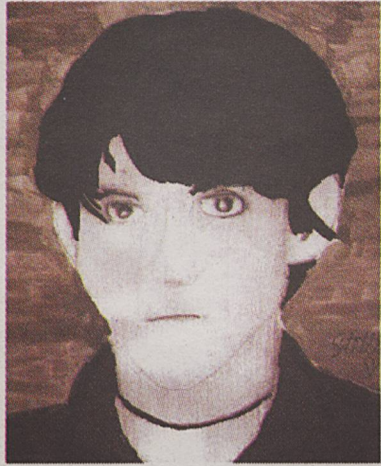


i got
the
idea
from



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Indie Kid's wet dream
Conor Oberst talks
exclusively about him-
self.

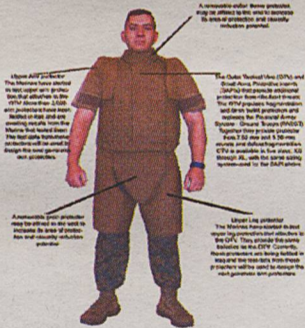
4 5

Music
Bumped-up bumper bump-
and-grind special. more
music than is conceivably
understandable by a human.



Centrespread
All of the venues in london-
town eva. completely exhaus-
tive and somewhat exhausting.

The Interceptor System



Travel
A taxonomy of weeping in
the eurozone.



Film
a ton of teh gud stuff
ov films!!!!!!!!!!!!111one

1 2

Literature
A pestilential alms
house of a section.
avoid. or eat a dove
headfirst. you decide.



Acton

Acton is a funny kind of place. Actually that's a complete and total lie, it's a horrible, horrible, soul crushing blight on the otherwise fair and sunny face of West London. Acton is suburbia for poor people, a crude approximation of the quiet life, only with high rise towers and fried chicken. A journey through Acton is like a safari through the remnants of some poorly conceived and long since abandoned social experiment. On your left the public library and town hall, defunct since the genteel folk of Ealing overran the seat of local government in their inexorable eastward march and tonight host to a convention of African psychics. Keep your arms and legs inside the car at all times. W.G. Grace lived in Acton once but he didn't stay for long and very little of any note has happened since. It is a measure of the sheer wretchedness of the place that the best thing that can be said of the road out of Acton has nothing to do with anywhere else it goes but simply that it leads the way out of Acton.

liamchambers

rant comptroller
joshhelleronearth

cartoon comptroller
alexsmall

film comptroller
angustse

literature comptroller
erinorozco

theatre comptroller
mollytucker

style comptroller
abaosunsade

travel comptroller
jessicamcardle

food & drinking comptroller
kimmandeng

&c. comptroller
alexlevy

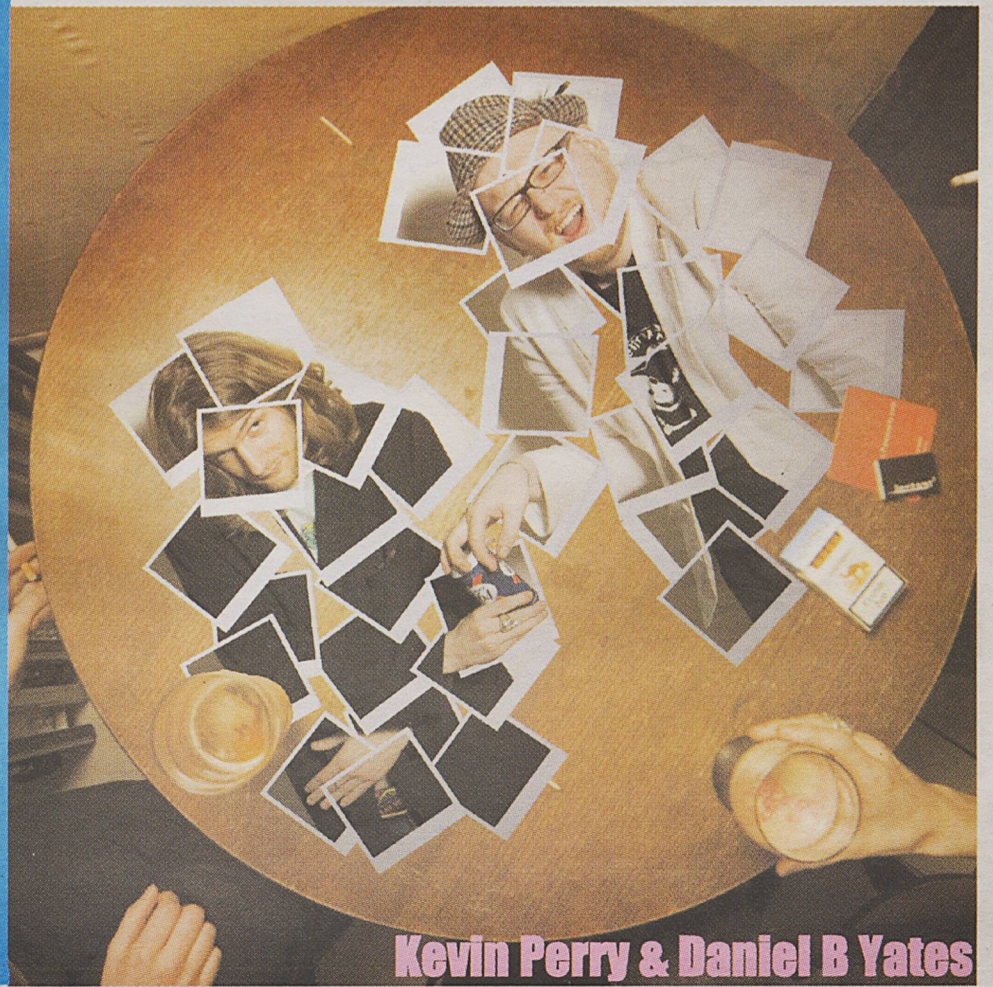
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EDITORIAL

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Kevin Perry & Daniel B Yates

glastonbury vs all tomorrow's parties

loisjeary frolics in the mud of the mainstream danielyates luxuriates in specially-treated loam

For a week in late June, a dairy farm in Somerset is transformed into a magical realm of debauchery and happiness which transports you far away from the real world. Once the cows move out, the festival-goers move in and unimaginable amounts of cider are consumed, bands are applauded, spliffs are rolled and hedges are urinated in. It is heaven on earth: just perhaps a little grimmer, with Pete Doherty present and slightly worse toilets.

The reason Glastonbury is superior to every other festival in the entire world is the sheer scale of the event. The site is huge with an awe-inspiring number of people and tents filling the fields as far as the eye can see. The line-up of bands is consistently staggering - on the iconic Pyramid stage timeless legends play alongside tomorrow's musical icons, and the odd eccentric choice (Rolf Harris, anyone?). The true heart of the festival is found on the smaller stages which play host to every imaginable type of music, most of which you haven't heard of but in the spirit of adventure are willing to try out. And if music isn't really your bag, it doesn't matter at all! You can go the whole weekend without seeing a single live band - taking in theatre, comedy, poetry and political discussion, or just sitting by your tent drinking cider and talking to a complete stranger who later turns out to be a flag pole. Fine, the choice may be overwhelming at times, but nowhere else in the world is there an equal opportunity to indulge in such artistic delights.

Occasionally, God seems to disapprove of the hedonism that is going on in the fields below and commands freak storms to circle above, unleashing rains of biblical proportions and turning the entire site into a giant swamp. Some will get trench foot, others will have their belongings washed away on a tide of human excrement, but all will remain cheerful to the bitter end - that's the Glastonbury spirit. The thousands of revellers - the chosen few who braved

slow connection speeds and engaged tones to acquire highly demanded tickets - are just so darn happy (whether drug induced or not). And you might well feel smug in your nice warm house, but to be honest, once you've taken enough mind-altering substances or listened to enough mind-changing music then you stop feeling damp, chilly and grubby and start feeling ethereal, immortal and pure... and that's just the lads.

In Glastonbury nothing is as it seems and the most peculiar happenings suddenly seem utterly normal. The Lost Vagueness field, a sensory orgy of burlesque drag queens and cabaret, is a particularly interesting place to go after dark; although I'd be careful as you might end up fornicating with a circus freak or transgender midget, which is fine if that's your thing, but not so good if you're sharing a tent with a more conservative friend. Fancy dress is a given - the herd of men in black tie and horses heads that trot about neighing at people are a bit disturbing, but where else in the world could you see an overweight man running through a field at dawn (the family camping field for those with young children to be precise) wearing nothing but a pink thong and shouting 'It's okay, I've covered my bits' to bemused security guards sitting in fluorescent vests and psychedelic face paints? It may sound odd, but it reminds you that Glastonbury is a place like no other and the best arts festival in the world.

A typical Glastonbury conversation: Where's Johnny? Seriously, where's Johnny. Er... not sure man. Last time I saw him he was with those scousers who were carting around burning tents in shopping trolleys and kicking campfires into pasty kid's faces. Yeah, fuck, them, they burnt my fucking tent man. Jesus. We should probably get security over. Me and Suzie tried that, we searched the fields for hours, it's so

hilariously easy to get totally lost, and when we eventually found some security, all they did was strip search us in a really intrusive manner, nick our drugs and laugh at Suzie's underwear. It was harsh. Man, you're an idiot, everyone knows it's good to avoid security, they think they have carte blanche to fuck anyone over, just because the place is so impersonal and stuff, they think they're unaccountable. True that, yesterday there were

police hanging around our tent. Yeah, there's about 500 pigs here, but I guess, when a festival gets this well-known you expect it. Fuck where's Johnny. I dunno man. I'm sure he's alright, probably at the Carling tent. Which one, there are dozens. Good point. Man, I stink. Of course you stink, we all stink forget about it and have fun. Dude, I did forget about it, about 5 times, but every time I raise my arms it's like smacking myself in both cheeks with a rotting haddock, it's hard to forget the morbid stench of 3 days constant sweat-

ing. Well change your t-shirt or something. I fucking would if it hadn't got burned by those scousers. Jesus. Have we got any booze? We ran out. We can buy some right? 4 quid a pint from the Carling tent. Dude, hang on. I've got some E, I got it off some guy, I'm not sure about it though, its printed with a picture of a cat and some worms. Sweet, let's treble drop for Radiohead. I saw them when they last played here. I was near the front, only a few thousand people between me and the band, great view of the screens, the sound was just bouncing around off the valleys, but great view of the screens. You really should check out some of the smaller stages, there are loads and it's where the black people play. I might just go to the Lost Vagueness and revel in the overpriced mysticism. Guys, guys, I found Johnny. He's... he's... dead. He tried to have a shit and.. fuck man.. Jesus.. he fell in.

A typical ATP Conversation: Where's Johnny? He's in the swimming pool with Vincent Gallo. Are you sure, I thought I saw him playing Air Hockey with Peaches. Yeah God, sometimes it pisses me off that the bands are so accessible and the amenities so awesome, no matter, the place is so conveniently mapped out we'll never lose him. We need more booze. There's a very reasonably priced shop across the road, it sells copies of the Guardian and The Wire. Nice. I think I need a wash. Well we have shower and a bath in the chalet. Funny to think this is the same price as the typical field festivals. I can't wait to rock out tonight. Fuck yeah, Cheap Trick punish, this aint for pussies. We can catch a film in our chalet later, they're broadcasting a load of excellent films. Man. I don't want to miss the bands, they're of insane quality, genuinely innovative, artistically fucking beautiful. No branded haircut bullshit here. True that. Guys, I found Johnny, he's .. he's.. dead. No matter, we're in heaven already.



sheffield steel, arctic cool, heller twatishness



Sadly they aren't obscure anymore, yet the Arctic Monkeys, regardless of what the naysayers naysay, are still one of the most exciting bands on the planet. It is probably easier for a band to innovate having had the fastest selling album ever, but at the same time the temptation is there to simply have more of the first. The Monkeys are popular a lot of different parts of the world, which is due to their clear musical talent, but they will always mean something quite different to those people proud (and lucky) enough to call themselves Sheffielders.

People who grew up in Sheffield during the nineties are experiencing something both weird and wonderful with the rise and rise (and rise) of the Arctic Monkeys. The media will often refer to Alex Turner's strong northern accent. But if you are from Sheffield you understand that when he says "I wouldn't o" said it if I would have known," he is in fact talking with a thick north-Sheffield twang. Only a Sheffielder would have the audacity (and linguistic ability) to rhyme "Mondeo" with "say 'o". Where 'o is a shortening of 'owt meaning nothing. Two years ago if you were away from the glories of Sheffield (I know, why

would you leave right?), upon seeing someone in a grumpy mood and saying they've "got' face on," you would be met with utter bewilderment. It's a lot more specific than being a northern thing, people from Leeds never used the words "mardy bum."

It's true that other towns experience this. London's Calling probably meant something special to Londoners, particularly at the time. The Beatles are loved in Liverpool and Manchester still obsesses over Oasis. Whenever a band comes from your town there is a likelihood that you'll adore them and say that you heard about them before everyone else (and claim that you've met them). The Arctics are different though. For one thing, not a lot of great things come out of Sheffield. I'm not saying that it isn't rite good to live there, but if you walk around anywhere outside of the town centre it seems a bit like a cultural wasteland. It does have an excellent music scene if you can find it but to have a band this popular is quite unexpected. As well as this, they are so bloody Sheffield in everything that they do. There are few bands that so represent the city they're from like the Arctic Monkeys do. From the awkward teenage self-conscious interviews

to the wonderful pronunciation of the word "concern."

The first album in particular, Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not, and they're earlier work was close to the hearts of people who grew up going to The Boardwalk and The Leadmill. That record was such a witty reflection on growing up that almost any teenagers could relate to it. It's not just the references to places "High Green mate, via Hillsborough please," it's the nuances that made it truly Sheffield. "They got engaged, no intention of a wedding" or "though they might wear classic Reeboks, or knackered Converse or tracky bottoms tucked in socks." These were lads who'd grown up around us and seen the same things, then they decided to put a record and just describe it. The second album, inevitably, has moved on from that. The music is more frantic and not necessarily to its detriment, more produced. Perhaps it's just a result of the feelings I have about the first album, but the music sounds quite sentimental when looking back on teenage years. The second album mostly avoids that sentimentality. The songs are generally about things that they've experienced recently. At least that's

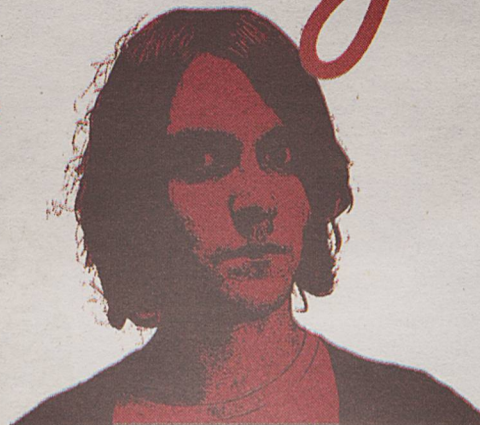
what I think they're about, the lyrics are more cryptic than the first time around. Brianstorm is the first single and it is supposedly about some bloke they met backstage in Japan. It's hard to tell that from the lyrics but once you're told that the thought process is slightly more apparent. I feel quite sure it'll be club banger thanks to the frenetic dueling guitars. Fluorescent Adolescent is much more like a song from the first album. "Flicking through a little book of sex tips, remember when the boys were all electric," the nostalgia (to its credit) abounds. To my mind the best track on the album is the beautiful Do Me A Favour. Right from the heavy opening drums, similar to A Certain Romance, to the aching vocals then thrashing guitars for a rousing finish, even though it is very polished it may be the best piece of music they've made.

Favourite Worst Nightmare is a work of depth and innovation. Don't listen to people who don't like The Arctic Monkeys, they remain the most exciting rock band on the planet. It's a planet they have already conquered, yet they remain four quintessentially Sheffield boys.

RRANZIT

bright eyes

loisjeary talks to **conor oberst** and the rest of his band about religiosity, political music and his psychic mind powers



I doubt whether David Cameron has ever met Conor Oberst - the paths of Tory big-wigs and introspective indie darlings rarely cross these days - but there cannot be a more perfect poster boy for Cameron's 'Hug a Hoody' nonsense than the Bright Eyes musician. I have encountered Conor in his off-stage persona on two occasions and I'll admit that I was hard pushed to recognise him, cocooned as he was in a dark hoody, eyes shiftily fixed on the ground. Conor's disguise served to hide him from the world at large, a desire somewhat reinforced by his music, which is at times angry, at other times reflective, and at all times poetic.

A reluctance to talk in interviews has created an air of mystery and it is easy to think that all we know about the man is what he reveals through his song-writing, which is all very well and good in musical circles but it's an interviewer's worst nightmare! Luckily, Conor is flanked by the present line-up of the ever changing band of musicians that complete Bright Eyes, including the two now permanent members, Nate Walcott, who created the distinctive string arrangements for the new album, and producer extraordinaire Mike Mogis. The answers to most questions are short and laboured and Conor has the disconcerting tendency to litter his answers with fallacies, but deliver them in such an awkwardly shy way that it's impossible to tell whether he is being serious or not. Occasionally he will make eye-contact and I assume he is about to say something sincere, but more often than not he trails off and fields the question to a different member of his motley crew. Even so, he is very intriguing and you get the impression that he is not deliberately being evasive or awkward - he's just a bit uncomfortable with being looked at.

The band have been working on the follow-up to 2005's double album release 'I'm Wide Awake It's Morning/Digital Ash in a Digital Urn' for a year and the resulting album is a sophisticated and, dare I say it, hopeful collection of characteristically striking lyrics, haunting female harmonies and up-lifting instrumentation. I ask Conor whether the hopefulness embodied by 'Cassadaga' is indicative of a new approach to life. "I try to be hopeful. A theme of our tour has been manifesting your own reality with whatever you think about. Anytime Jake wants something he just thinks about it and it happens. You think I'm kidding but it happened the other night. I had a lot of stuff to carry and I truly needed a bag and I thought 'I wish I had a bag'. Then a second later someone came up and gave me a bag, a nice looking bag! But Jake, he fixes broken bones and stuff. He's a little more advanced." The story is not as miraculous as it initially seems, the support band simply had some tote bags left over from the merchandise stall, but the sentiment seems nice enough. "The point is, if you hear that it is hopeful and positive then maybe you should go with that."

'Cassadaga' is the name of a spiritualist camp of psychics in Florida, and there are frequent references to religion and spirituality throughout the album. Conor is reluctant to admit that there is a coherent theme, but Mike says that it is clear to him. "As a guy who is very familiar with the music but doesn't write the lyrics, I do feel like there is a theme, but I know

from the recording of it there was no intentional pattern. Conor had a lot of different material and we decided to record everything and some songs we even recorded in a few different ways. It did end up having recurring themes lyrically and whether he intended that or not, as a listener to that aspect of it I feel like, even though it wasn't intended, there is a through-line . . . it's a spiritual record, a religious record!"

The rest of the band laugh and Conor claims, unconvincingly, "We're aiming for a new market and it's not Christianity it's just religiosity. It's a big market - religion is one of the most popular things in the world. Anton, what's that song you like? 'Life is good, eternal life is better!'"

Violinist Anton Patzner is suddenly animated, "That's a song we heard in a hotel room and we thought was pretty amazing. 'Life is good, eternal life is better!'"

Over the noise of Anton's chants, Jake Bellows, guitarist with Bright Eyes' label-mates Neva Dinova, shouts, "When you started singing that to me I thought you were singing 'a turtle life is better'. God, you sound like a real hippy!"

In fact, noticeably lacking from the new album is the stark degree of political consciousness which many have come to expect from Conor's lyrics. There is the odd nod to the state of the world; however, it is considerably subtler than the vitriolic 'When the President Talks to God', which upset bible-bashers, Republicans and let's face it, most of America, when performed on Jay Leno's Tonight Show in 2005. This omission is a mystery to me - it's not like the world has dramatically improved in the intervening period and at his recent London show he thanked the crowd and the whole of Britain for withdrawing troops from Iraq and expressed his hope that his own country would soon follow. Could it be that he is trying to shake the obvious comparisons with the politically charged musicians of the 1960s? Or, most worryingly of all, has he adapted his sound to be a little friendlier and more tolerable to the rest of society? I bloody well hope not, so I ask him how far he wants his music to reach and whether he intends to keep it underground and provocative.

"I'd like to have as many people connect with it as want to. I don't know, I'm still figuring that out. There are certain things you do because it makes sense in the context of promoting an album, but that aren't necessarily what you really want to do. The point is to share your music with people."

Mike agrees: "It seems unfair to try and keep it away from other people just for the sake of it. Some indie bands have become so massively popular that their shows end up being not enjoyable for the band because all of a sudden they have crowds of 12-year-olds that want to hear one song, so it becomes a drag to play live music in that band. I'm hoping that it won't happen to us. It seems like the music that we make is a little bit more thoughtful, so I feel like we don't have as much to lose by throwing our music out there to as many people as possible."

Characteristic in Conor's lyrics is a fascination with geography and landscape imagery. 'Cassadaga' is a lyrical romp across America -

I lost count of how many states were name-checked in the first song alone - and there is a sense of searching for a place to belong. Conor says that the importance of place and setting in his songs "is out there, even if it's not explicit. It's the form of songs, they can be moved from one place to another, but whenever I think of them they always happen somewhere - except the ones that are in outer space, but I guess that's a place." On the country-twangy 'I Must Belong Somewhere' Conor assigns a whole host of objects their proper place and concludes that 'everything must belong somewhere/I know that now, that's why I'm staying here'. It is easy to wonder whether his lyrical pursuits reflect a personal desire to feel a sense of belonging and whether he uses his song writing as a therapeutic tool. "I have a lot of scattered thoughts and so writing stuff down brings some sort of clarity to it and makes me feel a little less like I'm floating away and a little more with it."

The title of 'songwriter of our generation' and 'the next Bob Dylan' has plagued Conor throughout his career and considering his reluctance to hog the limelight, it seems to be more of a curse than a blessing. Does the pressure of this expectation affect his song writing? "It's always nice when people enjoy what I do, as long as you just keep it in a space in your head. The most important thing is to stay open to the music and create something that's exciting for us and hopefully then it will be exciting for other people."

Jake quickly interrupts: "But if you were to write music with the effect it would have on people in mind then you couldn't possibly be true to what you are intending to do in the first place. You can get roasted and wonder will people like it or not like it - but you can't even let that come in to your ideas when you're trying to make music. It would just screw everything up."

Many wondered how Conor Oberst would follow the success of releasing two, thoroughly different, full-length albums at the same time, with both being hailed independently as albums of the year. The answer is that they have followed it up with a wonderful album that succeeds in being quintessentially Bright Eyes whilst demonstrating a new richness in sound and hopefulness lyrically. Conor seems as assured a performer in his new material as we should expect from such a talented and accomplished musician and song writer. And so what is next?

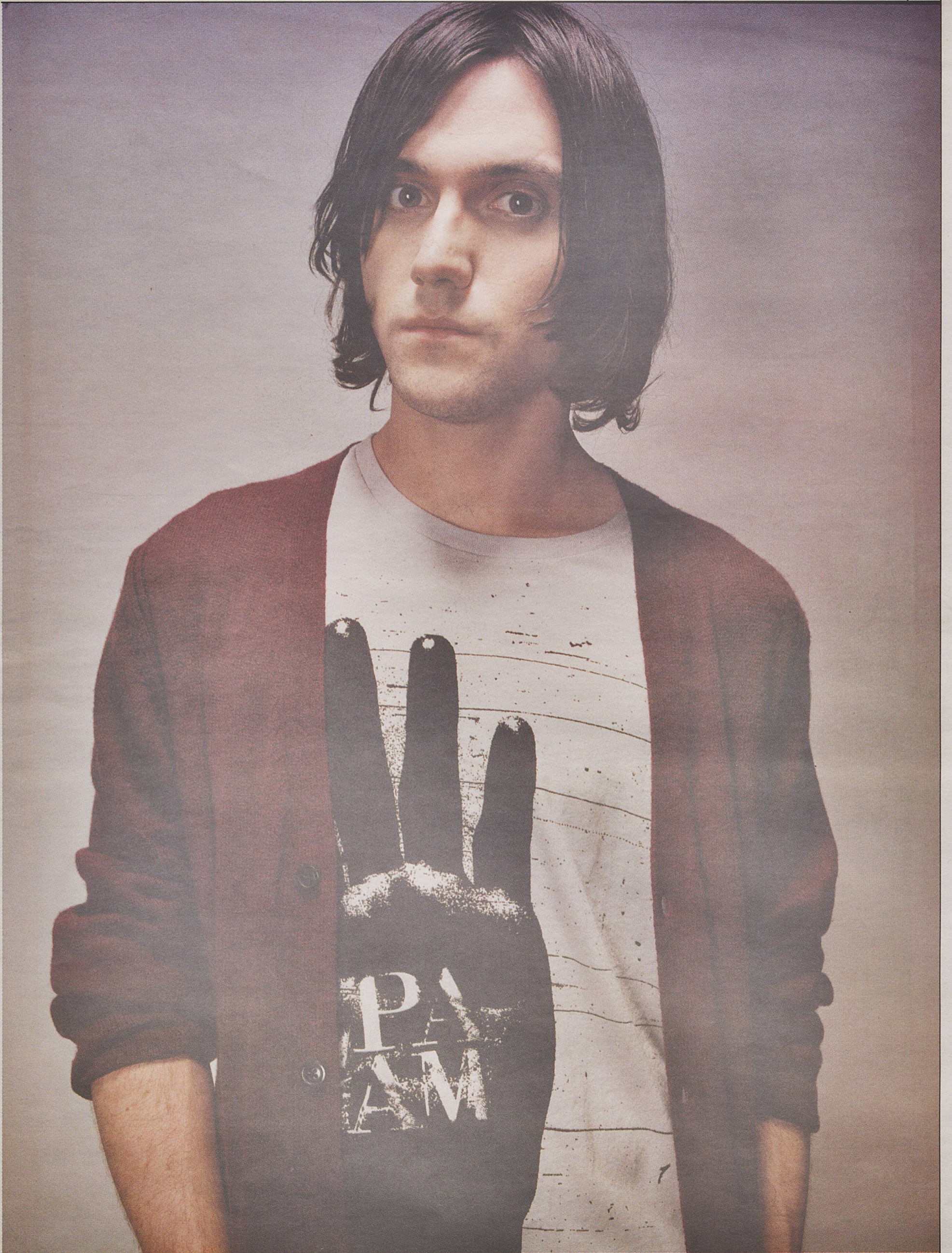
In a career spanning more than a decade Conor has written and recorded an infinite number of songs and the body of unfinished or unreleased tracks he must be sitting on can only be wondered at. Does he already have songs waiting in the wings, ready for the next album? "I can't write songs anymore. It comes in waves, I find that if I really try and sit down and do something or feel obligated then it doesn't work out. So I try and remain open and let it flow on through. There's a lot of method to the afterthought but the initial inspiration just happens... or doesn't."

With this admission it takes considerable self control to restrain myself from offering up my services as his new muse - perhaps David Cameron was right, we all do possess the irresistible urge to hug a hoody!

“

anytime Jake wants something he just thinks about it and it happens

it's a big market - religion is one of the most popular things in the world



the only one who knows

alan mair tells kevin perry about being mates with bowie, employing freddie mercury and the return of the only ones

You can say a lot of things about **The Only Ones**, but you can't accuse them of not being original. Too psychedelic for the punk scene, they were at the forefront of New Wave in the late 70s with their anthem 'Another Girl, Another Planet', which was recently repopularised in a Vodafone television advert. Their star burnt out in the white heat of touring and heroin addiction, and guitarist John Perry, bassist Alan Mair, singer and lyricist Peter Perrett and drummer Mike Kellie (below left to right) went their separate ways in 1982, but this year sees the four back together for a short UK tour and a slot at the Dirty Three curated All Tomorrow's Parties. Mair has been the driving force behind the current reunion, and is probably the only member of the band who was clean enough to remember their heyday. However, he tells me that it was actually another long awaited reunion that provided the catalyst for getting **The Only Ones** back together.

"A few years ago my first band **The Beatstalkers**' singles were finally released as an anthology, and to mark the occasion we got back together for a gig at the Barrowland. Playing with them really got me thinking about how much I loved playing bass and how that's really what I do best. Sony wanted to put a 'Best of The Only Ones' out, and I helped with the liner notes. After that I spoke to each of the other guys individually. Kellie said he'd do it, and John said he would but warned me that people had tried before and that I didn't have much hope. Then I went to speak to Peter, and at first he was reluctant. He went out of the room for a bit, and after a while he came in and said, "Are you sure people want us back together?" I just laughed, and said "You need to get out more, Peter!" Sony said they'd put up some money for us to get some rehearsal time if we were offered a gig, and by the second day of playing together we sounded like **The Only Ones** again. When ATP got in contact it really happened. We've got a healthy musical appreciation

for each other this time round, and Peter's not a little spoilt boy any more. We're looking forward to the tour - all the rumours about Peter collapsing are fallacies, he's rehearsing four or five hours a day now."

I get a clear impression that Mair is delighted to be back making music after the long hiatus. It should be no surprise, as he has been a rock star, on and off, since he was a teenager. "The Beatstalkers were kind of my school band, but the press called us Scotland's first real pop stars. We dominated the Scottish pop scene at the time, and when we moved to London, we got a residency at The Marquee Club. I also became mates with David Bowie, who at the time was a struggling song writer and wrote three tracks for us."

It was not to be for **The Beatstalkers**, however, and when they split Mair took an unusual career step - he became a clothes designer. "It began when **The Beatstalkers** were touring Germany and we ended up staying at this warehouse. We didn't realise what it was at first, but it was a lot of fun! The owner was a very trendy woman and she had this amazing pair of unusually cut leather trousers. You couldn't get clothes like that anywhere, especially not in Scotland, so I made my own pair - it was Rock 'n' Roll with a sewing machine! When the band split up, I started up my own business from my old manager Ken Pitt's office. I thought Ken just wanted me there to answer the phones, little did I know that he fancied me! He looked like Clark Kent, I was so naïve I had no inkling he could be gay." Pitt famously also managed Mair's friend David Bowie. "Yeah, I became really good friends with David at this point, and he wrote 'Little Bombadier' for my son, Frankie, who always used to be with me around the office."

Meanwhile, business was thriving. "A friend suggested that I get a stall at Kensington Market, and I did and it became very successful. There was a great atmosphere there, it was like the fashion side of the music industry. I met Freddie [Mercury] and Roger [Taylor] who ran a stall opposite, and as I became more successful I got Freddie to watch my stall, and then employed him when their stall had to close. Despite being hopeful that they'd be successful,

Freddie was very self-effacing. That was one of the nice things about him. A lot of young songwriters are too eager to say that they're great. I saw them play their first gig at the Kensington Estate Management Halls. This was back when Queen were still called Smile, and they were just...okay. I didn't like to tell Freddie, but I wasn't sure about them. Then I was driving to work one day and on the radio they played this fantastic single called 'Seven Seas of Rhye'. When I got to the stall I told Freddie, "You won't be working here much longer, you've got a hit single."

Living in London, Mair was never far from the music scene. "London was an incredible place to be, I'd really pushed to move here, even when I was in **The Beatstalkers**. The music scene here meant that you could see amazing bands every night, like Hendrix or the Stones. The first gig I saw in London was **The Who** at the Marquee, and I was just... 'Fuckin' Hell', it was the most brilliant and mental night I'd ever seen, to my astonishment they were smashing up their kit and I was just thinking, 'No! Our instruments were too precious to us'."

Over a period of time I lost touch with the music scene, while I was working at the market, but one night a few of the guys from the market said they were going to go and see this guy called David Bowie. I was like, 'How do you know who David Bowie is?' I hadn't seen him in about a year at this point. I went down to the show with them and talked my way backstage. I was walking along and heard David singing so I walked into his dressing room and there was Ziggy Stardust! I was just like 'What the hell's going on here?', but he said 'Alan!', and all my mates were shocked that I knew him, because by this point he'd become big. His show that night was inspiring. It was like 'Fuckin' hell, a star is born!'"

It wasn't long before Mair felt the need to start playing again. "I bought a bass and got a pub gig just to get back into playing. I was looking for a band though, so I went for an audition with Roger Chapman's **Streetwalkers**. The audition was okay, but as I was leaving I saw these two stunning girls go into the studio next door. I went in and watched the

band, and after I left Kellie asked Manno, the owner of the studio, who I was. He said he could tell I was the bassist the band had been looking for as soon I walked into the room, just from my vibe." Manno gave the band Mair's number, and the rest is history.

Their sound was still to evolve, however, and even now, looking back, it is difficult to fit **The Only Ones** into a neat genre. "Punk was fantastic, it got rid of all those super groups who were terrible. But I still remember the punks thinking we were hippies and the hippies thinking we were punks. If we were to fit into any definition then I suppose it would be New Wave, but really I think we were around at the wrong time. I think we'd have fitted in the early 90s, when bands like Radiohead and the Stone Roses were coming through. We were never mentioned in the 80s, when people were playing ironing boards and weird stuff like that. It changed in the 90s."

Mair produced much of **The Only One's** material, and had some of his best times in the studio. "The best times for me were making the first record. The first single was 'Lovers of Today'. The record companies weren't interested so we put it out ourselves and it was record of the week everywhere. Then the labels got interested and we went into the studio, I remember when Peter wrote 'Planet', which is still such an exceptional song. Also, headlining **The Roundhouse** and playing festivals in places like Holland were fantastic."

Heroin took its toll on the band first time around, "For me, we split up because there were too many drug addicts in the band, but we were still having an amazing time musically. The last album was harder to make, and I almost quit after that, but then we got the chance to tour the States with **The Who**, and I thought, 'A goodbye present!' It was fabulous fun, but there were too many females giving the other guys drugs, to get that power over them. It seemed like everyone was on hard drugs, even the road crew."

Back together and shorn of distractions, another planet awaits.



tiger lillies

kitflemons reviews the tiger lillies at the soho theatre

According to Alex Kapranos, of Franz Ferdinand, "Any description [of the Tiger Lillies] is an injustice. They are peerless". However, sometimes an injustice has to be done and the Tiger Lillies' visit to the Soho Theatre on the 21st of April was a gig just crying to be reviewed; one person I met had travelled all the way from Oslo, just to see the band - on three consecutive nights!

Almost always on the move to a new venue in a new country, it is hard to tell whether the Tiger Lillies are chasing their fans or running from their critics, as they seem to have both in equal measure, being no strangers to controversy.

Singer Martin Jacques, drummer Adrian Stout and bassist Adrian Huge took to the tiny stage, wielding, during their hour and a half set, a range of instruments from the accordion and double bass to the musical saw and plastic chicken. Taking inspiration from cabaret, gothic literature and the seedier underbelly of society, their music is a wonderful throwback to the days before rock 'n' roll, yet with a thoroughly modern, biting edge.

Their first song 'Death Train' set the tone for what was to come, as even at their most light-hearted, the Tiger Lillies deal only in the macabre. Their brand of neo-cabaret is certainly unique, Martin Jacques singing this first, pacey song in a gruff, rasping, moan, before breaking into a gentle falsetto in the slower songs that followed.

Although all of the songs have the Tiger Lillies' print firmly on them, they are hugely diverse, from the relentless morbidity of 'Death Train' to the mournful lament of 'Hailstones'. Where they per-

haps come into their own, however, is in their most light-hearted tunes, eliciting a laugh as they force even the greatest taboos into the open. When Martin Jacques starts a song with "When I was a young choirboy", he will soon be travelling into risky territory. Songs about heresy, child abuse, prostitution and murder, however, are standard fare for the Tiger



Lillies and they carry them off exquisitely. The audience, surprisingly homogeneously middle-aged, were soon giggling like prepubescent boys at every swear word and risqué line.

And the Tiger Lillies loved it. Adrian

Stout, dressed in a sharp suit, hung over his double bass, carrying the tunes with apparent ease. Meanwhile, Adrian Huge, drum kit bedecked in tiny cymbals and plastic chickens, seemed to be playing with a favourite toy, even rifling through a box of trinkets when the performance called for it. Whether filing a hi-hat or donning a priest's collar, the gig seemed to be for his entertainment as much as for the audience. Similarly, Jacques was relishing the impact the trio were having - calls to have them banned from playing in some countries did not prevent him from wailing like a banshee one minute, deliberating every last expletive the next.

The effect was, indeed, incredible, but, unfortunately, this wasn't a perfect gig. There were only sitting places available and the largely conservative audience did nothing to justify the Lillies' manic extravagance. There was no singing along and even some quiet toe-tapping was quickly reprimanded by a very sour-faced woman sitting in front of me. Though this was no fault of the band, their performance surely deserved a less oppressive atmosphere - the audience took them far more seriously than they took themselves (although appreciation was shown, with the band having to finish on two encores).

Doubts about the venue and the audience aside, however, the concert was a brilliant performance by one of the most unique and controversial bands I have heard. According to the Tiger Lillies, "If you've never been interfered with as a child, then you haven't lived"; however, personally I'll forgo the child abuse and make do with seeing this band live.

In today's music industry, if an artist wants their music to be recognised, rewarded or simply listened to, then they generally need to prostitute themselves to the corporate big-wigs at the major record labels, who, if they are unlucky, will bastardise their music and get them a cover at NME. If they have a fortunate escape, and the men in suits throw the demo CD on to the reject pile, then the artist will be left to fend for themselves in the murky underworld of the indie music scene. For some bands the lure of success is so strong that the rights to their music and the earnings from it are signed over without much of a thought. However, some artists are brave enough to go it alone, and the independent music scene is a hub of talented and hard-working artists who are determined to keep control over their music. Whilst the music world suffocates under the weight of countless generic indie bands, it seems that many have lost sight of the root of the term and independent music has been all but forgotten.

The organisers of The Indy Music Awards want to change this and have created the awards to recognise the talent and dedication of London's independent artists and the venues and promoters who take a risk in supporting them. Over 200 independent musicians from across the musical spectrum were nominated, with 36 acts reaching the shortlist across nine different and slightly artificial categories. Although the eventual winners will be chosen by a panel of music industry types, the 'Venue of the Year' will be chosen by fans, whilst 'Fan of the Year' is chosen by the bands and venues themselves. Jeremy Glover, CEO of the awards, is passionate about the talent that can be found in inde-

pendent artists saying, 'the music is healthy... If the industry doesn't know how to make a business out of it then that's their fucking problem. The music is fucking healthy!' Impressively, those



bands that find themselves nominated often receive positive responses for management companies and venue promoters, meaning that the awards are not just a nice pat on the back but also energise and inspire the musicians whilst helping them progress in the music business.

Instead of the usual suspects which pop up on all other music award lists, the bands represented by The Indy Music Awards are inventive, exciting and just plain weird. Not all nominees push the

boundaries in quite the same way and for some it is quite clear why mainstream success has been so lacking - but the majority of nominees mix talent with a fervent imagination. Best Solo Act nominee Joe Driscoll is an "East Coast white boy" who beatboxes in to a didgeridoo, raps, sings, plays the guitar - and then records it all live on stage, piece by piece, before looping it over and fusing the sound together to create genre-defying mash-ups in front of your very eyes. It's a new, technologically inspired take on the one-man band and it is awe-inspiring. Having moved to London and spent years playing small venues, Joe is honoured to be nominated but is adamant that 'you don't need money to tell you it's good!' Ironically I can't help but feel that this charming and good looking young man could make a lot of money if he is picked up by the right people; however, that would rather destroy the entire spirit of the 'go it alone' independent artist, armed with only his instruments, against the corporate world. Also nominated are Joana and the Wolf - like Kate Bush on crack. Joana wails, howls and throws herself about in the oddest of manners whilst a toy wolf hangs around her neck and guitars wail in the background. It's not everyone's cup of tea but that's what makes it so wonderful and makes these awards so important - they recognise those bands that have rejected the mainstream in favour of something a little bit odd and everyone who is excited by new, inventive music should be thankful that there are some people out there fighting these band's corners.

The Indy Music Awards will be held at Clapham Grand on 15th May and tickets can be bought from www.indyawards.co.uk.

field day

kevinperry looks ahead to london's unique new summer festival

There's no shortage of homogenous rock festivals around this year, but I somehow doubt that many of them can count welly throwing, a coconut shy or a largest marrow competition amongst their attractions.

All of this is however on offer at Field Day, a new festival which is the product of collaboration between many of London's alternative promoters, including Eat Your Own Ears, Adventures In The Beetroot Field and Bugged Out! and takes place in Victoria Park on the 11th August.

There's an eclectic line-up across a range of stages. Ex-Beta Band duo Robin Jones and John Maclean's new band, The Aliens, provide an appropriate level of psychedelia for the rock-festival-meets-village-fete occasion, especially when blended with the likes of Erol Alkan, Jo Jo De Freq and Andrew



Weatherall.

But what makes Field Day that little bit different is the inclusion of such summery delights as a tombola, a tea and cake stall and barn dancing, as well as the aforementioned marrow contest. They'll also be a brass band playing at the Victorian Band Stand, so they'll be something to listen to if you don't fancy watching the likes of The Earlies, 1990's, Bat For Lashes and Pull Tiger Tail.

It promises to be quintessentially English and a taste of village life in the centre of the city. Unfortunately this also means they'll be Morris Dancing, perhaps the most terrifying and soul-destroying form of entertainment since Mime, but you can always avoid that.

Tickets are twenty-two bob and fifty new pence and are available via ticketweb and from Rough Trade in Covent Garden. There's a website at fielddayfestivals.com but it's perennially under construction. Seriously, avoid the fucking Morris Dancers though.



loisjeary rewards quality, not quantity

indy music awards

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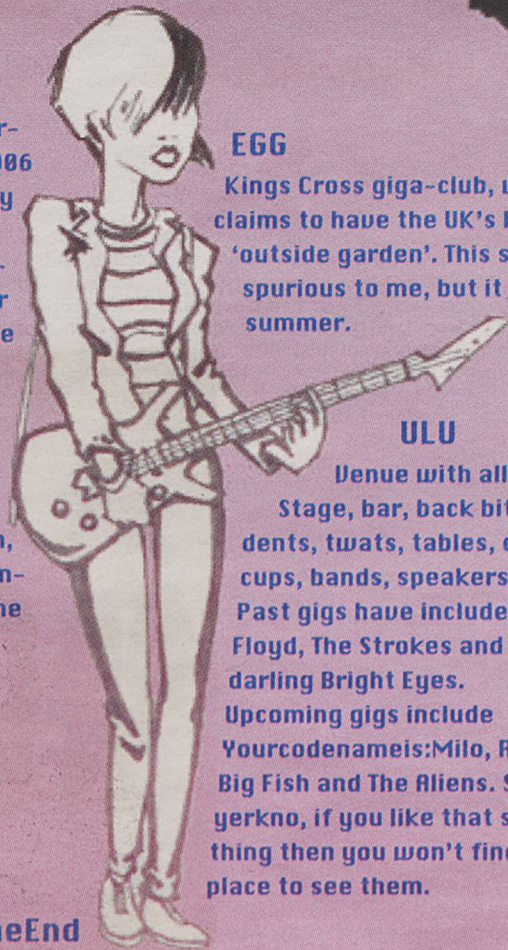


I'm Mickey-Fucking Mouse. LDN style. Brap. Music in London is overrated, most of it is disneyfied, the rest is just fellating a microphone. I'm here to show it up. I made you a map. Now fuck off.

THE NORTH

Ally Pally

Alexandra Palace was built in 1873 as a majestic counterpoint to the great exhibition centre at Crystal Palace. In 2006 Slammin' Vinyl put on a massive rave there and a lot of pasty people took drugs and spazzed out. In between these two events The UFO Club had their residence here in the 60s, putting on acts such as Pink Floyd and The Crazy World of Arthur Brown and controversially distributed LSD-dipped flyers. The Stone Roses played their first southern gig here in the 80s and it was packed and stuff. Franz Ferdinand overstayed their welcome with a 4 day residency here, the Pixies culminated their 2005 tour here in a frenzy and Morrissey made sex with gladioli on the stage in 2006. It's for the big occasion only but well worth a visitation if someone you like is on, or if you demand your venues to resemble the palace of Versailles.



EGG

Kings Cross giga-club, which claims to have the UK's largest 'outside garden'. This sounds spurious to me, but it is cool in the summer.

ULU

Venue with all the essentials. Stage, bar, back bit, drunk students, twats, tables, chairs, glasses, cups, bands, speakers, music. Yes. - Past gigs have included Pink Floyd, The Strokes and cover darling Bright Eyes. Upcoming gigs include Yourcodenameis:Milo, Reel Big Fish and The Aliens. So, yer kno, if you like that sort of thing then you won't find a finer place to see them.

Turnmills
In the 1990s this is consolidating rave island. The Che was launched later enjoyed and guns

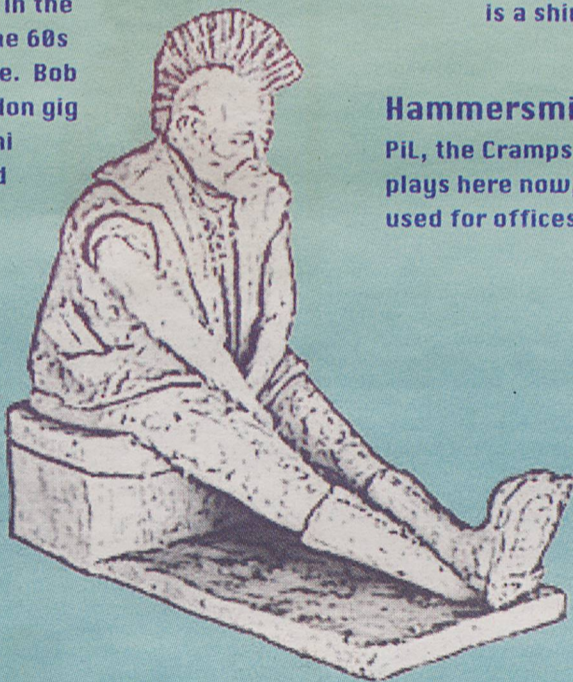
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THE OLD WEST

Troubadour Club

The crusty jewel in the leafy crown of the 60s London folk scene. Bob Dylan's first London gig was here and Joni Mitchell followed soon after. Jimi Hendrix tested his new dentures on the door. It now operates as a tiresomely bourgeois faux-venue.



The Roxy

Opening in 1977 to a jagged fanfare of punk guitar courtesy of The Clash, The Roxy was a grimy punk staple in the heart of Covent Garden. The resident DJ was the legendary Don Letts and the venue hosted such acts as Generation X, X-Ray Spex, London and the Adverts. Today it is a shiny boutique selling swimwear.

The End

Just next to High Holborn Halls the End was conceived by pill munching master-class-of-a-human Mr C, once of the Shamen. Until recently it hosted upmarket Indie extravaganza Trash where skinny people would eat coke.

LONDON MUSIC MAP

Hammersmith Palais

PIL, the Cramps and Soft Cell played here, as did The Clash. Noone plays here now, it closed earlier this month. The site will be used for offices and a restaurant complex.

100 Club

Oxford Street saw the punk blister burst in 1976 with the International Punk Festival. Bands playing included The Sex Pistols, The Damned Souxie and the Banshees, The Clash and the Buzzcocks. Recently the venue has seen welsh band The Automatic playing songs for Coca Cola and iTunes in front of a handful of competition winners and executives.

Fabric

One of the best well thought-of daues in the UK, Fabric boasts an imr and an electrical music policy. It's terrible all at once. There is a ben

Ministry of Sound

Something of a musical fly-trap for t superclub backlash of the millenium. use. Go there for a badman's smacko

Fridge

One of the biggest clubs in the whole damn something of a Brixton institution. Just as co size of rooms, household appliances such as fri whole buildings, and it is within the cavernous design, thought to date from the early thirti is housed. But don't think this place is antiq installation of a GAE Digital 50K sound sys according to my mate Alan. It also has, a literature, "the biggest, brightest mirror argue with that? Sister venue Oven clo no-one.

Transition Studios

Legendary mastering studios, for all those in tune with urban music, where CD plastic is ritually turned to vinyl gold, solid dubplates for those who like to use their samples in the time honoured spinning-analogue tradition.

Westway flyover

An impersonal concrete hulk of elevated road. It was turned into a symbolic totem of the west London punk and Reggae scenes by The Clash. It is now functions solely and efficiently as an impersonal hulk of elevated road.

PART C CAREERS



Teach First: a different choice

In an interview with **Rosamund Urwin**, Odette Orlans talks about the Teach First scheme

Odette has taught English at an inner-London comprehensive for nearly two years. She studied English at Lincoln College, Oxford and applied for "Teach First" in her final year of study. In September, she will begin studying law.

What exactly is Teach First; could you explain how the scheme works?

Teach First is an independent, non-profit organisation which takes students straight out of university and places them in demanding secondary schools in London, Manchester and across the Midlands. Participants receive six weeks' intensive training before going into schools and are given further support throughout their time on the course. After the first year, they attain qualified teacher status, equivalent to a PGCE. In the second year, they follow a course in leadership, which involves lectures in finance, marketing and strategy at Imperial's Tanaka Business School, as well as workshops in soft skills and networking events with leaders in business, media and education.

Teach First teachers take on a great deal of responsibility very early, and in a very difficult environment, so are forced to adapt quickly. They must guide a diverse range of teenagers, persuading them to put effort into things they may find initially unappealing, whilst maintaining respect and order in the classroom. In order to motivate stu-

dents, teachers have to be innovative and practical. All these skills transfer well to fields other than teaching.

How do other employers look upon Teach First?

Numerous employers in diverse sectors look kindly upon Teach First participants. In fact, employers such as McKinsey and Co, Citigroup, Clifford Chance,

tions open, perhaps those who are nearing the end of their time at university and are, as yet, undecided about which profession to pursue.

About half the Teach First participants go into new careers, the others catch the teaching bug and stay in the educational sector, often moving swiftly to management positions in their schools or leaving to teach abroad.

teaching. This has a lot to do with how supportive and friendly my school is, and how interesting my students can be. There have been some real highlights over the past two years. I took my students to see *The Woman in Black*, which they loved, and they screamed with excitement throughout. Most of them had never been to the theatre before; one even asked me as

Recently, Jeremy Paxman taught my GCSE students about political interviews and an actress from The Globe theatre ran drama workshops on *The Tem-*

moments of chaos in my classroom. Conversely, lessons I expect to be dull can result in excellent debates, and it's genuinely fascinating to hear my students' views on everything from satire in *The Simpsons* to whether the school leaving age should be raised.

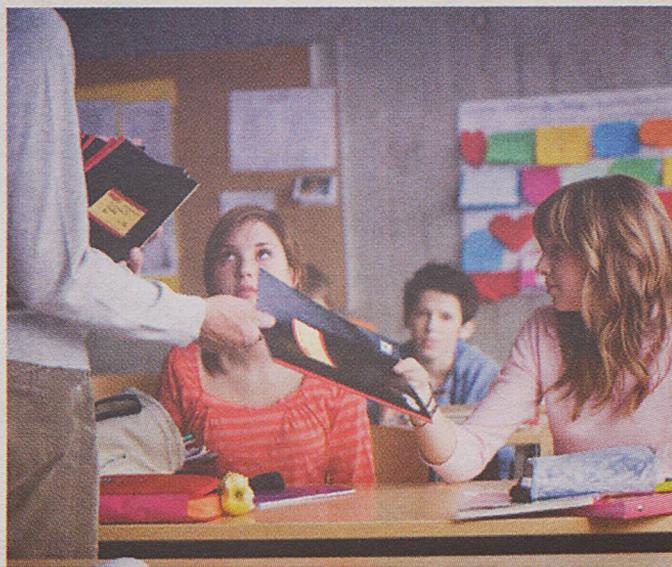
Do you think your experiences of teaching will be useful in your chosen career?

It has definitely improved my presentation and communication skills. My ability to negotiate has been honed, mostly through tactical prevention of fights!

Would you recommend Teach First to other students?

The scheme is definitely not for everyone, and I would recommend anyone considering it spent a day or two observing in a Teach First school before applying.

However, I am very glad I have done it. I was lucky in that I have a lot of support from the teachers in my school and from Teach First. I have also learned a huge amount, especially from my pupils. At the start I felt very much like a contestant on *Faking It*: "We took one over privileged Oxford student and, after a mere six weeks' training, threw her into an inner-city school...let's see if she can fool anyone" but now I do feel like a real teacher. As a bonus, I have a lifetime of funny stories about the day-to-day going on in school.



EMI and Shell back the scheme and it is one of very few organisations that the three major political parties all support. Teach First is an excellent choice for those who wish to leave their op-

What have been your best experiences of teaching?

Even though I find my job difficult, I have started to love

“one of the things I both love and hate about my job is how unpredictable the day can be”



pest.

What have been your worst experiences?

One of the things I both love and hate about my job is how unpredictable the day can be. No matter how meticulously I plan a lesson, I never know how it will go. The dynamic in the classroom can be influenced by anything from the amount of pizza and e-numbers ingested at break time to the weather, and, if I'm completely honest, there have been

we queued up, when he'd get his 3D glasses to see the screen with.

I really love the look of glee on my students' faces when they are successful and it is hugely rewarding to see them succeed. One of students won a national poetry competition with a rap about his dreams, and my GCSE class mostly performed better than they had expected and were really pleased. The most interesting experiences have often been when visitors come to the school.

Teach First facts

In order to be eligible you need have an academic degree with at least a 2:1 qualification

You will get six weeks summer training before you start

You can expect to be paid around £15,663 to £19,371 in the first year and in your second year you will receive the same salary as a newly qualified teacher

You will get the same holiday entitlement as other teachers

You can apply now at www.teachfirst.org.uk



Graduate Deadlines

Business Monitor International	Financial Markets Sales	2 May 2007	Zurich Financial Services	Marketing	11 May 2007
Siemens	Broadcast Projects	6 May 2007	Miller Insurance Services Ltd		11 May 2007
TNS	Consumer Sector	6 May 2007	Hays Accountancy and Finance Consultancy		23 May 2007
uSwitch.com	Business Analyst	11 May 2007	RWD	Consultants	23 May 2007

Well met at the moot

Ruth Louise Knox prepares for a career in law with the ELSA Moot Court Competition

As any LSE law student worth their salt well knows, the art and activity of mooting carries great possibilities for their future legal career. The extra-curricular staple of soon-to-be barristers, the moot court simulates court proceedings in front of an appellate body, requiring the student to do full research on a fictional legal problem, present their oral arguments in favour of either appeal or dismissal and finally win over an often sleepy and jaded real-life lawyer sitting as judge. It helps put theory into practice, complementing the legal education of the degree itself.

Of course, involvement in mooting develops a plethora of skills that are not just specific to the legal profession. Participants adjust to the demands of unscripted public speaking, fundraise and organise their entire travel itineraries to international venues, practise that all-important process called 'team work', and sometimes debate policy issues beyond the remit of strict law.

An example of these competitions is the ELSA Moot Court Competition on World Trade Organisation law. ELSA (the European Law Student's Association) is the world's largest independent law student association. It was formed in 1981 by a group of law students, and now has a membership exceeding 25,000. It organises seminars and conferences, international traineeships and academic activities, including the EMCC itself. In October 2006, three LSE Law with French students on their year abroad at the Université de Robert Schuman, Strasbourg, decided to take on the competition, teaming up with a fellow ERASMUS student from the

University of Birmingham. For them, the past six months have been a long and often arduous period. Preparation work had to be undertaken for a booklet of

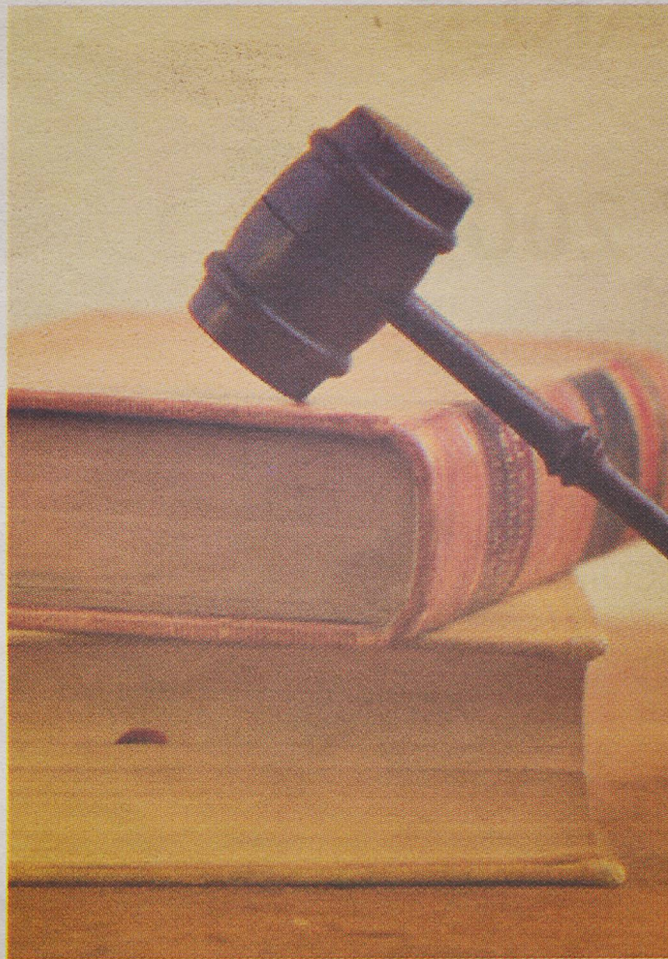
fictional country, Factoril, which issued compulsory licences enabling production and exportation of a patented drug to alleviate a public health crisis in

to send the four-strong team to the competition's first round, based in Hamburg, North Germany. Several persistent, persuasive letters later, the team managed to fundraise 1,500 pounds, thanks to generous contributions from the LSE Law Faculty, Birmingham Law Society, the English Speaking Union, the Université de Robert Schuman and Howard Davies' Director's Trust Fund'. A successful campaign was begun to persuade

bate before the WTO law experts which comprise the Panel from the 15th March till the 19th March 2007. Facing eight university teams drawn from across Europe, the girls will have to stick to strict speaking time limits, answer frequent and probing questions from the panellists and commit a large body of WTO case law to memory. It's a daunting task, but one with many rewards – including networking opportunities with international lawyers at the social events planned for the four day competition, introductions to potential employers who sponsor the event (including Baker and Mackenzie, White and Case, the World Trade Institute) and an internship at the International Chamber of Commerce for the Best Orator in the Elimination Round of the Finals held in Geneva, Switzerland.

The LSE have already tasted success in this competition. In January, a team of LLM students won the UK round held in London by a considerable margin, and are due to head to the next round in Cluj Napoca, Romania, at the end of March. Their undergraduate counterparts, Ferdisha Snagg, Tais Jost and myself, alongside Birmingham University's Sorrel Meechan head to Hamburg in just under two weeks.

Despite often feeling like you have as much reading to do for your moot as you do for your degree courses, taking part is undoubtedly both exciting and rewarding, as new friendships are forged, the competitive spirit is awakened and sometimes, a win is achieved. So get involved – at the internal or external moots planned for the LSE in the coming year. It's the first step towards becoming Judge John Deed.



taking part is undoubtedly both exciting and rewarding, as new friendships are forged, the competitive spirit is awakened and sometimes, a win is achieved



the relatively inactive 'faculté de droit' at the Université de Robert Schuman to allow the team to represent them in the competition, given the mixed nature of their university backgrounds.

All that remains to be done is for the team to transpose their written arguments into a live de-

written submissions 55 pages long, after reading as much case law and academic commentary as possible. They constructed arguments both for and against a

two developing countries – Listeria and Distria.

'Swotting up' wasn't the only heavy task – at least 1,000 pounds had to be raised in order

Internship at UNICEF

Sumanth Inukonda discusses his experiences with the UNICEF internship programme

Since 2005, UNICEF India has hosted the United Nations' largest internship programme in the world. The programme begins with around a hundred students, from both Indian and international backgrounds, congregating in New Delhi for a four day orientation programme. Expect more than dreary, day-long seminars since the interns are also treated to mouth-watering Indian cuisine!

The theme of the 2005 internship programme that I participated in was Knowledge Community on Children in India. Following induction we were divided up into small groups and then sent to do fieldwork with grassroots organisations that are working on UNICEF projects. As monitoring and evaluation interns we worked on varying projects such as polio eradication and village level micro planning.

I worked in a team, with a brilliant British Indian and a garrulous German, both doing their law courses in UK. We were, sadly, the only all male group that year. Our task was process documentation of the Right to Health-Care Campaign. This is a

unique campaign launched in 2000, which aims to make health care a legal and enforceable right in India and also to provide access to health for all its citizens.



the programme is ten weeks long and a unique opportunity to travel and understand the incredible country that is India



This is admittedly ambitious for a country that spends only a small percentage of its GDP on health.

We were stationed in the quiet mid-western town of Pune



but our work took us to different corners of India. We travelled extensively across the country, to big cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore and Lucknow and also to remote and barely accessible tribal villages of central India. We designed questionnaires and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with people involved at various levels of the campaign like grassroots health activists, medical practitioners, eminent academics and campaign coordinators. We analysed data, wrote a report and made recommendations that emphasized community participation for improving health standards for the poor in India.

The programme is ten weeks long and a unique opportunity to travel and understand the incredible country that is India. It offers you a chance to aid in the effort to resolve important problems, as well as a chance to meet new people and make friends. All teams are expected to submit a detailed 10,000 word case study and ten minute film, so if you have film skills that's a bonus.

For further details contact amsingh@unicef.org

Quick Job Find

Looking for jobs? Here are some opportunities listed on the LSE careers website that you might find interesting. For further information

<https://careers.lse.ac.uk/lse-website-main/student/search-ForPositions.html>

Employer: Standard & Poor's (a McGraw Hill company)

Position: Research Executive
Description: S&P Fund Research, Canary Wharf, is looking for a summer intern.

Range of duties assisting senior fund analysts and management, including fund classification; data collection; quant analysis; market research; workflow analysis.

UK work permit essential. Major European languages an advantage.

Salary Range: £10-15 per hour
Closing Date: 2 Jul 07

Employer: Concern Worldwide
Position: Street Fundraiser

Description: Concern Worldwide is an international, humanitarian organisation working in the world's poorest countries.

We are seeking committed, enthusiastic, confident people to join our team of face to face fundraisers working throughout London and the South East.

Full training provided. This is an excellent entry level position in the charity sector.

To apply, please email CV and covering letter to Vernon Kenny at vernon.kenny@concern.net
Salary Range: £300-400 per week

Closing Date: 22 May 07

Employer: Shoosmiths

Position: Trainee Solicitors
Description: Training contract start date: September 2008 or 2009.

We offer a training contract of 4 x 6-month seats in most of our office locations (Birmingham, Nottingham, Milton Keynes/Northampton, Fareham, Reading).

The seats offered vary slightly by location, but the firm's key areas are Corporate/Commercial, Commercial Property, Employment and Dispute Resolution/Litigation.

Salary Range: £20-25K per year
Closing Date: 31 Jul 07

Employer: Last.fm Ltd

Position: Country Manager Interns

Description: Last.fm's business development team is looking for individuals to help manage our international sites and work with our partners.

<http://www.last.fm/about/jobs/#job3>

Salary Range: Salary negotiable
Closing Date: 12 May 07

Employer: Greater London Tutors

Position: Country Manager Interns

Description: We are urgently seeking Economics Tutors to tutor to A level and beyond. The hours are extremely flexible, the pay is excellent and the work is both rewarding and interesting.

Salary Range: £20-25 per hour
Closing Date: 2 May 07



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Recruiting Officer.

Groton, June 2, 1862.

THE CALL TO DUTY

JOIN THE BEAVER

FOR HOME AND COUNTRY



HACKNEYWORLD

Turnmills

In the 1990s this Islington club enjoyed a reputation for consolidating rave into the indoor legal dancefloors of clubland. The Chemical Brthers Legendary Heavenly Social was launched here as was gay institution Trade. It later enjoyed an excellent reputation for violence and guns. It is now insanely expensive.

333 Club

Trend hole. If Nathan Barley was real, this would be his Mecca, and all the idiots would congregate here wearing their Geek Pie hair. Unfortunately he's not real, but we have Peaches Geldof to make up for it.

The Rhythm Factory

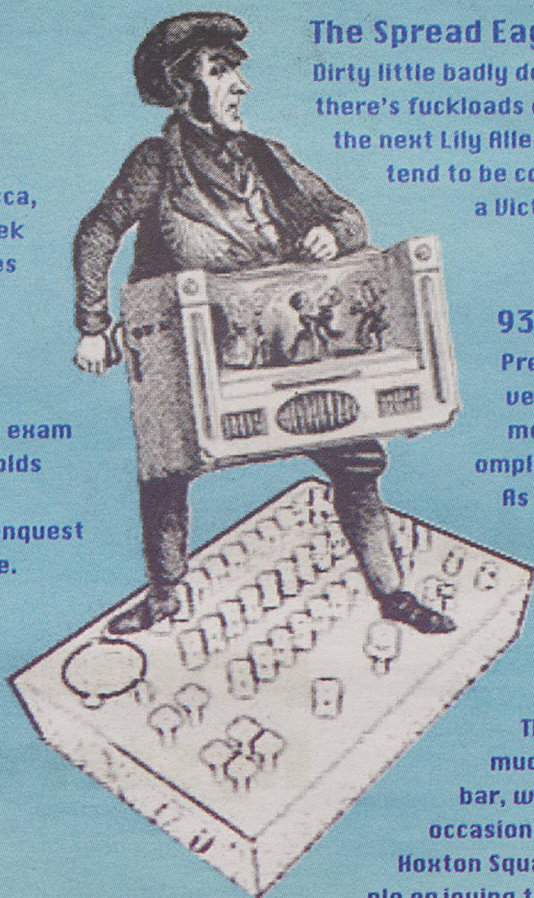
These people are so serious about their music they have an entrance exam on the door. Sample question: Name the shoes Klaxons' Jamie Reynolds wears in the Gravity's Rainbow video- A: Reebok Classics. B: Reebok Classics 92. C: Reebok Classics Ventilator SPTs. D: Reebok Classics Conquest II. E: Clawfeet. F: Reebok Classics Soqua Slip-ons. G: All of the above.

Hause Zu Hause

Began life as an urban farm but the animals, especially the two white siberian tigers, didn't like the sub-bass, so, in 2002 they were quickly killed and forgotten about. Angling pool is a mustyes, but touch yourself quickly because your hands will be cut off soon: As a fabulously quirky policy they practice Shariah law here.

Cromwells

Informed by the Protectorate, this club caters for those with a downbeat, uptight, puritan ethos. Dancing is forbidden, as is christmas, but the sweet wooden penitance sofas will keep you kicking your insides to the beat of Godliness. Discount on the door for Jews.



The Spread Eagle

Dirty little badly designed venue. Good name though, and there's fuckloads of drugs around. Good place to watch the next Lily Allen/Jamie T/Jack Penate so you can pretend to be cool when they become famous. 'LDN is a Victim' must love this place.

93 Feet East

Pretty trendy, but can be a decent live venue if you get the right night. In summer they have a barbeque, and who can complain when there's burnt flesh on offer? As an aside, I once literally stole the shirt off someones back here.

Hoxton Bar & Grill

The name is pretty misleading, this isn't much of a grill. It's actually a pretty trendy bar, with a decent sized venue which hosts the occasional low-key gig. Also ideally located on Hoxton Square, which is often fill till late with people enjoying the summer warmth.

Bardens Boudoir

The name is pretty misleading, this isn't much of a boudoir. But it is an elegantly vaulted cavern on the Kingsland High Rd with seriously fucking good little seats and chairs on a little thing. It is a stranger to fresh air and purity but the stifling atmosphere and appalling sound are all somehow worth it when the music of the heavens is busy rogering your ears in a cellar. That is a thing that happens.

Cargo

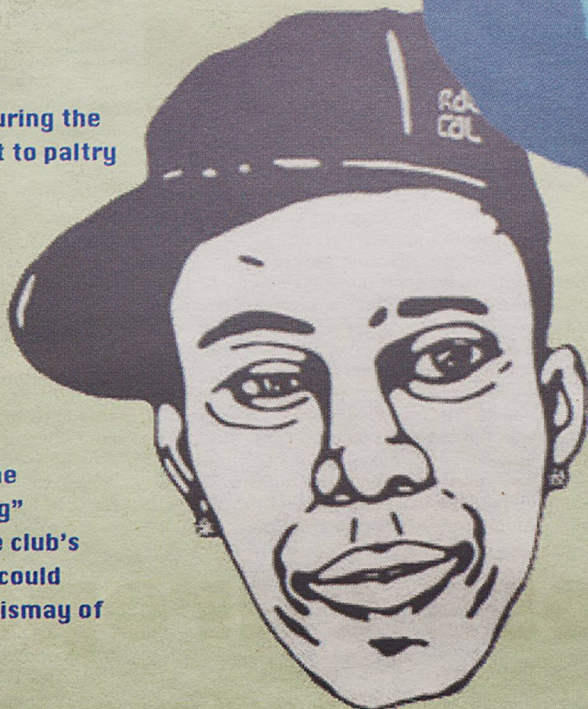
Shithole. An utter shithole. Literally shit in a hole. Not good shit either. Shit shit.

The 02

You're not allowed to call this the Millenium Dome anymore. It's the 02. They paid someone a sack of money, and 'Millenium Dome' is like, negative. Anyway, starting soon this is a great big music venue, and also a little music venue. The big venue is The Arena, and will host Bon Jovi, Justin Timberlake and The Rolling Stones. The little one is called Indigo Music Club, and will host Jools Holland, the Blind Boys of Alabama and Cake.

DMZ @ Mass

One of the beacons of the emergent grime and dupstep scenes that currently define urban music in London. Sub-bass of bowel-worrying depth and intensity, always helps you make your mash in the dark.



DEEP SOUTH

festival fashion

abaosunsade has all you need to know, and then some.

There's nothing better than slipping into a drunken stupor in the summer sun while a host of your favourite bands perform nearby, so let's hear three cheers for festival season, which lies comfortably close on the post-exams horizon. The anticipation period can often prove difficult for the festival goer. Once the line-up is announced, fanatical excitement is replaced with "pre-ticket purchase" anxiety, where one

may find themselves asking questions like, "Will tickets sell out before my student loan comes through?", and "Will tickets sell out before I finally get through to this frickin' website? How many bloody times do I have to hit the fucking 'refresh' button?" But once these hurdles are successfully jumped, it's pretty much smooth sailing. Now you've got your ticket for Reading/Leeds/V/Download/other (delete as appropriate), "What next?" you may ask. Well, whether it's Glastonbury or Global Gathering, the Big Chill or Benicassim, PartB Style has all you need in this essentials guide.

- 1. WELLIES:** Even if you're not headed to a muddy location - what good do you think a pair of flip flops will do your feet in a crowded mosh pit? Likewise Converse (which hardly suffice when moshing to NME's new favourite band in the pre-pubescent playground that is Koko's on a Friday) are definitely not made for festival moshing - which is on a whole other level. Ditch your Havaianas and

bag some Hunters - they may not be pretty or comfy, but at least you'll leave the festival with all your toes, and fungus-free feet.

2. HOODIE: They protect your hair from rain, warm you up when you're cold, and the sleeves double as tissue in the frills-free wilderness that is a campsite. Distinctive hoodies also help your friends locate you in crowded spaces, and hoodies with your name on them help you make friends with people who can read by doing the whole "introduction thing" for you.

3. SOCKS & UNDERWEAR: For (hopefully) obvious reasons, bring lots and lots of these. At least one pair for every day you're there. And some extras for accidents (you never know!) Don't bring loads of t-shirts and shorts because (a) you probably won't change out of the first outfit you wear and (b) you don't want to lose anything you really like.

4. DISPOSABLE CAMERA: A picture is worth a thousand words. The replacement of a digital camera you dropped in a puddle at a festival is worth approximately 66.5 three quid pints you can no longer afford. It's all about the disposable camera at festivals, you don't need to worry about charging it and you won't be too upset if it gets lost... unless it holds proof that you did actually get off with Brandon Boyd from Incubus. No one would believe you otherwise, he's just that gorgeous.

3. MATCHES/LIGHTER: Cos they're just so useful. And cos rubbing two sticks together DOESN'T make fire. Cartoons lie.

4. CONDOMS: Like a boy scout, dear students, always be prepared. Enjoy festival season!



primark she keeps it real. she's hollieeastman. hysteria

the checkout longer than all the line to Crush on Freshers week.

Why the insanity? Is it worth it just for a £1 T-shirt? As anyone who has ever been to a Primark will know, if you get there any more than an hour after it opens there are only supersizes left and the joint pretty much resembles a jumble sale/hurricane victim. Yet the chain now commands a huge fashion following with A-Z listers from Lily Allen to Kelis sporting the label. A Primark "in-joke" in the street is no longer shameful, but a fashion statement and deservedly so. With leggings, the spring staple,

for £3, floral print dresses for £10, flip flops for a few quid and ballet flats for under a fiver its no surprise that Primark receives the kind of following that your Gran had for the Beatles. General public be warned, Kate Moss's Topshop collection is out this week, tape up your windows, lock all door and hide in your cupboard, the hysteria is here to stay.

STYLE

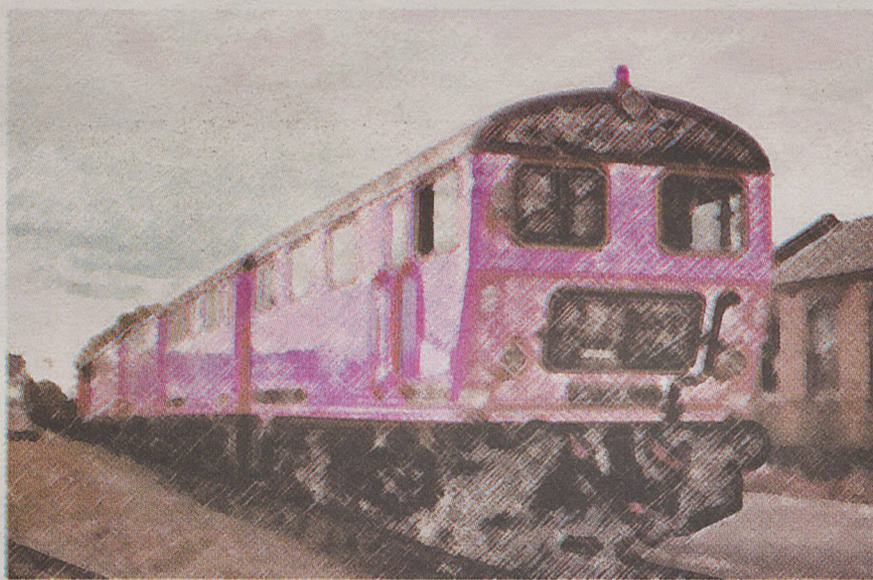
In the not too distant past Primark was a dirty word. Confessing to shopping there was met with a similar response to that of admitting to some form of incestuous act with an elderly relative and your pet dog. Bargain shopping was something that was strictly reserved for the post-Boxing Day blues and spring cleaning rewards. The rest of the year you complained, but put up with the fact that a new pair of jeans was probably going to cost you almost a week's wages. One never boasted about the cheapness of their new £2 handbag. Yet today it is estimated that one in every four fashion pounds is spent in Primark.

When the new, and enormous, Primark opened on Oxford Street earlier this month 3,000 bargain hunters were camped outside from as early as 2am, eager to fill their baskets with as much discount clothing as they could. The crowd, fuelled by a rumour that all the items inside were going to be on sale for one pound, stampeded into the store, causing the hospitalisation of two security guards, leaving them to call in mounted policemen for reinforcements to restrain the gathering. After the initial surge, potential Primarkers then had to wait outside in line for 2 hours for their chance to enter. Upon entry the scene was more reminiscent of Calcutta train station than a clothes shop, complete mayhem, employees telling tales of brawls over the last size 8 floral dress and queues for

Plumes of Marlboro Red wafted skyward, a toddler wandered trailed by his frazzled grandmother, multiple languages beyond my comprehension filled the air, luggage abounded, and general chaos reigned - all this before even boarding the train. Our overnight sleeper from Vienna to Brasov, Romania - one of the five night trains taken on my 15 day trans-European Eurail journey - was just the icing on our locomotive cake. My aim for this trip was to travel in eco-friendly style; armed with my five-country Eurail pass, I was determined to criss-cross Europe without being jet-swept off my feet.

From London we took the Eurostar to Paris, and after a quick Parisian breakfast it was off to Gare de L'Est where we boarded our first night train from Paris to Vienna. Our train to Vienna was immaculate; we shared our six person cabin with only one man, who ranks as the best traveling companion a night-train rider could ask for. He was a textbook Frenchman: literary allusions peppered his speech, he told us about the beauty and cuisine of the places on our itinerary, and he spoke of girlfriends and lovers from his own past travels. His most memorable nugget came in the morning, when our train attendant came in with breakfast trays of instant coffee, a roll, and a pat of butter.

"A Frenchman without coffee in the morning is not a Frenchman at all," he said, as we marveled at his perfection. I would have liked to add that a girl from New Jersey isn't a Jersey girl until her morning coffee, but somehow that lacked the poetry of his sentence. As the train pulled into Vienna, we bid adieu to our temporary friend and night train number



one. After three days of perfect weather in lovely Vienna, we boarded night train two to Brasov, Romania. This leg of our trip was a brainchild of my boyfriend, who has long nursed romantic fantasies of the Romanian countryside and (oddly) Bran Castle, legendary home of Dracula (although, apparently, Vlad Tepes, the real Dracula, never set foot there. Oh well!).

We shared our room with four people bound for Deva - two of whom were restless travelers inclined to hourly cigarette breaks that left our extremely tiny and cramped room smelling strongly of cigarette smoke. The next morning, as the sun rose, we took our seats at the window

where we could see beautiful landscapes complete with horse-drawn carriages transition to dilapidated factories and run-down industrial scenes.

Our time in Romania was brief, and soon we were on our next overnight train to Budapest. After the previous train, we decided to spring for a true treat and book a room all to ourselves. This, I must write, was an exquisite extravagance. Our small room was a wood-paneled marvel that boasted its very own sink! The evening was passed playing cards and staring in amazement at our opulent surroundings. I recommend to any future night train travelers to book at least one night in a private room, despite the relatively high cost.

After 3 days in Budapest and one night in Eger (in the Hungarian wine country where the people and the wine were wonderful), we boarded night train four from Budapest to Munich. Lucky for us our cabin was near a room of American backpackers. Having the night silence punctuated by periodic, "That's like hilarious!" and "Dude, what!?", made me feel right at home despite the subdued creepiness of the man sleeping above me. This night train was made ever so slightly more pleasant by the water bottles we'd filled with wine in Eger for the equivalent of £1.50.

After Munich we took the Deutsche Bahn to Koln, and I marveled once again at the idiosyncratic efficiency of the German rail system. We sat mesmerized during our four hour journey by the electronic screens in our car that told us how fast the train was going (300 kilometers per hour!).

After one night in Koln we were off to Normandy, this leg of our trip was epic. Involving a night train from Frankfurt to Paris and yet another to Caen, where we boarded a local Normandy train to Bayeux. Yet, there was no rest to be had in Bayeux! After a few hours of strolling there, we were back on the train to sleepy Cherbourg, where we spent the final evening of our trip waiting for our ferry home to England the following morning.

As satisfying as my keeping my green pledge was, I discovered an even better reason to go locomotive. Trains reflect the countries in which they run; we met locals, saw beautiful countryside, and got to see, to some extent, what life is like in parts of Europe. No plane can offer that!

mainline across europe

allisonmerriam is a locomotive junkie

TRAVEL

the discreet charm of the picnic

kimmandeng is one sandwich short

I have deeply conflicting feelings about summer. Although I do appreciate the change from amusing myself with ridiculous scarves and gloves to entertaining myself by wearing the most comical shorts I can find, I find several things about summer quite bothersome. Aside from the grotesque temperatures inside the tube carriages I have a major personal problem with sunlight, which results in my dashing from one shaded area to another, like a scared frog jumping from one lily pad to another. This may make me sound like a vampire of sorts, but the less exciting reality is that I suffer from allergic reactions to sunlight. And yes, you may start laughing now; just remember though that this is what I like to term a "true life" story. I do enjoy some things about summer, which is why its arrival leaves me in such a difficult state of being.

Among some of the best things about summer has to be eating outside. Picnics are really a stroke of genius in my opinion, and I think many people would agree with me. What could be better than eating food that generally has already been prepared for you, which usually requires no washing up and takes place in areas that are full of people to watch and make fun of? It is definitely one of the more entertaining food events and certainly appeals to my extremely lazy self. Not to mention spying on and laughing at people sitting in your vicinity is almost a prerequisite, which is ideal for me, as I generally get in trouble for doing those types of things in less suitable situations.

Of course along with finding an ideal location for your picnic, you need to

locate the best food and drinks. This is actually much trickier than it sounds, as my friends and I have recently discovered, you need to be a boy scout, i.e. prepared for any situation, in order to thwart any picnic disasters. For us this means not

opener, choose cans or screw off top beverages.

Co-ordination is also an important factor in planning a picnic. Making sure that you do not end up with six packets of crisps and no dips is key. Ideally, you need

day to discover that 99 Flake ice creams are actually no longer 99p. In fact on the Southbank I bought one for 2 pounds! I know I have gone slightly off topic from picnic advice, but ice cream does fall into the category of things I appreciate immensely about summer, so I try to incorporate it into every picnic situation. The only problem is that you need to be able to eat it right away, which means that no matter what your having to eat at your picnic, you're most likely eating your dessert first. But who cares? At the end of the day picnics are all about fun.

Picnics are also ideal meal events because even if things go horribly wrong, you are still having fun trying to solve your problems, like when my friend and me had trouble opening our drinks. Not to mention they are pretty hard to turn down, so that when you are trying to entertain you offering a picnic is likely to get you what you want. Especially if you trick them into thinking you will be revising in the park. Okay, this is probably enough bad advice form me, so I will sign off now. Good luck with exams etc. and enjoy all the god places and ideas we have been recommending in this section when you are done! Love you all.



walking for thirty minutes to find a perfect spot, setting everything up and then realizing that neither one of us is in possession of a bottle opener. As luck would have it a phone call to a close drinking friend meant that we found a way to open the bottles without an opener, but in future I think we will be sticking to more traditional methods. So, my advice is to always either check that you possess an

to allocate someone capable of taking charge of the decision making process to organize your group. Something, which is usually absent in my group of friends, seriously, you should see how long it takes for us to decide on where to go for dinner. Once you have figured this out, you need to go get ice cream. I have decided that everyone should replace one meal a day with ice cream. I was shocked the other

Have you ever compared your life with Maxine Carr's? Richard Herring has and he finds that his life is sadly wanting. She's got a new life, probably a new face, and a new husband. Herring, on the other hand, just has a new comedy show, Menage a Un. No wife, no 'respectable' career, no hope.

But there is a silver lining. This show, born out of Herring's frustration with his lonely life, is his best yet. Touching on everything from the always controversial shagging Jesus in the vagina he's magicked up on his left thigh, to the ever more controversial relationship advice for Maxine Carr to Herring's political manifesto which offers some convincing arguments for voting BNP. Herring is moving from the quirky and whimsical, into the more dangerous waters usually inhabited by his ex-partner Stuart Lee. Even without Lee's dark good looks and menacing countenance (Herring looks more like a bumbling, eccentric uncle) he pulls off some pretty shocking statements with gusto. He cranks up the shock factor, claiming Maxine Carr would not only make a great girlfriend because you'd never be as bad as her last boyfriend, but also that she probably could have prevented the Soham murders by "being a whore in EVERY room of the house". Eventually, even jaded London audiences break and gasp in horror, allowing the joke to be turned on us.

Herring takes great joy in including

his audience - his blog, 'Warming Up', gives his own reviews not only of his



shows, but also comments on the quality of the audience. Every night he singles out a young

woman in the audience to serenade with a graphic, yet poetic description of her lithe limbs, perky breasts and, of course, silky sweet vagina - "Like a squirrel's ear". He offers himself to her, body and soul, in fact, he extends the invitation to any woman in the audience (line up in order of attractiveness/dirtiness to make selection easier) and describes a night of indulgent sensuality, topped off with breakfast in bed. Not just any breakfast, porridge with Marks and Spencer king-size blackberries. Four pound a punnet. Despite the tempting offer, he spends every night in his Menage a Un - back in his hotel room alone each night, "attempting to masturbate to the poor quality soft pornography laid on for sexually unambitious businessmen."

The name of the show also refers to the stand-up's art, which is a lonely one. The format allows Herring to be more introspective - comparing himself less than favourably to the sexist and racist comedians of the 60s. Does being 'ironic' excuse any kind of unacceptable behaviour? Or does it actually compound the sin? Could this be a backlash against the comedy 'rock and roll' of the nineties that made Herring famous? Towards the end, Herring is accompanied on stage by two old people on a bonfire (who turn out to be the ten minute punchline to a seemingly very weak joke) whose job is to deconstruct the concept of 'the joke', while being participants in it. They also say how fat and shit he is, which gets a good laugh.

christinewhyte laughs her head clean off

richard herring

Food and drinking

Comedy

being duped by geeks, fanboys and studios

angustse on the problem with comic and videogame films

With characters possessing out-of-this-world powers, coupled with the fundamental good versus evil storyline, American comic books provided doses of fantasy, sci-fi and escapism every issue. They are naturally a source to tap for Hollywood studios obsessed with churning out mainstream entertainment. But for every Spiderman and X-Men, there's Ghost Rider and Elektra. Bad films may exist for the sake of diversity, but then there are unjustifiable flops, critically and financially, such as 2004 Golden Raspberry winner Catwoman.

The first proper comic-book adaptation was Superman. Genuinely entertaining and innovative, it didn't resort to a barrage of action, but rather told the beginnings of the legend as if he really existed. Relying on a mix of special effects, the charm of Christopher Reeve, and a well-written screenplay, Superman didn't dumb down to audiences but instead appealed to all bases.

It's disappointing that the lessons of Superman haven't been learnt entirely. Those which follow the model, such as X-Men and Spiderman, are both critically lauded and do extremely well in the box office. But the market is crowded with films such as Daredevil and Blade, which rely either on the stars or some action scenes. They may sell well, but they could never stand on its own as a good film. The 'third path' is to be ultra-stylish, first brought up by Tim Burton in Batman. There's a fine line for directors to walk if they follow this approach, to either bombard the audience with visuals or risk the film being labeled ludicrous. 300 is, at least for me, an example of the latter- it's shot and choreographed amazingly, but can you really ignore the casual lumping of all Asian cultures in a Persian army, let alone its effeminate drag queen leader? Even Batman, with its subsequent sequels filled with lavish set pieces, had to resort to story-orientated psycho-

logical fear in Batman Begins to reboot the franchise.

But comic-books are just plain escapist fun, a fragment of adolescence, right? This attitude is far from correct. Comic books in recent years have evolved significantly, from mere male-dominated fantasies to a true art medium, both in terms of

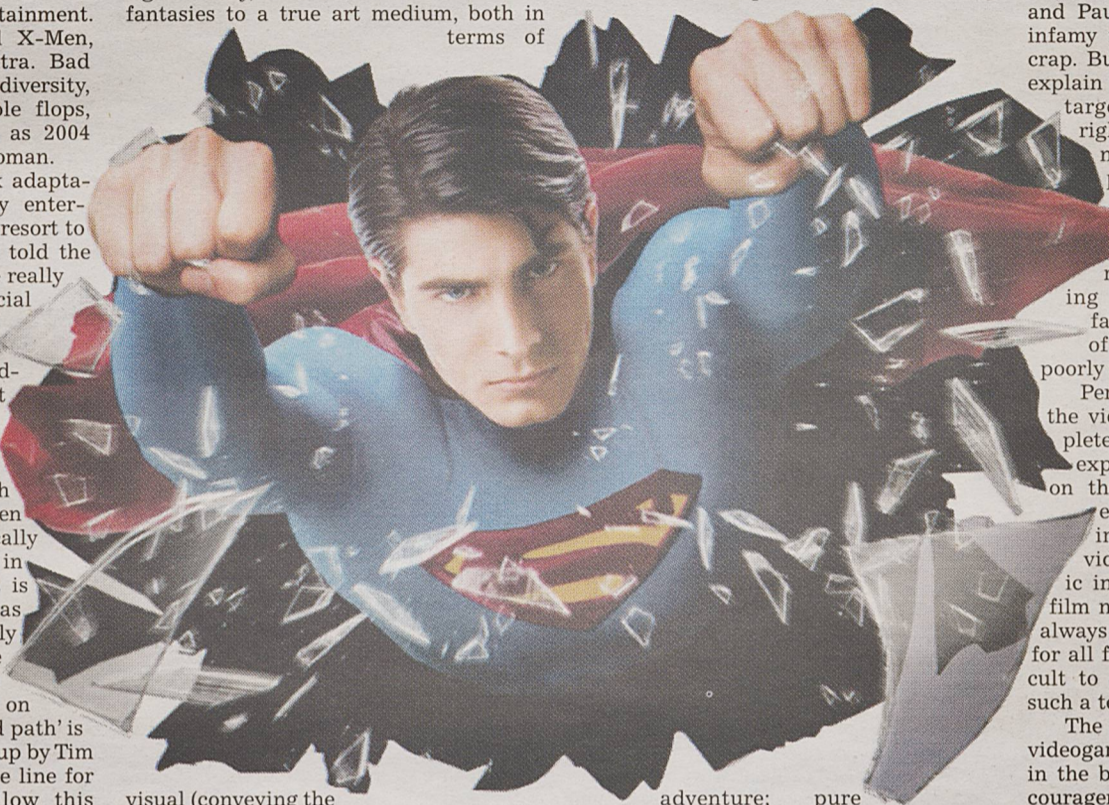
the mixed batch of film adaptations. It's the lack of imagination and the constant ignorance of story that is at fault. Directors which are also comic-book fans, such as Bryan Singer, know how to selectively extract elements from comic-books to create a comprehensive entertaining

(based on a videogame...where you play volleyball with bikini-clad women). At best, you can rely on star power (Angelina Jolie in Tomb Raider) or aim for cult-camp status (Super Mario Bros.).

What's wrong here? The easy answer is that talentless hacks, such as Uwe Boll and Paul W.S. Anderson, have achieved infamy for continuously producing such crap. But other fundamental issues may explain this. Hollywood studios, eager to target the youth market, buy the rights cheaply from game companies, which in turn are eager to promote their franchises beyond the usual gamers. Studios then provide minimal money for production, hoping to squeeze as much profit as possible, and hoping hyperactive kids, who are so familiar with gaming as if it's part of their daily lives, will see their poorly made film.

Perhaps the ultimate answer lies in the videogame medium. It hasn't completely matured yet to be a holistic experience, preferring to concentrate on the graphics or gameplay at the expense of narrative and full immersion. Ironically, excellent videogames clearly display cinematic influences, such as the John Woo-film noir crossover Max Payne. There's always an argument for creative license for all forms of adaptation, but it's difficult to envision greatness in film from such a tepid source.

The only positive note is that most videogame adaptations tend to do badly in the box office. Yet such financial discouragement has not stopped the current development of around 41 videogame adaptations. Consumers may have the choice not to watch them, but if these 41 awful films all end up flooding the market, surely that's a depressing scenario for the rest of us moviegoers. And imagine future generations queuing up to see formulaic action they already experienced with their Playstations- the death of cinema as art?



visual (conveying the atmosphere and emotions) and narrative form (darker material). Masters such as Frank Miller (300) and Alan Moore (V for Vendetta) have contributed immensely to such developments. There are even comic books which are labeled as graphic novels, having lengthier storylines appealing to mature audiences. 'Serious' films such as Road to Perdition were adapted from such.

Thus, one can't blame 'the source' for

adventure; pure fanboys only know how to copy.

Quite a different problem applies for videogame adaptations. Video games truly began in the 80s, so adaptations are only a recent trend. I can confidently state that so far there has been no single good videogame adaptation. There are half-baked zombie flicks such as The House of the Dead, half-baked horror such as Doom, and films downright incongruous such as martial arts DOA: Dead or Alive



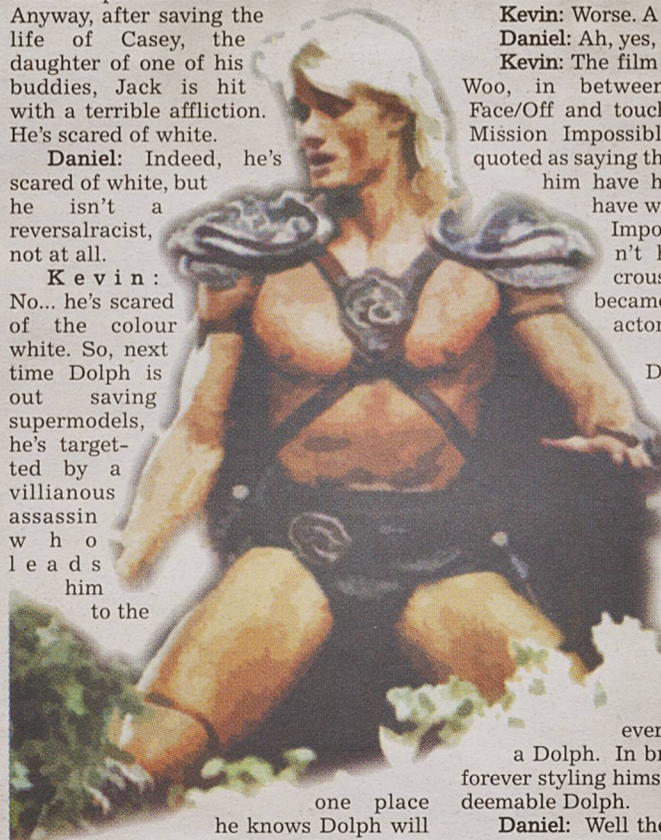
Daniel: Dolph Lundgren is a man amongst other men. Many see him as a towering B-movie lump of mentally-inert muscle, but in fact he is one of the world's most remarkable polymaths. He was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to MIT in 1983 and gained a master's degree in chemical engineering from the University of Sydney, alongside numerous acting and sporting accolades. Despite his genius, he is known as a monster, hard and unkindly to children, cruel to animals, angry at minerals and vegetables. While it is true that Dolph has moulded his body into the world's third deadliest killing machine, achieving a 3rd Degree Black Belt in Kyokushin Karate, he is actually a nicey, a loving mother, gentle and beneficent, a giant of soft sex and romantic arm-wrestling. However ridiculous Dolph might appear, he is, ultimately like you and me. Although he is slightly better. As a child Dolph was unruly. Growing up in a rubbish pit in northern Sweden he quickly learnt to fashion stones into rudimentary dresses and to kill rabbits with his penis. This quickly led to infection, but also to a casting couch in Stockholm where he was touched hard in exchange for candied lies about his potential.

Kevin: I concur. There's a marvellous bang action pulp wonderflick starring Dolph named 'Blackjack'. I rented it from Blockbuster hoping that it would help me boost my high score on the Windows game of the same name, but instead I was treated to a mouth watering orgy of Dolph magic. Our hero plays Jack Devlin, a tough-talking U.S. Marshal charged with

protecting high-profile politicians, supermodels and of course, A-list actors - a field Dolph knows all too well. Anyway, after saving the life of Casey, the daughter of one of his buddies, Jack is hit with a terrible affliction. He's scared of white.

Daniel: Indeed, he's scared of white, but he isn't a reversaracist, not at all.

Kevin: No... he's scared of the colour white. So, next time Dolph is out saving supermodels, he's targeted by a villainous assassin who leads him to the



one place he knows Dolph will be weak, his Achilles Heel if

you will.

Daniel: The White Cliffs of Dover? After Skool Club?

Kevin: Worse. A milk factory.

Daniel: Ah, yes, of course.

Kevin: The film was directed by John Woo, in between taking Travolta's Face/Off and touching Tom Cruise in Mission Impossible II. Woo was later quoted as saying that if the studio had let him have his way, Dolph would have won the lead in Mission Impossible II and it wouldn't have been the "ludicrous Scooby Doo turd" it became. He's a high calibre actor.

Daniel: Calibre is Dolph's middle name.

Kevin: Actually I think it's Hans.

Daniel: Yes. And his first name is in fact Peter.

Kevin: Yes, his first name is Edgar. The moniker 'Dolph' was given to him at school by the teachers, and referred to the fact that all he ever did was pretend to be a Dolph. In breaks, in class, he was forever styling himself as a total and irredeemable Dolph.

Daniel: Well there are some accounts from the time that suggest he was a dol-

phin, or at very least grew from a dolphin's beak that someone had planted in the ground.

Kevin: Do dolphins have beaks?

Daniel: Their pointy-points then, their brisket cannons, call them what you will, but this is a point I would like to develop because there are a number of contemporary accounts that do in fact suggest that he grew out of the ground. Perhaps, backing that up, is the legend that the man turned down Gladiator because there was talking in it.

Kevin: BY THE POWER OF GREYSKULL!

Daniel: I concur. Rabidly. Masters of the Universe was more to Dolph's rarefied taste.

Kevin: When Showdown in Little Tokyo was released, starring Dolph and Brandon Lee, Dolph was billed as a "10 feet tall bodybuilder from a country near the North Pole, the son of a bear-trapper, who grew up in the harshest northern wilderness known to mankind."

Daniel: Brandon Lee was so mildly perturbed he died making his next film.

Kevin: Sylvester Stallone spent eight weeks re-editing Rocky IV to make it look like he beat Dolph. In reality Dolph, playing the Soviet Union, crushed Sly into a tiny ball, and his portrait was paraded outside the Kremlin for two years. If he ever dies he will be laid in state next to Lenin.

Daniel: On top of Lenin.

Christine: In Lenin.

Kevin: I concur.

Daniel: As do I.

danielyates and kevinperry discuss manlegend dolph lundgren's contribution to the cinema canon

in conversation: dolph

EDITOR ON FILM

Daniel B Yates vigorously flexes his reviewing muscle and some things come out.

man of the year

Embarking on life as a political thriller, moving into a traumatic adolescence as a comedy, maturing into saggy middle-age as a romance and dying, not a moment too soon, as a shocking disappointment, *Man of the Year* is one of those films that, like your granny on a really bad day, simply has no idea what it is.

In its early phases the film tempts us politically inclined LSE types, it really does, with saucy coquettish steps toward weighty themes such as electoral fraud, populism versus principle and voter disillusionment. Then it stops tempting and wanders off into a layby with a big road-sign above it that says 'cliche-ridden crap' and lies down.

Robin Williams plays a Jon Stewart-cum-David Letterman figure, the host of a massively popular political satire show in America. Persuaded by his audience to run for president he gains an unexpected electoral victory. However over at Delacroy, the IT company charged with delivering the new electronic voting system, something is amiss with the software. It falls to **Laura Linney**, a software engi-

neer working at the company to put all things electorally fraudulent to rights.

There is a genuine opportunity here to imagine the election of a televisual populist to the post of 'most powerful man in the world' but it is woefully blown by, amongst other things, perpetual and insulting naivety. One doesn't have to be a Washington insider to know that as a presidential candidate engaged in the political positioning of himself as an everyman, a fallible being in touch with the reality of the people, simply standing in front of a microphone and babbling like a ritalin-added mentalist about heavy&hard drug use is not going to effect the required voter-response. One doesn't have to be in pulse-taking touch with the moral heartbeat of America to know that the crudest of sexual references, accompanied by uncontrolled and vicious pelvic thrusting, isn't going to fly as a contribution to political discourse. This kind of buffoonery in the script is only exacerbated by Williams' wild froth-

ing lack of gravitas. Invited on to the presidential debate, Williams screams and wheels around the dais, speaking totally out of turn, walking around, gabbling fresh nonsense like an entire village of idiots. How sorry a filmic spectacle this is when you compare it to **Peter Finch's** impassioned madness as political-visionary tv host **Howard Beale** in **Sidney Lumet's** beautiful movie *Network*. Whilst Beale addressed American hypocrisy and spoke with devastating directness and forceful eloquence to a population stifled by failure, Robin Williams just stands there like a pitiful fool, spluttering a thousand of the same awful cock jokes at a million miles a second.

I've had wanks funnier than this, and I can assure you in saying that I'm betraying whole wankfuls more sophistication than Williams' character manages in this film.

Along with an unrecognisably idiotic political culture and bowel-curdlingly bad



jokes about sex, this film brings with it a love story so flaccid and boring it makes **John Major** and **Virginia Bottomley's** bureaucracy of an affair look a political fuckstorm of Watergate proportions. Or a House of Commons that has been remodelled as an enormous policy-spouting penis, engaged in continent-quaking congress with the Pentagon building.

Dubious analogies aside, there is one passably interesting bit in the film. When **Laura Linney** becomes a threat to her shady corporate bosses, with a potentially devastating testimony to deliver, they don't kill her. In a neat twist they send a hitman to inject her with massive concentrated doses of illicit drugs. Next morning in the work cafeteria she falls apart quite spectacularly, is immediately taken to the hospital where all the drugs come up in tests, and is summarily sacked, moreover, thoroughly discredited. I reckon Tesco did this to me, but I can't prove it.

This film is hokum and tosh. It's not the West Wing, it's far too moronic. It's more like *Green Wing*, were the greenness in question the sickly pallour of naivety.

DBY.

stranger than fiction

It's hard to be stranger than fiction. There's some very weird fiction. In fact, if I was pressed, I'd have to say fiction is frequently more strange than non-fiction, nearly always more strange than the truth. Let me humbly offer some evidence: I've taken some horrible drugs in some horrible places, and regaled my bored friends with the resulting accounts. But even in my most impassioned moments of anecdotal elaboration I've never cast myself, for example, sitting around in a twisted vision of Tanzania, taking orders from my typewriter that turns into a beetle, compulsively snorting crushed centipede and dreaming of Mugwump jism, before going off to shoot my wife in the head. Rather I've taken a bunch of acid and walked about on a crane. William Burroughs' fictive account is, I think you'll agree, a lot stranger than my tales of adolescent bravado, proving that fiction is definitively, the strangest of all beasts. This film, *Stranger than Fiction*, is slightly odd, it's a bit off-kilter, it is on nodding terms with 'quirky', but it isn't actually, genuinely, strange. However, to its advantage, neither is it particularly familiar.

Harold is a watery and indistinct American working man employed by the IRS. He lives his life with a Kantian regularity, he counts everything he does and sees, his days are paradigms of geometric

constancy. That is until he hears an English woman's voice everywhere he goes, narrating his every action with a poetic elegance that bemuses him but also seems to wake something in him. He's convinced he's not schizophrenic, so he goes to a professor of literature in order to shed light on what kind of story is being told, where it might lead, who might be writing it and if there might be some way to reassert control over the narrative of his life. What unfolds is a bold if somewhat uneasy attempt to mould the idea of self-narrative and fate in the framework of this meta-literary conceit, which begins very promisingly and by the end has drifted off into a deflated obviousness.

Whilst not as assured or breath-taking as **Spike Jonze's** contemporary masterpiece *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, the two bear a marked resemblance. In both films our awkward hero attempts to negotiate a passionate love affair under the looming auspices of

encroaching unreality, massive indeterminate forces are ranged against fragile loves, and we feel that. Both films pursue similar themes of reason and its loss, authorship of one's own destiny and unlikely love affairs. Another shared characteristic is the casting of a comedy icon in a relatively straight role.

Like **Jim Carrey** before him **Will Ferrell** detours from a career of smirking slapstick to enter into a world of straight faced anxiety, dread and winsome ineptitude. However, whilst Ferrell manages to milk the funnier moments – and does in fairness make spinelessness his own – he lacks the profound intimacy and the nuanced ratcheting of desperation that Carrey achieved, when the film demands the latter and positively screams for the former. Without genuine intimacy the romantic scenes feel placid and sterile. **Maggie Gyllenhall** cannot remedy this on her own, despite being unbelievably love-



ly. She performs the feat of balancing a homely matriarchal aspect – as the chief nourisher of Harold's desiccated spiritual life – with a sparkling girlishness and winning vivacity. **Emma Thompson** is overly-mannered as the author and **Dustin Hoffmann's** Professor is solidly charming but with a touch of 'meh' about him.

Mentioning the visual style is probably something that is worth doing. Visions of Harold's regular life are patterned with slick, digitally-imposed grids and counters, that rise from the floor and mark his actions, giving a rather beautiful sense of scientific space-and-timekeeping to everything he does. In a similar vein the title sequence is a mighty spectacle, full of deftly-wielded digital motifs and subtle CGI flourishes. The soundtrack comprises of a roster of credible indie, as it probably ought to.

This film smells pretty good for a while. It starts off like a classic. But ultimately Ferrell's rigid inability to transcend his unprepossessiveness and the disappointingly simplistic ending, curb its beauty.

Strangeness and beauty have a complex relationship, *Aqualung* sang about a subject both strange and beautiful. *Stranger than Fiction* aspires to both but ultimately, and not strangely enough, achieves neither.

DBY.

a love song for bobby long

A swampy lovesick bout of a film set in the deep south and starring an aging **John Travolta** as the alcoholic ex-English Lit. professor that makes up the film's eponymous anti-hero. Him and his protégé, the handsome bearded **Gabriel Macht** exist in a perpetual drunken twilight, quoting literature at one another, stumbling the dusty roads, sleeping and drinking and doing very little else. Into their idyllic mess of a life steps **Scarlett Johansen**, whose recently deceased mother owned the house in which they live, and in coming to claim her inherited property young Scarlett brings with her a world of pain, a sea of troubled memories and a punnet of redeeming familial possibility.

Much is made in this film of the men's grandly decaying colonial lifestyles, an invention of a simple yet educated white existence. The earthy authenticity of great literature is moulded with the folksy porch-living, guitar-strumming honesty of the simple life, creating something of a nu-nostalgia for a dying species of whiteness, a seriously peculiar dinosaur indeed.

The potential of this film to stagger into the toxic

cesspit of over-sentimentality is great, but there are a couple of things that work to prop it up. Firstly the pervasive sense of a regretful fading, of lives already done and lived, an undercurrent of quiet and hopeless fatalism. There is a sadness in the film that works like a lemon, cutting through the sacharine scenes of neighbourhood chicada-soundtracked evenings-that-go-on-forever and the rural american south as utopian idyll.

The other enzyme in the film is the uncharacteristically fresh presence of **Scarlett Johansen** who quietly steals the film in the best performance she has given since *Lost in Translation*. Whilst **Travolta** lurches around in a limp paroxysm of dandyism, burbling a woeful single-dimensionality, and his partner-in-decline **Macht** does his best to disappear into the scenery, **Johansen** delivers the goods; a nuanced and emotionally precise performance, neatly judging all the fine lines. In *Lost in Translation* she

was given a tidy and limited stage on which to play out her erotic combination of naïf starlet and forthright machismo and she was rightly applauded for it.

In trying to recapture **Scarlett** as 'mysterious object' *Girl with the Pearl Earring* failed. She has never been so awful as in her two outings under the directorial carrot-and-schtick of **Woody Allen**, moving from pouting stiff to embarrassingly clumsy vaudevillian in two staggeringly awkward steps. But here she demonstrates range and a burgeoning sophistication, intimating that, given the right director, there might be something yet to justify her (omni)presence on our screens.

Travolta is a staggering travesty, sordidly lacking in the essential charisma that is supposed to define the character, this is unlikely. However despite this vacuum in the lead role the film is – in its honest southern, educated heart – a decent one.

DBY.



spamalot

charliesamuda is dead, deceased, no longer living

Monty Python is a bit like Star Wars, Lord of the Rings or The Beatles. It suffers from a cult following of obsessive fans. People who can recite every sketch off by heart and even do the dance to the 'fish-slapping' song. Fortunately Spamalot, a West-end musical by the Python's Eric Idle (which is "lovingly ripped off" from the Python's most famous film "Monty Python and the Holy Grail"), manages to appeal to those who have never heard of the Knights who say Ni or who may not recognize the significance of a dead parrot.

Back in the 1970's, when the original line-up of Monty Python began writing intentionally 'alternative' comedy they probably didn't imagine that they would, one day, be the subject of a West End musical - the epitome of establishment entertainment. Whether they did or not, they probably aren't complaining now: Spamalot made over \$18 million in its opening weekend and is still playing on Broadway, the West-End, Las Vegas and Chicago. The show has also won 3 Tony Awards and opened with an all-star cast (Hank Azaria, David Hyde Pierce and Tim Curry). But does it live up to the (unprecedented) hype?

Put simply: yes. The show's success lies in its ability to pay tribute to the spirit of Monty Python, rather than simply trying to re-create the original on stage, and that means putting on great a spectacle whilst being very, very silly.

For those of you who missed out on the 1975 film, the Holy Grail was not originally a musical (although songs by the Pythons are featured) and yet the transformation doesn't feel unnatural. The West End show ticks all the boxes and then some: the acting and dancing is spot on (despite the fact that its now too late to see the original cast) and the singing is

bloody brilliant too. The set also captures the feel of those Terry Gilliam illustrations that were so integral to the Python's work. There is even a brief cameo from John Cleese. The play, like the film, maintains a central (albeit slightly tenuous) plot line which prevents this from feeling too bitty and skit-like. Simon Russell Beale's King Arthur holds an already strong show together, along with Lady Guinevere.



But this is not simply a musical version of the 1975 film. There are plenty of references and in-jokes for those who've already seen the Holy Grail and other Monty Python sketches, so fans won't be disappointed. But quite frankly those original sketches were funny enough so that even those who didn't see them the first time round will be laughing too. The show incorporates plenty of new stuff that would never have worked on film and would probably have never occurred to the original Pythons. The cast uses the

musical medium to exaggerate the silliness of the whole thing. And each version of the show, whether it was performed in Vegas, New York or London, has been tailored to its audience. The US shows made reference to Anna Nicole Smith and Judge Judy whilst in London several of the songs make deliberate derogatory reference to Jade Goody or formulaic Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals: "Once in every show there is a song that goes like this, it starts off soft and slow and ends up with a kiss".

There are moments when the play, not unlike some of the Python's sketches, drags on a bit and plays for laughs one too many times but the relentless energy of the cast keeps things moving. You can also sense where the 'alternative' nature of the Pythons jars with the ethos of the West End because Spamalot often feels a bit squeaky clean when those original sketches were anything but. The producers were clearly trying to capture the family market as well as regular theatre-goers and looking round the auditorium (full even on a mid-week performance) they'd clearly succeeded.

Don't take the show too seriously. It's men dressed as women, singing and dancing, knights who say Ni and Frenchmen eating garlic and using cows as siege weapons. Exactly what Cleese, Idle, Jones, Chapman, Palin and Gilliam would have wanted. Get your timing right (i.e. ask for returns 10mins before the evening show) and with a little luck you can get yourself a pretty decent seat for £15, but even paying full price. The experience is well worth every penny. Unless you're feeling cheap, in which case get "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" on DVD, which of course is just as funny...but not nearly as much fun.

what's what

alexsmall spends an evening with g.b. shaw

A friend of mine dragged me to see 'What's What! An evening with George Bernard Shaw' last Thursday, and I left an enlightened fellow, drunk both with the unique connection with the founder of our university that the evening afforded me, and on the post performance wine that I heartily imbibed.

There was a poignant, almost melancholy air about the first half of the performance, situated in the Shaw library, under the gaze of the portrait of the Webb's hung over the fireplace, and the Fabian Window that Shaw himself designed. Comprised of original correspondence between Shaw and the Webb's and edited into a short play, I watched the excellent Leander Deeney, as Shaw, and Erica Gyuatt and Steve Bond as the Webb's, and it occurred to me that three years is a small time in which to fully appreciate the history of a place. Shaw, in particular, cut a particularly charismatic and sympathetic figure, at once caring and aloof, and, as the years wore on, gracefully railing against the inequities of old age.

The second half of the performance, held in the Quad, opened with a filmed excerpt of 'Money' from Shaw's book 'The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism', and moved on to Act One of Shaw's 1938 play 'Geneva', mocking the ineptitude of the League of Nations. The event closed with a brief BBC voice recording of Shaw to the nation on the event of his ninetieth birthday.

The outstanding success of the evening stands as testament to the efforts of director Gwen Sasse, founder of LSE's ReCollect initiative, and the rich history of the university more of us should take the time to appreciate.

theatre

Sherlock Holmes is the most portrayed character in film, having been played by 75 actors in 211 movies since 1900. However, there can be few occasions on which he has been portrayed with a strong

Spanish accent, as he is here on the stage of the Duchesses Theatre, and even fewer times when he has been played to such consistently hilarious comic effect.

The Hound of the Baskervilles is the latest production from Peepolykus, a touring comic theatre company made up of just three people, who play all the characters in this whistlestop retelling of Sherlock Holmes' most famous case.

John Nicholson, who helped to adapt the script, plays the fewest characters, primarily remaining as Dr Watson and providing a perfect foil to the eccentricities of his co-stars.

Javier Marzan plays a host of characters, including Holmes,

Baskerville's man-servent Barrymore, Barrymore's wife and Stapletons of both genders. It is his distinctive Basque accent which adds perfectly to the air of absurdity, particularly during the memorable opening to the second act, in which the fourth wall is well and truly broken down, a device the company frequently uses, but which is brilliantly subverted each time.

For me, however, the standout performance was from Jason Thorpe, who combines something of Ardal O'Hanlon's Father Dougal with the delivery of Robert Webb at his Peep Show best in his portrayals of Sir Charles Baskerville, Dr Mortimer and Sir Henry Mortimer.

All in all, this is a must see for theatre buffs and casual fans alike, a comic gem just minutes away from campus.



the game is afoot for kevinperry

the hound of the baskervilles

I don't know why I think Christopher Hampton is any good-if I spend any time on it I remember that I don't, but somehow the impression that I appreciate him, or may somehow have done in the past, lingers on. He's written a number of mediocre plays and screenplays, but nothing to write home about, and although I fit directly into his target audience (whiny liberal self-styled intellectual with a keen sense of my own superiority) I can never quite make myself like him. And so it was with Treats. I heard about it, saw that Billie Piper was in it, realized that Hampton wrote it and got all excited, temporarily forgetting that I'm not altogether bothered with Billie Piper and that I think Hampton is a bit rubbish.

Treats is a play that came really close to working, both in its original 1970's incarnation and in the current West End production, but that fell just short of it. Hampton appeared to be gunning for a thoughtful rom-com that highlighted the modern relationship and its necessarily complicated demise, but really just let three deeply and inescapably annoying characters pontificate at some length about variously angst-y topics, and their feelings (ugh) generally.

It wasn't that I couldn't bear the play, more that I just didn't care much for anyone involved. I don't know about you, but I struggle to listen to even my closest friends talk about their relationship problems for three hours at a stretch, so three perfect strangers (fictional strangers at that) who won't shut up (about who keeps the CHAIR, for example) tend to test my patience. I knew I was in trouble when by the second scene I was paying more attention to what was posted to the bulletin board in their flat than what they were actually saying.

As for Piper herself, well, her performance is not altogether a surprise. She was a fairly endearing Rose in Dr Who, but the stage appears to be an altogether too daunting endeavour: at best, she looks uncomfortable and at worst, just makes the audience feel that way. My least favourite scene was easily the one where she emerges from her bedroom and proceeds to sob and sniffle, noisily and inexplicably, for what feels like most of the rest of the play, making everyone present feel vaguely uncomfortable, like when that drunk girl at the party corners you and won't stop crying.

I wanted to like Treats, I honestly did, but to be honest, it's showcasing the sort of drama that's annoying enough in real life; I don't need to spend money and time watching it played out on the stage.

mollytucker is freaked out by the size of billie piper's mouth

treats

nowhere man

arthurkrebbers talks to julian baggini about life in middle england

His first small, carefully placed steps off the Yorkshire coach were a paradoxical experience. Guardian columnist Julian Baggini came into close contact with intelligent life forms north of the M25, and it felt "at once entirely familiar, and at the same time utterly alien". The globetrotting philosopher reminisces, "None of my arrivals into foreign lands had unsettled me this much."

Dr Baggini manages to find philosophy in strange places. Having reflected on the deeper meaning of Big Brother and the Simpsons, the London-based theoretician has now got his inquisitive eyes set on English culture. In preparing for his book, *Welcome to Everytown: A Journey into the English Mind*, Baggini dismisses the usual armchair reasoning in favour of actually embedding himself in the heart of Middle England by letting a semi-detached house in suburban Rotherham. Half a year's worth of field research - in pubs, take-aways and the pages of the Daily Mail - led to an unexpected epiphany. Your average Englishman, he concludes, is a conservative, illiberal and anti-intellectual ale drinker. Crikey! So should we all flee to the emancipated masses of the metropolitan wine bars?

Dr Baggini doesn't think so. Munching an organic muffin in a Covent Garden coffee shop, the philosopher-cum-author says his unique experience has in fact distanced him from his fellow urban cognoscenti. "I don't think that Londoners have much to be smug about," Baggini remarks. "The chattering classes overlook lots of the concerns that regular, working class people hold. They try to appear morally superior on issues like immigration and integration, but they don't see the legitimate concerns. You have to identify these and deal with them, not just high-mindedly write other people off as 'illiberal rabble'."

It's fairly easy to picture Baggini mingling with Northern pubgoers. For someone of his profession he is surprisingly

extravert, an upbeat cockney accent masking his Italian roots. This cheerfulness didn't always put him in sync with his nucleus of drinking companions. "Decline was a recurring topic of conversation. The worst pessimist was this fifty something white-bearded guy named Pete. If I expressed the view that maybe it wasn't all bad, he'd say: 'You haven't been around as long as I have, Justin' - he never got my name right."

As Baggini traces black cabbies whizzing past outside, he ponders about the perennial city vs. suburb conflict. "It isn't all that clear-cut," he argues. A basic thought experiment proved illuminating in this regard. "Whenever I found myself thinking negative thoughts about Rotherham, my trick was to turn this around and look at the kind of life I have in the city. And what you often find is that you are equally guilty. For example, it seemed very evident in Rotherham that people don't go out as much; they stick to what they know. But then the urban middle class - whose self-image is much more adventurous - also stick to what they know most of the time. Even when they go on holiday they stick to places where people like them go to."

Baggini has little time for Gordon Brown's trumpeting of Britishness. "What it feels like to be British is very different if you live in a suburb, a city; London or the countryside. We tend to see it through the filter of what we know. The only thing that is shared is a sense people have that they are English. What they do not share is a particular belief of what it means to feel English. The whole government agenda to instill a sense of Britishness in people is thus fundamentally misguided."

For instance, many Brits' adoration of soccer is completely lost on the intellectu-

al. Watching a match with Rotherham fans proved particularly unnerving. "They were nakedly partisan. Fouls by the opponent were always considered so blatant, the ref who didn't spot them was rewarded with calls of 'You don't know what you're doing' or, more bluntly, but besides the point 'You fat bastard!'"

The researcher's personal objective was therefore quite humble. He simply set out to "speculatively" pinpoint a number of "implicit philosophic beliefs" held by the majority of the population. The set of values that surface - pro-family, puritan, anti-intellectual, illiberal, conservative with a small 'c' - can quite easily be mapped onto many other Western nations.

Nonetheless, they do challenge conventional wisdom. While England is often earmarked as the bedrock of liberal democracy, in actuality it's a hotbed for what Baggini calls "conservative communitarianism". He explains:

"People will claim that freedom of speech is the number one distinctive feature of Englishness. Yet on the other hand they're very willing to silence Islamic radicals, showing little concern for their human rights. So you seem to have a contradiction. But what I've found is that people are actually very consistent: they are consistent communitarians. This basically means they think that you don't get rights and privileges in virtue simply of being a member of the human race. They are not just universal. You have them conditional upon you being an active member of a particular society."

Furthermore, the liberal principle of fair play is virtually non-existent in England: we all cheat when we can get away with it, according to the philosopher. He witnessed this when belatedly try-

ing to purchase a train ticket at his destination, Rotherham station. "I went to the ticket office and explained that there wasn't a guard on the train to check me. The clerk's reaction was one of blank incomprehension; he simply told me to go away and not worry about it."

Realising this, Baggini believes, was the secret behind New Labour's electoral triumph in the 1990s. "Blair tapped into popular sentiment with the 'No rights without responsibilities' slogan. He'd done his homework and realised that that's what people think - way before 9/11 and 7/7 brought it to the fore."

Besides broadening his cultural horizon, Baggini's trip up North proved socially enriching. "In a weird way, out of all the places I've lived, this is actually the place I've become most a part of. I've stayed friends with people in the area and have been back to see them." Indeed, he hints at the possibility of marrying a Rotherhamite.

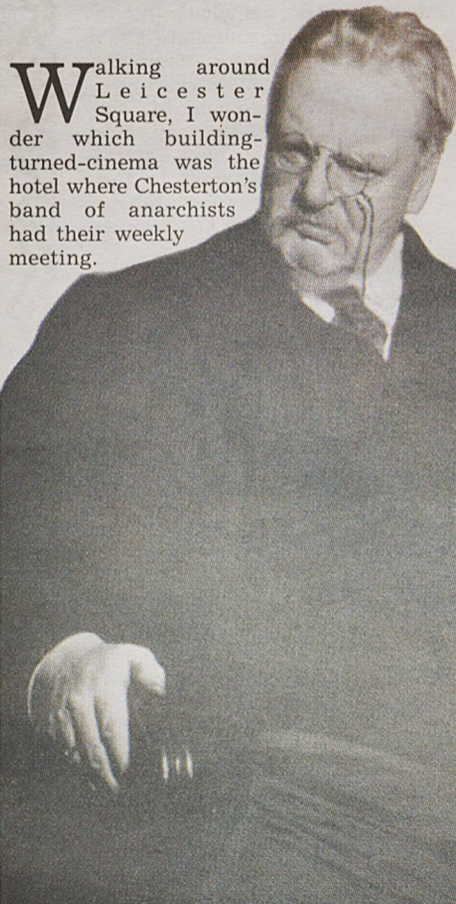
Rotherhamite.

"Maybe, though not likely."

Even philosophical investigations have their limits.



literature



erinorozco reviews
g.k.chesterton's
the man who was thursday

After reading *The Man Who Was Thursday*, one can't help but associate such landmarks with events from the book. The protagonist, Thursday, who is charged with infiltrating the Central Council of Anarchists, begins a chase that will take him from Saffron Park, to Embankment, to Leicester Square, to the docklands, to the zoo, and even briefly across the Channel to the French countryside where Thursday finds himself duelling with Wednesday. Yet as ridiculous as this sounds, there is a serious subtext dealing with religion and the rise of nihilism in society.

G. K.

Chesterton was born and raised in London in the late nineteenth century and even did a stint studying literature at University College, though he never received a degree. He is perhaps best known for his Christian apologetics, and is even credited with being a major influence in C.S. Lewis' conversion to Christianity. Aside from this, he is probably best known for his enormous height and girth. Some have even postured that he belonged to a club that restricted membership to only the largest and swarziest of gentlemen, the test for membership being the ability (or rather, inability) of the hopeful applicant to pass through a normal sized doorway.

In this sense, Chesterton resembles the ominous presence of Sunday, the leader of the Central Council of Anarchists whose mere face is described as "too big to be possible", though I'm sure the resemblance stops there. Sunday represents the depravity of the human race and manages to live up to the nightmare Chesterton purports to share with his readers. The man appears as nearly omnipresent, all powerful, and unstoppable threat to all of Thursday's goals as a police officer and indeed human. The novel begins with a poem that sets the stage for this, juxtaposing almost child-like good faith in humanity with the corrupt nature of the world as

Chesterton perceived it at the turn of the twentieth century. Chesterton's concise, eloquent use of language in this poem makes the reader almost wary of reading his prose, unsure of how it can compare to the passage preceding it; yet he manages to maintain the apocalyptic sense of purpose necessary for such a novel while incorporating his trademark wit. Characters like Sunday therefore manage to come across nonchalant and terrifying at the same time.

Overall, this book is extremely worthwhile, although the last chapter is somewhat disappointing. Chesterton's tone changes as his purpose becomes clearer, making the novel more obviously didactic and surreal. Yet this is just par for the course from an author who became increasingly orthodox in his personal and professional lives and shouldn't discourage potential audiences from enjoying his work. The most satisfying part of completing this fantasy thriller is that it allows the reader to walk through Chesterton's London. St. Paul's is no longer a congested hive of tourists, but an altar to order and reason. The London Zoo isn't a bunch of caged animals, but chaos awaiting opportunity to overflow. And as for Leicester Square, I still can't quite make out where Thursday's hotel is.

thursday's child

Lonely Planet says, "There's no room for preconceptions if you're packing to visit Iran." *The Beaver* says, "No room for preconceptions, perhaps, but a SatNav and a good map could come in handy unless you fancy spending a couple of weeks at Ahmadinejad's pleasure."

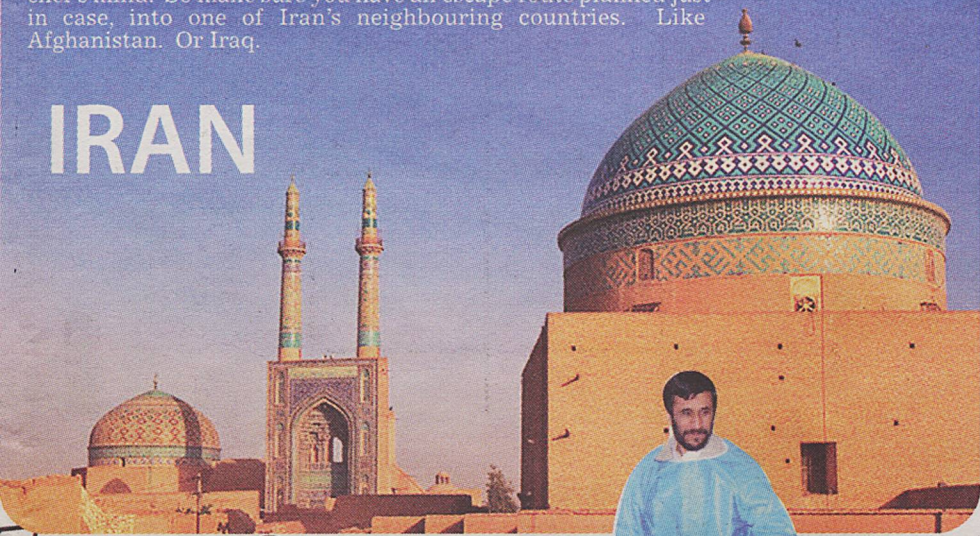
Bush would have you believe it's an earthly version of Mordor, but Iran may not be as awful as it's been painted. It has continued to tussle with, and often ignore, the UN, held a Holocaust conference, and is suspected of having supplied bombs and arms to factions in Iraq. Worse than all of this put together, they held 15 brave Brits in bondage, only releasing them when they agreed to accept Iranian goody bags and civil service standard grey suits.

Iran may be may home to one of the world's most stringent, outspoken, controversy-causing theocracies, but that's just politics... or religion. Don't talk about either, that's safest. As a tourist destination, it offers great diversity and natural beauty, from budget skiing to miles of coastline along the tepid (but often disputed) waters of the Gulf. Iranians are infamously hospitable, one of them may even invite you to their homes for a jashn (party) which will not be too different from an average student night out, meaning don't expect your newfound Iranian friends will be sober enough to drive you home.

Iran is famous for its beautiful, intricately decorated, ceramic buildings, in particular spectacular mosques, and with no fewer than 8 UNESCO world heritage sites to visit, it's perfect for any culture vultures. And if you're there for 4th June, you'll see lots of the Ayatollah as images of him abound for the national holiday of the Heart-Rending Departure of the Great Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which commemorates Khomeini's death in 1989.

With the world continuing to question if the US is planning on bombing Iran, and the potential for UN sanctions to be implemented, safety should be on every extreme traveller's mind. So make sure you have an escape route planned just in case, into one of Iran's neighbouring countries. Like Afghanistan. Or Iraq.

IRAN



SOMALIA

check. Military entourage; check. Somalia, here I come." "e, we'll, um, catch up with you."

country on paper - its borders were drawn by former colonial masters, it descended into chaos with Siad Barre in 1970, and descended into chaos with Barre in 1970, and descended into chaos with Barre in 1970.

worst violence in Mogadishu in over a decade, as Islamist militias and an Union of Islamic Courts for control. By June, the militias loyal to the Union of Islamic Courts can gain more of a grasp on the country. The UIC and the transitional government in September. In December, the UN endorsed African peacekeeping mission, and Somalia was being increasingly seen as a target in the war on terror to push back the UIC and by January, the UIC had abandoned even Mogadishu.

to enter Mogadishu in January 2007, three years since taking office and a suicide bombing. The government instituted a state of emergency, and the Council sanctioned African Union peacekeepers in February for six months - in March the African Union troops were greeted the sound of gunfire as insurgents and Ethiopian-backed government forces took place, which the worst fighting in 15 years.

Lonely Planet's World Guide recommendation - that you only go to this country with a Kevlar vest and a military entourage. If you happen to have these in your kit, the spots include; the imposing coastal cliffs, the bustling markets of Mogadishu, Geel, where there are hundreds of fantastically preserved Neolithic rock art. An unforgettable image of heavily armed militias, await.

Lonely Planet says, "A flipside Disneyland of state-sanctioned sights."

The Beaver says, "There's a reason Disneyland has been visited by 515 million guests since it opened, and North Korea is practically closed to the outside world. Mickey isn't packing a warhead."

This picturesque part of Asia seemed to reach its peak as a tourist destination in the 1950s when Americans and Chinese quite literally invaded in their thousands. It has long been engaged on talks with the international community regarding its nuclear programmes, and all the tantrums that seem to go hand in hand with diplomacy on such issues, resulting in talks breaking down. However in July 2006, North Korea caused a panic by testing long range and middle range missiles, followed by the announcement in October that Pyongyang had successfully tested a nuclear weapon. This did not go down well in the West.

But if you have no fear, and fancy a holiday with added Cold War nostalgia, Korea offers the chance to not only see nuclear reactors but also experience life in a true communist state, enlivened by chronic food shortages. North Korea recently placed an order for 12 giant rabbits (Google for pictures, they are astounding). Expect to be taken on a guided tour by bus of the capital, where only citizens of correct 'class background' may reside. However, if your picture of Asian capital cities involves the hustle and bustle of street markets and jostling bicycles, it's probably wise not to expect any. After all, the inhabitants are too busy playing the part of the happy and glorious citizen, and dealing with those pesky bunnies.

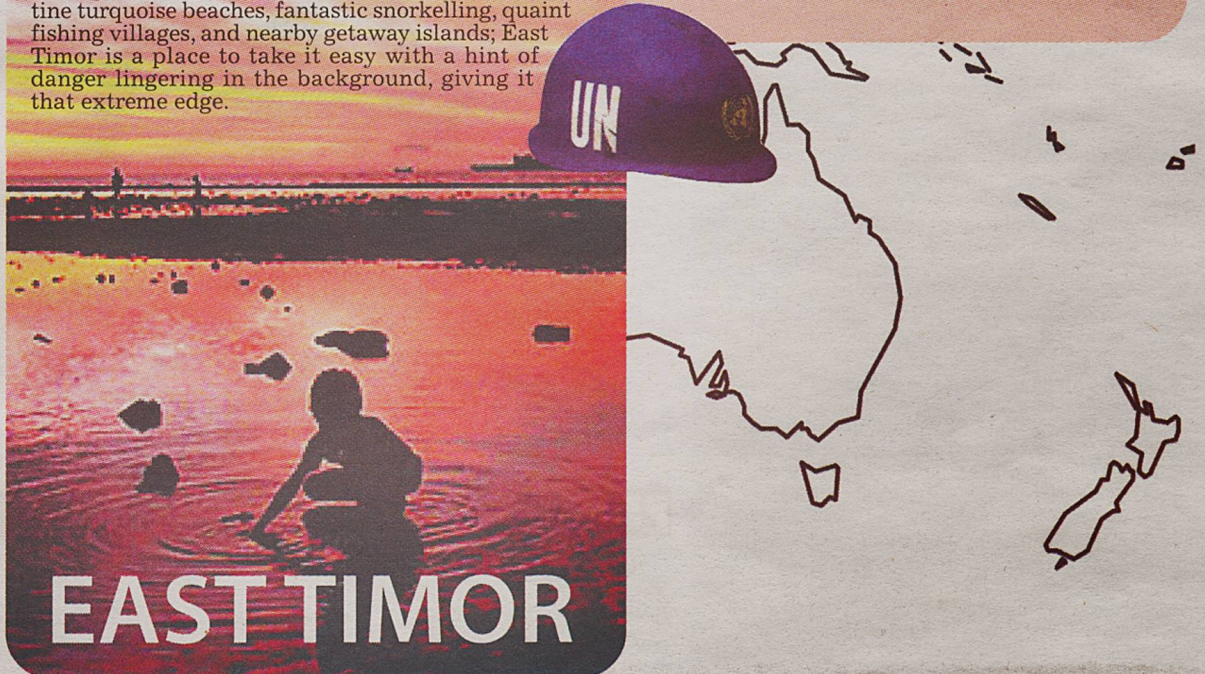


Lonely Planet says, "The ambiguous taste of freedom is fresh in East Timor's mouth."

The Beaver says, "The unambiguous taste of cold steel still rules the roost when it come to politics on this troubled island."

East Timor just makes it onto our list. It may have miles of untouched, pristine beaches, but it's not likely to be a tourist hotspot any time soon. Following the withdrawal of the UN, a report presented in January 2006 demonstrated the extent of suffering under Indonesian forceful rule - it attributed more than 100,000 deaths in East Timor to the occupation. East Timor looked like it was getting back on track, when former soldiers who had been sacked started clashes in March, leading to wider factional violence. Pressured by the President and many ministers who were threatening their resignations, Prime Minister Alkatiri resigned on June 26th. The UN Integrated Mission in East Timor was set up in August. In January 2007, the former interior minister was tried for arming civilians during the recent unrest. Internal displacement, due to the violence in 2006, continues to be a big issue. The presidential election this April sparked further violence, but there is finally talk of the Australian peacekeeping troops withdrawing soon.

Like so many other unstable states, East Timor has an intriguing colonial past. Visitors can expect to see Portuguese architecture, but with a tropical backdrop. Mountainous terrain, a slow-paced capital city, pristine turquoise beaches, fantastic snorkelling, quaint fishing villages, and nearby getaway islands; East Timor is a place to take it easy with a hint of danger lingering in the background, giving it that extreme edge.



EAST TIMOR



This week in FEATURES

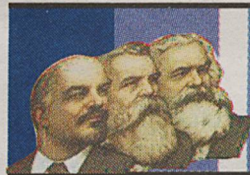
Burma's opium
entrepreneur **18**



Women
at war **16**



The Red



**Victor
Figueroa-
Clark**

Last week *The Guardian* published Naomi Wolf's article 'Fascist America in ten easy steps'. The article is a warning that the US is heading down a road which could lead to it becoming a fascist state. Wolf argues that the current authoritarian trend in the US is not new. Much was learnt from the pre-war fascist governments in Germany and Italy, and perfected in the post-war dictatorships in Latin America. The links between the US and the fascist dictatorships of Europe and Latin America are crucial in understanding why Wolf isn't "crying wolf", and why it is relevant for us in the UK.

US links to pre-war fascist regimes range from business links with Nazi Germany to indirect support for Franco's Nationalist Forces in the Spanish Civil War. But the most important links were forged at the end of WWII, when the US provided refuge for thousands of Nazi officials. The most famous case is of the Nazi scientists recruited to work in the US space programme, but the US did not just admire Nazi science. They admired its armed forces (just compare the uniforms of the Wehrmacht and those of the current US army) and the way that the fascist regimes had ruled much of Europe from the 1920s to the end of the war.

US officials studied the Nazi government, copying some of its structures. The most notorious case is the creation of the CIA in 1947. One of its first directors was Alan Dulles, the man who had been in charge of US negotiations with the Nazi regime. The US recruited many Nazis to help found the organisation whose mission was to subvert enemies whilst maintaining plausible deniability; something the Nazis had significant experience in.

During the Cold War the US was able to gain more experience of carrying out such operations throughout the third world, but its main proving ground was Latin America after the Cuban Revolution in 1959. Here the continent that had been under US tutelage for longest shook under the impact of a revolution that proved it was possible to break free of the US, even in its backyard. The liberation of much of Africa and Asia from colonialism added fuel to this dream of freedom, and throughout the US-controlled continent anti-imperialist movements grew.

To control and destroy these movements the US and its allies in government resorted to the tactics Wolf describes. Tactics lifted straight from the manuals of the Gestapo. The "National Security Doctrine" (even its name is the same as that used by the Nazis in Europe) was fed to Latin American intelligence agencies and militaries as part of Kennedy's vaunted "Alliance for Progress". This Alliance mixed a great deal of empty words about freedom, democracy and rights with a large amount of military aid and training. Contacts between US and Latin American business elites and state agencies were built up at the same time.

Together these groups used fascist methods to destroy broad-based movements across the continent. The death toll went into hundreds of thousands, the numbers of tortured and disappeared will probably never be known. The resulting poverty and inequality have added millions more to the numbers of victims. All in the name of liberty and democracy. What the US has done to Latin America it could do to itself, without the majority of people realising.

The danger for us in the UK is to assume that 'our' government is different. If we have followed the US into disaster in Iraq and Afghanistan, what is to stop us following the US into outright tyranny? Britain is no stranger to the methods that Wolf outlines in her article. We now have our 'terrifying internal and external enemy'. British citizens in Guantanamo can testify that we have delegated our torture camps to the US. We are under increasing surveillance and citizen groups here have long been infiltrated. Latin America shows us where this can lead. Our limited democracy is under threat by the slicing away of our hard won rights, by the incremental measures that seek to divide us and make us afraid of each other. Dictatorships don't always seize power: sometimes they take it by creeping, poisonous osmosis and that is the threat that we face.

Victor is a guest columnist.

Read Wolf's article at www.guardian.co.uk

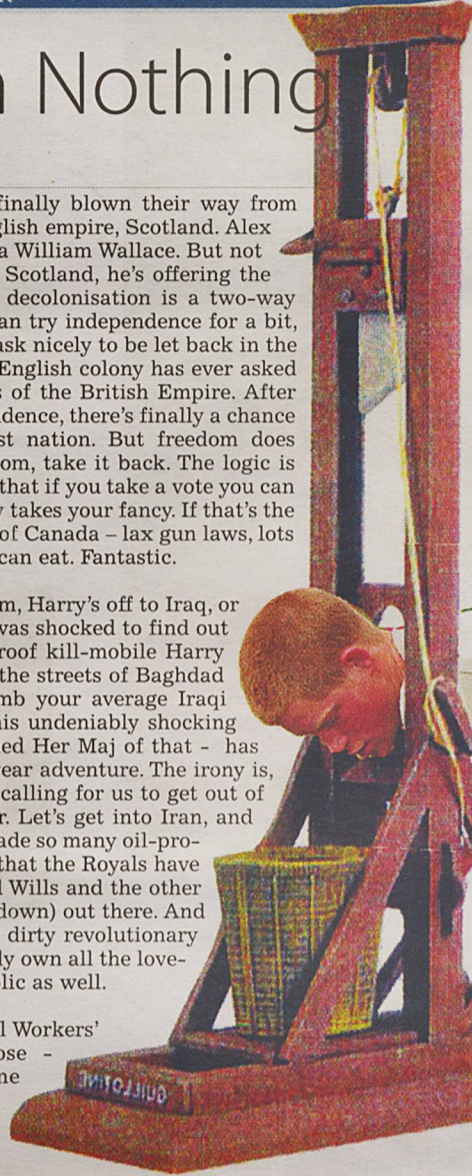
features@thebeaveronline.co.uk

Notes on Nothing

The winds of change seem to have finally blown their way from Africa to that last vestige of the English empire, Scotland. Alex Salmond fancies himself as a bit of a William Wallace. But not content with crying, "Freedom!" for Scotland, he's offering the Scots a 'suck it and see' deal. Apparently decolonisation is a two-way street. Salmond is arguing that Scotland, can try independence for a bit, and then if it doesn't suit them... well, just ask nicely to be let back in the union. Though, as he points out, no former English colony has ever asked to be clasped back into the matronly folds of the British Empire. After fighting for three hundred years for independence, there's finally a chance of self-determination for Britain's chilliest nation. But freedom does come, Holyrood can, in all its limited wisdom, take it back. The logic is befuddling, but apparently Salmond thinks that if you take a vote you can just sort of become part of whatever country takes your fancy. If that's the case, I'd quite like Scotland to become part of Canada – lax gun laws, lots of skiing and all the baby polar bears you can eat. Fantastic.

On the subject of English imperialism, Harry's off to Iraq, or he isn't, or he is. The government was shocked to find out that the giant bomb and bullet-proof kill-mobile Harry was meant to be piloting through the streets of Baghdad is vulnerable to the kind of road-side bomb your average Iraqi teenager can knock up in an afternoon. This undeniably shocking fact – soldiers can be killed, no-one informed Her Maj of that – has put the little tyke off his Middle East gap year adventure. The irony is, that across the country so-called leftys are calling for us to get out of Iraq. I say, get us in, further, deeper, harder. Let's get into Iran, and Syria and, I don't know, Qatar and stuff. Invade so many oil-producing, geopolitically significant countries that the Royals have to send in some of their own, get Harry and Wills and the other useless one (which doesn't really narrow it down) out there. And then sit back and let the insurgents do our dirty revolutionary work for us. Before you know it we'll not only own all the lovely oil in the world, we'll be a socialist republic as well.

Until then, please enjoy International Workers' day in whatever way you choose – www.indymedia.org.uk has some pretty good events listed. Smash a McDonald's, graffiti a war memorial, or just enjoy a nice Starbucks while you shop in Gap. Whatever floats your boat.



The Right Approach

**Rupert
Dexter-
Chomondeley**



I was driving down the Kensington High Street the other day when I had a curious encounter. It was a balmy morning, full of all the joys of spring, perfect for a quick spin in the Land Rover. I spotted an empty space as near to Marks' as I could and was about to reverse into it when I became aware of a flapping presence in the rear view mirror. Upon closer inspection, the figure turned out to be a very small woman, jumping up and down and gesticulating with some gusto. Her face was a mask of horror, and I wondered what on earth could be the matter. For a split second it occurred to me that I might have run something over again, possibly a dog or a small child. Better not be a dog, I thought as I got out rather hurriedly. But to my enduring surprise, the problem turned out to be the car.

'You can't drive that thing', she said, pointing a finger at my Land Rover. I had a look at her. Her hair was all over the place, and she was wearing a rather grubby Mac and Wellingtons. She had mud all over her. I thought it might be my Auntie Mable. But it bloody wasn't. Besides, Mable hasn't been out of bed in five years, on account of the drink.

'You can't drive that', she said again, finger still pointed accusingly, 'because of climate change'.

Oh. Now it dawned on me. I've read about these sorts of people, these climate fanatics, in the Mail. There was some frightful bore harping on about it on the news the other day. In fact, there seem to be an increasing number of them these days, popping up all over the bloody place. I've thought about it but I can't see the problem. If anything, its damn expensive keeping a house in Barbados and something that warns this miserable place up a bit is fine by me. But these people don't listen to sense – this was a situation that had to be handled with tact.

'My dear lady', I said with what I hoped was a disarming grin, 'please don't tell me you're not appreciating our lovely spring weather? Hasn't been this hot in April since uncle Harold fainted from the heat in the old boys' match at Harrow in 1958'.

The lady, however, was not for turning, and shook her head violently from side to side. I rather hoped it might fall off. 'No no no', she said, still shaking like a lunatic, 'it's not here that we have to worry about climate change, it's Africa.'

This really was too much.

'Good God woman' I exclaimed, unable to restrain myself any longer, 'you don't mean to suggest that I shouldn't drive my Land Rover because of the Africans?' The woman stood unmoved. 'It's people like you with your gas-guzzlers that give this country a bad name', she bashed on, and on, and on. Ordinary poverty-stricken people suffering for the greed of the selfish few and so forth. Reminded me of the stuff I used to hear at University from the Communists. That turned out to be a load of codswallop as well – show me a country in the old Eastern bloc that didn't turn over to our side at the first available minute. By the looks of things most of them bloody came over here as well.

I realised that the tiresome little creature wasn't going to give up, and decided that Marks' could wait another day. But the damned temerity, the impudence to stand up and accuse a perfectly law abiding British citizen in such a manner appalled me. If a man wants to drive the car he wants to drive, then it should be up to him. I don't hold with these modern notions that one has to take such non-issues like the environment into account. The Americans have got it right with guns. You tell me that you wouldn't if you had the money. Besides, I need the thing for the dogs. I expect they think we should all take the bus, but you couldn't get my dogs on a bus. And the last thing that was going to persuade me was all this claptrap about Africa.

I'm sick and tired of being told that we should save the Africans. We tried to save the Africans once, and it was called the British Empire. We tried to save them again, and it was called Live Aid. My daughter goes to school with Peaches Geldof, and the bloke's a bloody disgrace. Give us your fucking money? You're not getting any of my fucking money, you filthy Irish bastard. Potatoes is all you're getting out of me!

Sam Burke is revising. He might regret that.

Vive la revolution!



FEATURES Credits

Head of Politics Desk: **Gary Blank**

Head of Society Desk: **Rosamund Urwin**

Head of Business/Careers/Law Desk: **Soumya Gupta**

Political Correspondents: **Greg White, Ben Gianforti**

Is the left lost?

Arthur Krebbers talks to the scourge of the liberal left, Nick Cohen

The political left is doomed. If left to its own devices, it will erode into an "insular, selfish and hypocritical" ideology – worlds apart from its idealist 19th century socialist and Marxist roots. This apocalyptic warning comes from journalist Nick Cohen, who pictures himself as a knight in shining armour for all those left of centre. His new book *What's left? How liberals lost their way* presents a vindication against recent developments within

fronted with radical, anti-American Muslim movements – who are racist, psychopathic and totalitarian – the people most likely to make excuses for them are the people on the left. They are most likely to justify these movements. My argument is about why the left is failing in this way."

The opinion maker draws on a series of analyses to justify his controversial claim. To begin with, he argues that socialism in its purest form is extinct. No serious mainstream party

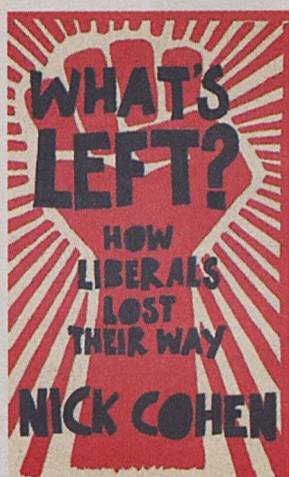
politicians aren't a threat to them. All they say is 'be against America', and fair enough, there are enough reasons to be anti-American."

There's more to the rise of the pro-Islamist left. Cohen spots a variety of societal factors, the first of which being the failure of multiculturalism. "Most modern multi-cultural states can not criticise self-styled communities, especially those that are shaped by ethnic minorities and can be highly anti-liberal. There is a failure to recognise difference in quality of life, a type of inverted racism. People say that feminism is alright for a woman in Amsterdam, but not for a woman in Afghanistan."

"Besides that," Nick continues, "you have the Bush presidency, which is opposed by lots of people. And there is this feeling of fear. We are frightened by radical Islam. A natural response to this is to appease. We start saying that it's all our fault, it's all the West. If we were very frightened, we would make a stance. We wouldn't have a situation where German soldiers would go to Iraq and not fight. Or where Italy's social-democrat government almost fell because the most left-wing thing the communists could do was oppose America in Iraq."

The outcome of this plethora of circumstances is historically unique, argues Cohen. New left-of-centre political movements such as the Respect party and the Stop the War coalition show an unprecedented alliance between the "liberal left" and the "far right". "What's happening now is rare. We have the liberal left going along with the far right, not the far left. In the second world war there was some of this through treacherous support for the Nazis, but it is a lot more now. The scale is different."

The left, Cohen believes, think they are in control of their devout friends. "They (the left) are riding the tiger – they think they are in control, but the tiger is in charge. Why would rightwing fundamentalists listen to



"The central argument of my book is anti-fascist, pro-feminist, pro-democratic and pro-enlightenment."

leftwing movements. In particular, he argues against the left's appeasement of militant Islam. So, what is he so afraid of?

Cohen doesn't mince his words. There is a lot on the line, he fears. "The central argument of my book is anti-fascist, pro-feminist, pro-democratic and pro-enlightenment." He tells me. "It's a historical argument about most of Europe. When con-

is arguing for widespread nationalisation, thus making it very hard to earmark truly progressive thinkers. "It's easy to be leftwing now," says Cohen. "Fifty years ago, socialism would propose nationalisation and high taxation. Now leftwing politicians don't have to propose very much. There are lots of rich people now who have books of leftwing politicians in their cupboard. That's no surprise: these

atheist communists?"

It's time for progressives to turn a critical eye to Islamism, the Observer columnist feels. Many of the theocratic Middle Eastern governments should form their first target. "European liberals can't see things for what they are. But let me tell you: you don't want to be feminist in Iran, or a democrat in Syria. European countries, should realise that. We should have learned our lessons from the 20th century. The victims of anti-semitic tsarism weren't just Jews, they were ordinary Russians. These are the

consequences of fascist regimes. They have problem with human rights, democracy and women."

Despite all the gloom, Cohen remains an incurable optimist. "I am a writer, not a prophet – But I'm optimistic." He says. "I'm part of a movement on the left who are taking this on, have arguments. Unless the trend is stopped, the left will become selfish, insular and hypocritical. It will turn against democracy, socialism and feminism. These concepts count as much in the poor world as they count in the rich."

How Nick Cohen lost his way

The Beaver's Politics sub-editor, Gary Blank, counters Cohen's arguments

In his new book *What's Left: How Liberals Lost Their Way*, the 'democratic socialist' journalist Nick Cohen excoriates the majority of the Left for its supposed support for 'fascism'. According to Cohen's narrative, the 'death of socialism' destroyed the political compass of the far-left, while post-modernism rotted the Enlightenment foundations of liberalism. Opposition to the US and everything it stands for became the Left's sole raison d'être. Thus, in 2003 leftist anti-war demonstrators marched alongside reactionary Islamic fundamentalists 'against the overthrow of a fascist regime'. Once the occupation ensued, these same leftists sided with the Baathist-Islamist 'resistance'. In contrast, Cohen remained true to leftist principles by supporting the war and defending Iraqi 'democrats' (i.e., endorsing the occupation).

Cohen's critique is not without some merit. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and its Stop the War Coalition opportunistically pandered to Islamic reaction, and it can be justly criticised for having done so. But Cohen's alternative is far worse—and

far more unprincipled from a socialist standpoint—than anything the SWP may be guilty of.

The 'liberal-left' of Cohen's imagination is little more than a straw man, something which suits his polemical

modern Western societies. For this reason, socialists argue that the working class can only defend existing gains, and conquer new ones, if it organises its own parties and seeks to build its own political institutions.

The 'liberal-left' of Cohen's imagination is little more than a straw man

purpose but is largely devoid of political meaning. Liberals and Trotskyists, post-modernists and social-democrats—all shades of 'left' opinion fall under his catch-all term. As a result, Cohen seems oblivious to crucial political distinctions within the left, and ignorant of the very tradition that he supposedly defends.

Genuine socialists are not uber-liberals. Unlike liberals, socialists argue that the state is not, and cannot be, neutral. Ultimately, state policies must serve the interests of a particular ruling class—that is, capitalists in

To a certain extent, Cohen recognises the centrality of class in contemporary politics. He has long criticised the pro-capitalist policies of New Labour, and in 'What's Left' he acknowledges that American neo-cons are ultimately loyal to the 'boss class'. Yet, when he discusses foreign policy, Cohen ignores the implications of these class loyalties. At his worst Cohen seems to actually believe the 'democracy' and 'freedom' rhetoric of the Bushites and Blairites, and at his best he simply asserts that the real motivation for the Iraq war is not

important. According to Cohen, leftists were faced with sharply delineated choices: continued sanctions or war, the return of Baathist tyranny or 'democratic' occupation.

Genuine socialists never accepted Cohen's bankrupt alternatives. Standing on a century of tradition opposing the predatory colonial and imperialist wars of "our" ruling classes, socialists recognised that the rhetoric emanating from the White House and Westminster was hardly novel. If there was any doubt about the coalition's intentions, it was easily dissipated by the course of the war and occupation itself. Looting was ignored as the 'coalition' rushed to secure Iraq's oil fields. Unemployment skyrocketed as the occupiers closed state industries. Trade unions remained banned, as they had under Saddam. Chemical weapons were unleashed on Fallujah. The Americans initially opposed democracy, but then swung their support behind Shiite

parties (and militias) every bit as reactionary as their Sunni cousins. To the extent that he even acknowledges this litany of crimes, Cohen only sees regrettable 'mistakes'. Socialists, in contrast, recognise that these actions stemmed directly from the nature of the imperial enterprise itself. The 'coalition' sought to acquire a new oil colony, not to 'liberate' Iraqis.

This does not mean that socialists were, or are, indifferent to the plight of Iraqis and others living under dictatorship. Instead, we argue that true liberation can only come about through the concerted struggles of workers and the oppressed themselves. Authentic internationalism requires Western socialists to extend their own forms of assistance to these struggles (e.g., though solidarity strikes, demonstrations, and material aid), rather than supporting the neo-colonialism of 'their' rulers. Nick Cohen is welcome to believe the opposite. But in doing so, he sheds any pretension to the traditions of socialism.



A woman's right to go to war



Ros Urwin talks about girls and guns

It is widely-touted nonsense that men are somehow more suited to life in the armed forces than women since they are more aggressive by nature.

Celebration at the release of Faye Turney and the other service personnel captured by Iranian forces was cut short by the deaths of four British soldiers in Iraq, two of whom were female. Rather inevitably, these incidents gave rise to a debate over the role of women in the armed forces, with many in the mainstream media finding themselves in agreement with Iran's President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who decried the west for allowing women to serve as soldiers, "Why is there no respect for motherhood?" he demanded, "Why does the West not value its women?" These are audacious remarks given that Iran, a country where women are still stoned to death for adultery, can hardly be considered a bastion of gender equality. But it is the supposedly liberal thinkers who anger me, people who would have no time for Ahmadinejad's other opinions, but nonetheless agree that women should not be allowed on the front line or even in the armed forces at all.

Currently in the UK women remain barred from roles where the primary role is "to close with and kill the enemy": thus they cannot serve in the infantry, the Royal Marines, the Royal Armoured Corps, the Household Cavalry or the RAF Regiment. But war now is very different from the battles of the past: a clear distinction between front-line action and work with no contact with the enemy cannot be drawn. Faye Turney's capture highlights this problem - it no longer makes sense to prevent women from serving in combative roles out of a desire to keep women out of harm's way, because every member of the armed forces serving in Iraq or Afghanistan is in danger, whether they are in the front-line or not. Thus we have only two logical options: either women should not be allowed to serve in any capacity in the military or we open up every position to them.

And true equality of

the sexes demands that the decision of who is fit for a given career is not decided on the basis of gender but on merit; this applies in the army as in every other vocation. There need be no lowering of entry standards - only that those women who wish to serve, and meet the stringent criteria, cannot be prevented from doing so by some desperately out-dated notion that a woman is not fit to fight for her country. If a woman has the necessary skills to serve in the military and is willing, then the army needs her expertise.

consider the numerous medals earned in both conflicts by women to see that the field is exactly where some women belong. If a woman wants to risk her life for her country, we must allow her to do so. In the same way that women have fought for their rights, they must fight to be allowed to do their duty and serve their country.

It is widely-touted nonsense that men are somehow more suited to life in the armed forces than women since they are more aggressive by nature. It's the old "equal but differ-

do not value motherhood, the same argument can be put against having fathers in the forces: children ideally should have both parents caring for them. In an interview in *The Independent*, Captain Burdus, who serves with the 22 Signal Regiment, argued, "The fact you are a mum makes no difference. There are a lot of fathers doing the same job. People always ask "How do you cope?" And I think "Do you ask the men?" As she makes clear, it is no easier for a loving father to be separated from his children than it is for a loving mother. And whilst I have no doubt that Faye Turney's family suffered immensely during her imprisonment, I cannot imagine the families of the other captured soldiers suffered any less.

Undoubtedly there remain enor-

each other from such discrimination, but once they can demonstrate their place is deserved, the men will give them their due recognition and respect. The military remains the ultimate boys club - allowing women access to all positions is the only way this will change.

Faye Turney's treatment by the Iranians shows that female soldiers are liable to be treated worse than their male colleagues, but preventing women from serving on these grounds is not the answer. Female soldiers are undoubtedly aware that they may be captured by men who do not believe in the equality of the sexes, but clearly this risk for these women is outweighed by their desire to serve - we must allow those women who want to fight for their

A woman's wrong to go to war

What the opponents to women in the military are saying

"This is lesson, you know, number 1,000,047 on why women shouldn't be in the military. In addition to not being able to carry even a medium-sized backpack, women are too vicious."

Ann Coulter, on Abu Ghraib



What Ahmadinejad ignores is that truly valuing women means allowing them to do their duty alongside their male colleagues. Opposition to female soldiers, widespread though it remains, is not derived from any evidence of failure or weakness amongst them, but a vague sense, a gut feeling, that a battlefield is not the right place for a woman. In fact, evidence indicates the opposite is true: the leadership skills and courage of women have constantly been proven in Iraq and Afghanistan and one need only

ent" lie and those who put this argument are usually guilty of gender stereotyping: just as there are many passive men, so too are there many aggressive women, and one must consider that those women willing to go and fight for their country will not be those timid, reserved types that many conservatives seem to mistake all women for. They will be the strong, brave people that the army so desperately needs.

And as for the assertion that allowing women to serve shows we

The Conservative Party

Tory defence spokesman Gerald Howarth said: "I think a lot of people will be asking themselves about this - given that the enemy milked the fact we had a female sailor with a three-year-old child.

"Putting females in harm's way presents an unscrupulous enemy with an opportunity to exploit them for propaganda."

From the article, *Why our girl troops are in more danger than ever*, *The Daily Mail*

Major Judith Webb

"I no longer believe that we should send women to the front line - by which I mean somewhere they might find themselves in hand-to-hand combat, or cast as aggressors.

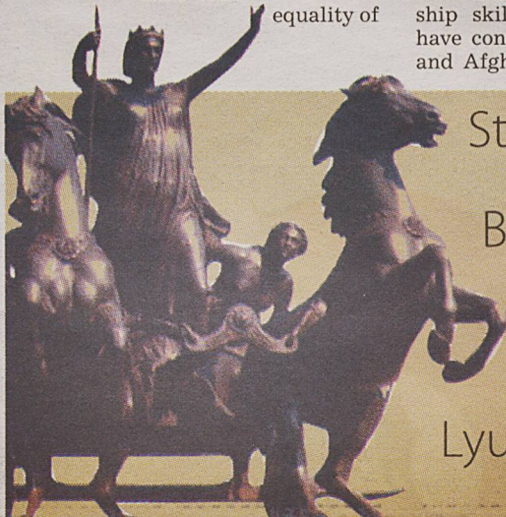
Why not? Well, it may not be fashionable but it's time that society accepted the simple fact that women are different."

Major Judith Webb was the first woman to command an all-male field force squadron in the British Army.

mous problems for female soldiers: sexual harassment and discrimination are common complaints amongst them and one imagines this may be initially worsened by the conditions of battle. But the only way for women's treatment in the military to improve is for their presence to become normalised - while females in the forces remain something of a novelty, male soldiers will continue to treat them as such. But when women saturate every section of the services, not only will they be able to protect

country to do so. We should not give in to the injustices of other societies by perpetuating inequality in ours.

From Boudicca to Joan of Arc to today's soldiers, women have proved that the "weaker sex" is anything but: it is about time both the army and society in general recognised this. To achieve true gender equality we need to allow women access to both the opportunities open to men and the duties men face. For women are entitled to pick their own place - be it the home, the office or the battlefield.



St. Joan of Arc

A French heroine who helped save her country from English domination.

Boudicca

Queen of the Iceni tribe, Boudicca led a major uprising of the tribes against the Romans after being flogged by a Roman

Hannah Snell

Snell dressed as a man to become a soldier in the 18th century, fighting many battles and being injured many times.

Lyudmila Pavlichenko

A Soviet sniper during World War Two, Pavlichenko killed over 300 enemy soldiers.

War Heroines

2007 - 2008: A Year of Elections

Election past

French student Lucie Marie Goulet gives us a peek in her diary.

Monday, 9th of April 2007

The official campaign has just started. Posters are going to be stuck up next to polling places. The order in which they are placed has been drawn, and funnily enough Olivier Besancenot (far left), is going to be placed first whereas Nicolas Sarkozy (main right party), clear gamblers favourite, is last. The company in charge of sticking the posters up was also on strike until Friday, which really wasn't surprising considering that it's probably their best time to get heard.

Each candidate's media coverage also gets counted. Which I think is really silly since it doesn't take into account all the articles published on the web. Trends such as the far left get more coverage as a philosophy than socially unacceptable groups like the far right.

Tuesday, 10th of April

Those last 15 days of campaigning are going to be decisive since it is estimated that 42% of the electorate is still undecided. Add to that the fact that the numbers of voters has gone up, especially in some "banlieues", and that it is hard to predict how they are going to vote.

Wednesday 11th of April

There is a film out today called Le Candidat "the candidate". Apparently the fact that it's out in the middle of the campaign is just a coincidence. Anybody who believes that please raise your hand.

Thursday 12th of April

I've had a look at facebook today. Pretty much every candidate obviously has an official profile. Bayrou, Sarkozy, Royal, have official profiles. The groups about Le Pen are mainly calling not to vote for him, apart from one described as "For those who

Election present

Christine Whyte wants Scotland to be free

When Prince took the charts by storm with '1999', he probably didn't realise that there would be more reasons to party than just the advent of a new Millennium. In Scotland, colonial shackles were partially removed with the founding of the Scottish Parliament. Donald Dewar led a new government, which finally represented the true voting patterns of the Scottish electorate. This year will see the third elections of the devolved parliament. The Lib-Lab coalition is looking like a herd of vulnerable lambs as Salmond's Scottish National Party's (SNP) wolves circle.

The election has come at an exciting time, as the dust from 'Sheridan versus News International' starts to settle and Solidarity (Sheridan's new party) is now up and running. This split in the socialist vote is manna from heaven for a struggling New Labour party. The Scottish Socialist Party was a formidable player in Scottish politics. thanks to the devolved parliament's list system which allows some measure of proportional representation. But now, with their founder and most popular member having indulged in mud-slinging with a right-wing Murdoch



Photographs: Camille Goulet

believe Jean-Marie Le Pen is a French patriot and that France's future lies in his visionary program."

Tuesday 17th of April

Sarkozy and Royal are given 50-50 in a poll by CSA if they both go to the second round. Everything is still possible.

I've also been surprised by how little the candidates talked about the Virginia Tech shooting. I know the situation is quite different in France, we don't have the whole arms problem but security has been a major issue since the start of the campaign.

Wednesday 18th of April

Valerie Giscard d'Estaing, former French president and founder of the UDF party is supporting Sarkozy over Bayrou. Surprising? Maybe. But no paper is giving it that much coverage. Presidential influence tends to wane after too long out of office...

Thursday 19th of April

Rumour after rumour after rumour. If pretty much everybody agrees that Sarkozy is going to reach the second round, the other candidate to stand on the 6th of May still raises debate. In most cases, predictions are for a Sarkozy-Royal duel (expect pistols and backstabbing).

However, some journalists consider themselves better informed than everybody else (they wouldn't be

journalists otherwise) and announced that a poll conducted by the French Renseignement Generaux (unit of the French police in charge of collecting information for the government) predicts le Pen to reach the second round. Now what's interesting about this information isn't so much its verdict, as the fact that it is illegal for the RG to do that anymore. Their motive? There is a very easy link to make: Sarkozy as Ministre de l'Interieur was head of the French Police. It's just one easy step for readers to think that he took part in the ordering of this poll, and hasn't fully relinquished his government role. Needless to say the magazine which broke the story and stood by it after denials from the RGs is rather lefty.

Friday 20th of April

Heated debate about whether or not polls should be forbidden from being published and commented on all French media (including internet) between Saturday 21st April midnight and Sunday 22nd of April, 8pm. It's probably a fair bet to say that by the next campaign, this law will have been changed to take into account modifications in technology.

Saturday 21st of April

The official campaign closed at midnight. Candidates are not allowed to talk anymore, polls can't be published etc etc. I guess they are happy to get

some rest now... Sarkozy went riding in southern France yesterday and ends up on the Financial Times cover with a stupid-looking face, something in between Bush in his Texas ranch and a cowboy. I read the FT coverage of the elections and despite a very good article, I still don't know for sure who I am going to vote for. Two weeks have past and I'm still undecided, along with 1/3 of French voters. I guess am having a bit of a McGarry syndrome; "tired of having to choose between the lesser of who cares".

Sunday 22th of April

Am seriously wondering how you feel when you are running for President and it's election day. I mean I am only voting and I am really excited. I've been trying to find stuff on the net which I haven't read yet but considering that the media can't report on polls or on candidates' programs anymore they talk about a) the sociology of voting and voting day (conclusion, it's a bit like the World Cup), b) what candidates can expect (i.e. if that one gets less votes than last time he will be a looser...), c) what candidates do on voting day (read the newspaper, have coffee, impromptu riding session?).

Monday 23th of April

Sarkozy versus Royal! No last minute surprises and a predictable result. The surprise is the

number of people voting. 85% of the voters cast their vote, with some departements even reaching more than 87.5%.

Tuesday 24th of April

Today's Union pour un Mouvement Populaire meeting was something of a Stalinist public trial, with a former high advisor to Royal telling to a full theatre how wrong he had been all that time. But then, Merci Dieu, Sarkozy showed him the light (or a promise of a Ministerial title).

Wednesday 25th of April

As expected Bayrou didn't call to vote for either Royal or Sarkozy. So now question is: who are those people going to vote for? Are they going to go more for the right which could sound logical considering the history behind the UDF party or are they going to go for an "anybody but Sarkozy" attitude?

Thursday 26th of April

You know there is something seriously wrong with your interest in French politics when you actually have dreams about the elections. Which is why I am going to stop writing this diary. But, I think it will be a win for Sarkozy and a 'red' card for Royal. Unfortunately, she just doesn't have his experience, or his horsemanship. Watch out on 6th May for the final score.

Election future

US DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY

Tracy Roosevelt puts a tenner on the nose for Clinton

In the words of Meatloaf, "we're gonna go all the way tonight, we're gonna go all the way." The Democrats will be in Office in 2009. I see Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama on Pennsylvania Avenue. The people of the United States are ready for change--and the democrats will be that change. The primaries are tough to call. At this point it could be Hillary, Barack, or John Edwards (for the Democrats). In an informal poll of twenty-somethings I know, Barack Obama is the favoured candidate. He's seen as progressive, new and edgy. He is a charismatic speaker and he promises constituents a new brand of politics with greater access to politicians. His experience in community organising bodes well for that.

guarantee. He also has, and has had, a strong stance against the war. At the same time, Hillary Clinton is the candidate with the most experience. As a second term senator (with perhaps some previous experience in another presidential-reign), she is the most prepared for the domestic and international challenges the U.S. will face as it enters the '10s. Clinton is the best candidate to make sure our country is safe. Historically, that's been a daring statement to make about a female candidate. Nationally, she carries some baggage, but she won New York because voters had time to get to know her - in the next few months she has the opportunity to make Democrats across the country do the same thing.



First Minister McConnell with the 'English' Queen

rag the SSP has lost a lot of the trust and respect it had gathered in its exemplary parliamentary and community work. The resulting name-calling (the word 'scab hadn't been bandied about that much since the General Strike) has caused a political hissy fit of biblical proportions and Sheridan's new party, Solidarity should take quite a few votes off the established leftists.

This split in the vote will only result in fewer radical MSPs in the Parliament next session and New Labour are working hard to make

best use of this advantage. Convenient leaks of multi-billion pound defence contracts going to Clyde and Rosyth and flying visits by top brass to tinpot parochial radio stations all suggest a party on the defensive.

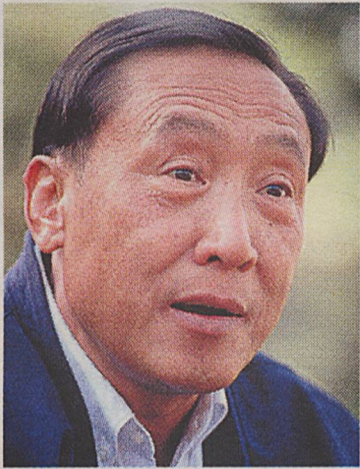
And Scotland could be the election to give them a real kicking while they're down (as we say in Glasgow). Not only is Scotland forced to play host to the UK's nuclear armaments, Scottish regiments play a disproportionate role in a war we don't want, Scottish communities suffer under increasing liberalisation of the economy and Scottish unions and activists are stymied by London policy makers. But Scotland holds an ace up its sleeve - the Labour leadership. What will Brown do with an SNP majority in Holyrood? You can imagine his befuddled expression. Labour are currently conducting a vicious, smear campaign on the SNP, making preposterous claims about the cost of independence, personal attacks on Salmond and frankly pathetic cartoons to appeal to the 'yoof'.

In Scotland, we can send a message to Labour they won't forget in a hurry. On May 3, say no to war, no to Trident, no to imperialism. And yes to the SNP.



Khun Sa: Opium King

Chris Wilkins looks at the life and times of an alternative entrepreneur



Khun Sa has left a legacy: he successfully exploited favourable conditions through his charisma, determination, commercial savvy, good luck and ruthlessness

SE is famous for producing dynamic, entrepreneurial commercially-aware graduates. Our endless fascination with alumni like Stelios Haji-Ioannou, founder of the easy empire, indicates that we are keen to live up to this reputation for excellence. But 'entrepreneurs' aren't always the best role models.

Consider Zhang Qifu, now in his 80s, a Burmese-born ethnic Chinese better known by the pseudonym 'Khun Sa', or 'prosperous prince'. Like any good businessman, Khun Sa made something out of nothing by taking advantage of prevailing conditions, working his way to a position of dominance and eventually securing large profits for himself and his associates. But his product wasn't budget air travel or Internet access – it was opiates, mainly heroin, for supply to the global illicit drugs market.

Khun Sa started out as an anti-communist guerrilla in the mountainous region of Shan State, near the Chinese border. By the early '60s, he had used his charisma and leadership ability to recruit a personal army of several hundred men. Eventually, he caught the attention of the central government, who decided to arm him in the fight against communist insurgents. Khun Sa had more on his mind than ideology, however; he used his new-found power and influence to set up a quasi-independent fiefdom, moving into opium and heroin production.

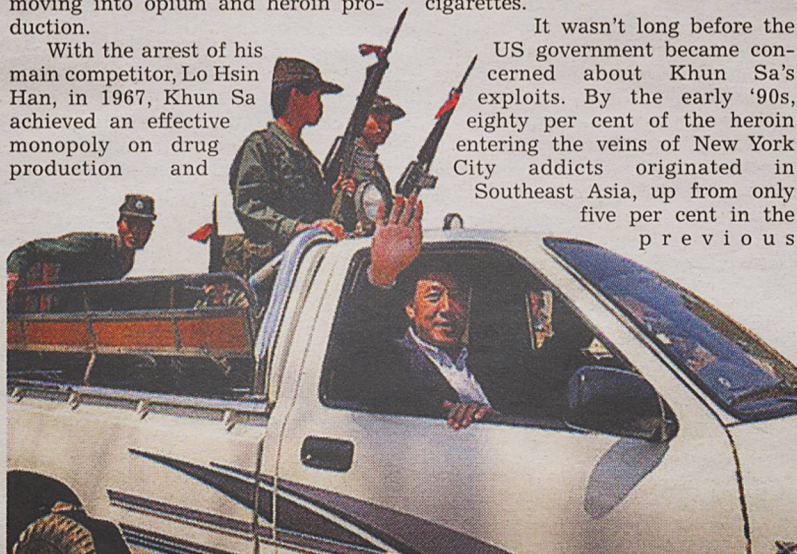
With the arrest of his main competitor, Lo Hsin Han, in 1967, Khun Sa achieved an effective monopoly on drug production and

trafficking routes to neighbouring countries. After a short setback at the hands of the law in the late '60s, Khun Sa returned to the Golden Triangle to continue building his drug empire. By this time, Southeast Asian heroin accounted for almost 70 per cent of global production, and Khun Sa quickly established himself as the region's greatest and most feared trafficker.

At the height of his power in the 1980s, Khun Sa had a personal army of 3,000 with a further 20,000 under his sway, 10 heroin refineries, and a luxurious dwelling, known as the 'White House' – an ironic tribute to a centre of 'legitimate' power, which testified both to his position of pre-eminence and to the extent of his ego.

Few believed his ideological claims: that he was a Shan freedom fighter who taxed opium to raise funds for a revolutionary struggle. He had a poor reputation with the locals, who complained that his repressive rule was no better than that of the much-despised military regime. But Khun Sa showed no remorse; by the end of the decade, Myanmar's opium production had risen to almost 3000 tonnes, from just eight tonnes in the 1930s, and he controlled seventy-five per cent of it. Not surprisingly, he was earning millions in profit, which he invested in property in Thailand and Hong Kong – whilst paying his soldiers just enough to buy food and cigarettes.

It wasn't long before the US government became concerned about Khun Sa's exploits. By the early '90s, eighty per cent of the heroin entering the veins of New York City addicts originated in Southeast Asia, up from only five per cent in the



decade. Soon Khun Sa had a two million dollar reward on his head, set by the US government, and found himself cornered – by the military regime, rival militant groups and some mutinous elements in his own ranks. In 1996, he decided it was time to pack it in – but only on condition of amnesty from the military regime, which he managed to secure by bribing a top official.

And so the situation remains; Khun Sa is safe from prosecution, and the military regime flatly refuses to extradite him to face justice overseas, citing issues of national integrity and pride, while the real reason is probably because Khun Sa knows far too much about their own involvement in drug trafficking. Khun Sa may not have the power he once had, but he still has considerable investments. All in all, he's doing pretty well for a man with such an infamous past.

Khun Sa is the secretive associate of an extremely secretive regime, so it's impossible to know how he feels about his own career. An eye-witness report some years ago, from a meeting with old allies, suggests he was far from content: "I want to die", said a crippled, elderly Khun Sa to his stunned audience, "the quicker the better", apparently lamenting his decision to surrender in 1996.

Nevertheless, Khun Sa has left a legacy: he successfully exploited favourable conditions through his charisma, determination, commercial savvy, good luck and ruthlessness, achieving a level of prosperity comparable to that of the most-admired legitimate entrepreneurs – and for this he may inspire some admiration.

In the end, however, his life does not represent a cautionary tale about the dangers of greed and criminality, or some lesson in cosmic justice, because he is still a free man, living comfortably in Yangon under the protection of the Myanmar authorities. He has suffered no retribution beyond the regrets and ailments common to old age, and the fact remains that despite ruining so many lives in his quest for power and prosperity, he will continue to enjoy the fruits of his endeavours for the rest of his days.



From poppy fields to the streets

Heroin starts life as a poppy seed. The flower's botanical name is *papaver somniferum*. The Sumerians called it Hul Gil, the 'flower of joy.'



The sap is extracted by slitting the pod vertically in parallel strokes with a special curved knife. At the refinery, the opium is mixed with lime in boiling water. On the surface a white band of morphine forms. This is processed until it is reduced to a brown paste.

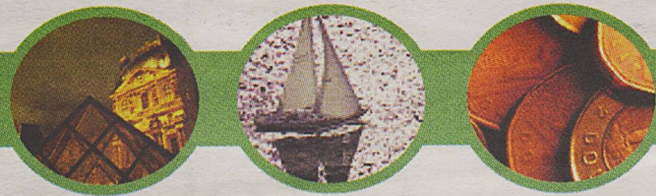
Poured into molds and dried in the sun, it is now morphine base, which has the consistency of dense modeling clay. Morphine base is smokable in a pipe – a practice introduced by the Dutch in the 17th century – or ready for further processing into heroin.



Purification in the fourth stage, involving ether and hydrochloric acid, is notoriously risky. The final product is a fluffy, white powder known in the trade as number four heroin.

By an age-old rule of thumb, every 10 tons of raw opium reduces to one ton of heroin. In other words, the worldwide opium output in 1996 translates into 430 tons of heroin.





Public Lectures

The French presidential election: Does it matter who wins?

Date: Wednesday 2 May 2007

Time: 6.30-8pm

Venue: New Theatre, East Building

Speakers: Richard Descoings, Maurice Fraser, Nicolas Sauger

Chair: Professor Christian Lequesne

Richard Descoings is director of Sciences Po, Paris. Maurice Fraser is a fellow in European Politics, European Institute, LSE. Nicolas Sauger is a research fellow, CEVIPOF, Sciences Po, Paris.

Will Blair's European Dream Be Brown's British Nightmare?

Date: Thursday 3 May 2007

Time: 6.30-8pm

Venue: Hong Kong Theatre, Clement House

Speaker: Sir Stephen Wall

Chair: Maurice Fraser

Tony Blair was at ease in the European Union. He saw the EU as part of the solution to the challenges of economic reform, energy security and climate change. Gordon Brown does not like 'abroad'. Will he be tempted to play the euro sceptic card? Will the EU constitution be, for him, a text too far? Or can Brown do for UK relations with her EU partners what Nixon did for US/China relations?

Stephen Wall was head of the European Secretariat in the UK Cabinet Office and EU adviser to Tony Blair from 2000-04. He has worked as private secretary to three successive foreign secretaries, Geoffrey Howe, John Major and Douglas Hurd, and, from 1991-93 was private secretary to the then prime minister John Major, responsible for foreign policy and defence.



The Bernard Levin Award

About the Award

The Annual Bernard Levin Award has been established to commemorate 'one of the most controversial British journalists and broadcasters of the second half of the last century', and to encourage and inspire students at the LSE to practise good journalism. Initiated by good friends of Bernard Levin, the Award will consist of an internship with a newspaper, magazine, television or radio company, with *The Times* providing the internship for the first year.

Details and how to apply

The Award is open to all members of the SU, and students should bear in mind that media experience at the top, like with *The Times*, are useful no matter what degree students may be taking.

The **Internship with The Times from the Bernard Levin Award will last three months**, and will cover all aspects of being in a newspaper, and may even be adapted to meet the intern's personal interests. It is flexible on timing, and can begin any time after October 2007 in order to fit in with students' studies. The winning student will also be awarded a certificate of their work, and be invited to celebrate their success in a style that Bernard would have enjoyed--an evening at the theatre and dinner for two.

The task for entrants will be to **write an article of up to 1,200 words** which celebrates, in any style they choose, the value and benefits of the cultural, intellectual, political, professional, business, media, or entertainment life in the proximity of the School's campus in Central London.

Entries are to be in by 15th June 2007 and the winner will be announced in the week commencing Monday 18th June. The judging panel will include an Academic of the LSE Media Department; Christopher McKane, Executive Editor of *The Times*; Liz Anderson, Arts Editor of *The Spectator*; the Executive Editor of *The Beaver*.

The internship will be published in *The Times*, the Student/Education section of *The Times Online*, and around campus, where there will also be follow-up mentions of deadlines, and the announcement of the winner.

About Bernard Levin

Bernard Levin, CBE BSc (Econ), a student and graduate of the LSE (1948-1952) and a Honorary Fellow of the School, was a brilliant debater in the Students' Union, a talented performer in the annual Student Revue, and a contributor to *Clare Market Review* magazine and *The Beaver* newspaper while he was at the School.

It was as a student at the LSE that he developed his taste for classical music and the theatre, and his passion for opera in particular. These interests were fed by the close proximity of the LSE to the Royal Opera House and London's plethora of concert halls and theatres.

Much of his early writing, while he was still at the LSE, consisted of reviews of concerts, films and plays, as were his first assignments as a journalist for national newspapers and magazines. He became the top columnist in *The Times* as well as writing for *The Guardian*, *The Observer*, *The Spectator*, and contributing to many other journals.

It was Bernard's intellectual and stinging commentaries on politics and political figures of all persuasions that brought him national and international fame. They were founded on an instinctive championing of human rights, and the underdog and vulnerable, as well as a distrust of anyone abusing power.

Born of a Jewish family, his concerns were for the persecuted around the world, and included the individual as well as the universal moral and democratic issues that loomed large throughout the second half of the twentieth century and remain with us today.

Even as Bernard was accepted as a student at the LSE he fought his case personally in Court as a conscientious objector, asking to be exempted from service in the armed service - and not only won his case but also, it is said, 'gained the respect of the Court Judge'.

Bernard's mentor at the LSE was the great Professor of Political Science, Harold Laski.

Bernard's wider popularity - some might say notoriety - grew as television became established as the prime popular medium. He participated in many programmes including the satirical 'That Was The Week That Was', chaired by David Frost. Bernard's wit and stunning use of the English language were the tools that made him admired, loved (and sometimes hatred) by both viewers and readers. He wrote many books about his enthusiasms - travel, music, opera, and collections of his journalism were also published.

Bernard died on 7th August 2004, having suffered from Alzheimer's through the last years of his life.

In November 2005, Bernard was selected by his fellow journalists as one of Britain's most influential journalists of the past four decades.



LSE Raising And Giving

LSE RAG is recruiting and it really wants YOU!

What is RAG??

Officially RAG means "Raising And Giving" and encompasses most of the charity fundraising events run by the LSESU each year. Unofficially it's a chance to have loads of Fun and raise loads of Cash for charity!!

LSE Raising And Giving is launching on a Massive year-round scale this year!! It will be a record-breaking year with plenty of fundraising events topped off by a fantastic and legendary RAG week.

There are hundreds of ways to raise money – and we are NOT talking about continuously digging deep and handing over your own hard-earned cash – RAG is about exercising hidden talents to raise money from unsuspecting members of the public at large and organising enterprising and hugely successful charitable events!!

However, all these events need the brilliance and enthusiasm of RAG members – people who want to get involved and help make all RAG activities as fun and lucrative as possible. Organisation of next year's events starts as soon as Exams finish – that's when the fun really begins!! RAG needs you!!

Why get involved?

1. It's a truly personally rewarding and gratifying experience! The money you help to raise really does make a huge difference – and it's surprisingly easy to do!!
2. You get to exploit industrious personal talents forced into hiding by endless hours of essay writing. Perhaps you have a secretly creative nature or amazing powers of persuasion? An overactive imagination? Maybe you're great with money, brilliant at publicity, a closet entrepreneur, or you just have a desire for fun and excitement...? Whatever your talents, skills, personality, whatever you want to get involved in; RAG is the organisation for YOU!!
3. It's EXCITING and FUN!
4. You could be doing something completely normal or something completely insane but ultimately the aim is to raise cash for Charity!! Abseil, Skydive, Escape the country for free – hitch to Paris, Amsterdam, Dublin? All for sponsorship – who knows where you could end up? RAG events are things you may never have the opportunity to do otherwise!
5. You are a part of a massive team of brilliant people – Just get involved – there are LOADS of new people to meet and there will be plenty of socialising; there are tons of different things to do!!
6. As part of the RAG team you will gain a huge range of extremely sought after, desirable and transferable skills and contacts – be it in the world of sponsorship, publicity, event organisation and management, team leading, working closely with charities and sponsors, working to make RAG events as cost-effective and profitable as possible. RAG and the skills you obtain seriously enhance your CV – being involved in Raising And Giving is a HUGE SELLING POINT; Making you stand out for all the right reasons – hundreds of firms actively look for people involved in RAG.

What can you be involved in?

Organisation of a huge range of events from a Freshers' ball to Raids and Hitches; Publicity of RAG; Working with Charities; Sponsorship – talking to firms, companies; Pizza Takeaways, Bars all to gain sponsorship for RAG events; Any Other Ideas...?

INTERESTED? You'd be mad not to be....!

**Come to the RAG Meeting
Wednesday, 2 May, New Theatre
(E171), 13:00-14:00**

Come see what it's all about and join up!! This is the year to really get involved and there's loads to do – WE WANT YOU!! There's also loads of information about how huge Raising And Giving is within other Unis on the web – just search RAG!! Also if you want to get involved or get more information email us: rag.lse@googlemail.com. Let the Fun Begin!!


EPOCH Review

The Entrepreneurs Open Challenge (EPOCH) is an "Apprentice" style competition, organised by the LSESU Entrepreneurs, which pits university teams from the UK and Europe against each other in various business tasks. The 2007 finals were held at LSE in February, and saw seven teams taking part in gruelling challenges involving selling, negotiation, strategy, and marketing – designed to test their business skills to the limit. Sainsbury Management Fellows (SMF), which grants MBA bursaries to talented graduates, sponsored the event and provided expert mentoring to the teams. At the end of the week's activities, Kingston University took home the impressive cash prize. James Raby from SMF commented: "SMF is committed to unearthing new business talent and fostering entrepreneurship. EPOCH is an ideal chance for young people to take advantage of the lessons learnt by successful business leaders. We hope this experience will broaden their horizons and open up new opportunities for them."

"LSE Raising And Giving



**Come to the RAG Meeting
Wednesday May 2nd, New Theatre (E171), 1pm-2pm**

nightline 

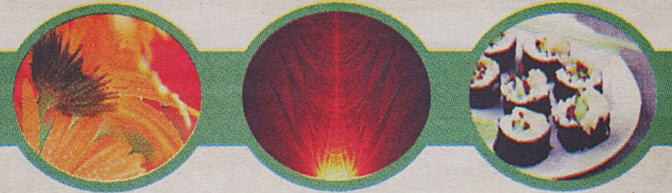
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the Beaver Listings



WEEK 2

Wednesday, 2 May

- 13:00 Catholic Mass
Chaplaincy
- 13:00 RAG 2008 Planning Meeting
New Theatre
- 19:00 Swing Dance General Class
G108
- 19:00 General Course Boat Party
Tickets on Houghton Street

Thursday, 3 May

- 13:00 LSESU UGM
Old Theatre

Friday, 4 May

- 11:00 Pre-disability consultative forum
drop-in session H605
- 20:00 Crush
Tuns, Underground, Quad

Sunday, 6 May

- 8:00 Media Group Media Group Awards
The Printworks, Clerkenwell

WEEK 3

Wednesday, 9 May

- 18:15 Catholic Mass
Chaplaincy
- 19:00 Swing Dance General Class
G108

Thursday, 10 May

- 18:45 Concert Classical Indian and Jazz
inspired improvisation
Shaw Library

WEEK 4

Thursday, 17 May

- 16:45 Concert Anna-Liisa Bezrodny, violin
and Nigel Hutchinson, piano
Shaw Library

WEEK 5

Wednesday, 23 May

- 18:45 Concert Rustem Hayroudinoff, piano
Shaw Library

SU Simulated Exam Sessions

Starting on Monday 30 April, LSE Students can register for a Simulated Exam Session at SU reception. At these sessions, students can practice for their upcoming exams by attempting to complete a past exam paper within the constraints of an LSE exam. Although students have to bring their own past paper, and cannot have their examination graded, they can use the opportunity to practice their timing and their ability to work in simulated exam conditions.

The Exams will run at 10am and/or 2.30 pm on most days in weeks 3 and 4 of this term. Students can see which exact sessions have space available by visiting SU reception in the East Building.

NOTION AND REDKEN PRESENT

theexperiment

by REDKEN
124 AVENUE NYC

BE PART OF THE EXPERIMENT!

DO YOU HAVE A CRAVING TO CREATE, TO MAKE AND INVENT,
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If you're a true original, have an unfathomable passion for music, design or film, and the talent to back it up, then it's your turn to take part in **theexperiment**. Redken and Notion have set themselves the challenge of uncovering the very best new creative talent in the UK and it's your chance to be part of it.

MUSICIANS:

IGNORE THE SO-CALLED RESTRICTIONS OF GENRE AND STYLE

Whether you're an unsigned band, producer or DJ, this is your chance to make your music the soundtrack to the creative explosion that is the experiment party!

DESIGNERS:

INNOVATIVE DESIGNERS OF EVERY DISCIPLINE, THIS IS YOUR CHANCE

Your work could provide the visual look for the experiment party at Koko. Whether you work as an illustrator, VJ, with digital formats, via photography or even prefer a fusion of these techniques, we want to help you develop and get your work seen.

FILM MAKERS:

WE WANT THE MOST INVENTIVE PAIRINGS BETWEEN MUSIC AND IMAGERY

Is your goal to create and produce a cutting-edge piece of film that encapsulates your talent and attitude? We want film makers who aren't scared of parameters and can be fearlessly original.

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TO TAKE PART IN THE EXPERIMENT, SIMPLY VISIT
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TO CREATE A PROFILE, UPLOAD MUSIC, FILM
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FOR PRESS ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT
LOUIS@MUSICIQMEDIA.COM

QUAD OFFICE HOURS

Ali Dewji Communications Officer, Tuesday 16.00

Jimmy Tam General Secretary, Thursday 14.00

Joel Kenrick Treasurer, Thursday 14.00

Alexandra Vincenti Education and Welfare Officer, Friday 14.00

James Caspell Postgraduate Officer Thursday, 3-4pm

Aled Fisher Environment and Ethics Monday, 1-2PM

Anushka Shenoy General Course Tuesday, 1-2PM

Louise Robinson Residences Thursday, 12-1PM

Carys Morgan Societies Thursday 4-5PM

Lizzie Fison Students with Disabilities Monday 11.30-12.30PM

www.lsesu.com/whatson

The Punter



Matthew Partridge

There has been a lot of activity in the betting markets. If you're a supporter of Gordon Brown, you'll be pleased to note that his betting price has now tightened to 1.12 on Betfair.com. However, the rest of us should be happy that we are able to lay (bet against) him at 1.13. Although his campaign team has a large number of endorsements from MPs and many in the media are treating him as the de facto Prime Minister; his support, to quote a character in the West Wing, 'is a mile wide and an inch deep'. Since it is now likely that he will face a challenge either from Charles Clarke, John Reid or John Hutton, he faces the prospect of a gruelling election campaign against a Blairite candidate who has little or nothing to lose, while he will have to endure sniping from the far-left in the form of John McDonnell, which will restrict his ability to adequately contest the centre ground.

Indeed, it is not difficult to see a scenario where Reid or Hutton could beat him, though even I accept that it's not that likely. My guess is that any fallout from January's events in the Home Office will be obscured by memories of last year when he adeptly handled the attempt to kill thousands of people by blowing up several airliners. According to polling guru Frank Luntz, Reid has the ability to connect with floating voters, especially those concerned about law and order. We should also remember that as late as September 2005 David Cameron was a blip in Conservative leadership polls.

Of course, it cannot be emphasised enough that betting against Brown is a 'value' bet based on the attractiveness of the odds on offer. Gordon Brown still has the support and the momentum while the three I have mentioned could decide not to stand at all. Therefore, like the other longshots that I have mentioned over the past year, I would not advise putting a large proportion of your bankroll on this bet.

Since this is the last column of the year, it is a good time to review the accuracy of my tips. The highlight has been my recommendation on the Democrats retaking the Senate. Barring a political earthquake, my predictions about Tony Blair remaining Prime Minister (if not party leader) past the end of this month seem certain to come true. However, I have laid some eggs as well, with my Cricket World Cup and Oscar predictions falling flat on their face.

I hope to be back next October to continue to give out tips on where value lies during the coming Presidential Primary season as well as on the vast range of sporting events. Who knows, if online betting continues to develop I could be handicapping LSE events by this time next year!

Use any advice given here at your own risk and don't gamble what you cannot afford to lose. Columnist(s) may have positions in wagers mentioned. Prices quoted are correct at time of going to press.

The (final) Great Debate

Can a Spurs fan live without hope?



SPORTSDESK

Sancha Bainton

I've never liked Easter break. That period between mid March and end of April is always terribly forgetful; none of my mates have birthdays, people tend to die, the weather is confused, exams are looming close enough to bring on sleepless nights but not close enough for you to actually get your ass out of bed and do anything about it. The worst thing, however, about Easter is it signals that horrible period in the football season where the leagues and major competitions are coming to a close; dreams are crushed on a weekly basis as a season's hopes are dashed due to poor

penalty decisions and shitty own goals. When you realise that 'maybe finishing top of the fair play league' has become your end of season excitement, depression is soon to follow. However, if you are a Chelsea or Man U fan then you are lucky enough to have a good month left of reasons to get out of bed. With a potential treble or quadruple round the corner for these two British teams I suppose I should show some enthusiasm. But I saw Man U do the treble in 1999 and to be honest no one wants to see Chelsea do a quadruple; for the good of English football.

Despite all my cynicism, I honestly thought this Easter would be different. I had a revision plan carefully scheduled around all crucial World Cup Cricket ties, I had a few promising tips for the Grand National and my parents had

buggered off to the States leaving me with a house all to myself. The cricket soon proved to be a waste of time (although for a split second I thought there might be a small miracle, what with it being Easter and a time of rebirth and all that good stuff); lack of parents just meant I perfected a 15 hour asleep/9 hour awake routine and my Grand National tip never made the Melling Road. On a more optimistic note in a couple of

months exams will be over, the sun will be shining, the Pimms will be flowing and for three glorious months we can once again begin the arduous process of getting our hopes up in time for the new season. As an Englishman, and a Spurs fan at that without hope, what else can I have?



"Only another exam to go"

From our illustrious AU President and Treasurer

Things ain't what they used to be



Kav Patel & Vangelis Livanis

Seeing as Dan got his say in the last Beaver, I thought only it fair that I get my say next.

I'm not going to review the year, those of you who were at the Carol, Ball, Fireworks etc. will know how well the events went and those of you who weren't have probably been informed of the debauchery that ensued. What I do want to have a 'rant' about is the changing nature of LSE and the effect it is having on our beloved AU. Having been here a paltry three years, I was fortunate (or unfortunate?) enough not to have done an AU degree. I have along with many others seen a steady decline in the commitment to the social

side of the AU. Wednesday's nights are OUR day!!! Whatever happened to the tensions between us and the post grads, I recall a time when a fight erupted between the rugby club and a dissident rude elder statesman. More importantly two-thirds of us remember when a man could streak around LSE and it was all just a bit of fun. It seems that the powers that be would like to ban fun from the AU vocabulary, for the ordinary AU-er there only seems to be one solution, go out and have fun! EVERY SINGLE WEDNESDAY!!

Don't let them make a mockery of what it is to be a student, or what it is to play sport. The introduction of non-alcoholic fresher's events should be the last straw for most of you, it is a farce. Do we not deserve the choice of whether we drink or not??? The main social events were better

attended this year than ever before, where do you all disappear to on normal nights? Here are some home truths for you.....First years, the year doesn't matter, you only need



Personally, I place blame on the SU being hijacked by a handful of mindless hippies



pass and you have succeeded! Second years, internships are pointless, your life will not end because you do not have one! Third years, you are leaders, go forth and show the rest of the AU how it is done!!

Many of the (hopefully) graduating, third years mourn the death of the AU once they pass, for they make up most of the attendees every Wednesday, don't let their nightmares become reality! The rest of the third years leave the fate of an institution that has saved the sanity of nearly everyone I know in your hands. That's my rant done! On a lighter note, I'd like to thank J, Van, Steph, Simbah, Gaz and Joey 'Big Dog' Mellows for making this the most fun and stressful year of my life!!!

Personally, I place blame on the SU being hijacked by a handful of mindless hippies. The vast majority of LSE students couldn't care less about


student politics or the personal crusades political parties embark upon under its name. They want to enjoy a normal student life and leave here with a decent degree and a well paid job. Sabbatical officers should be spending their time supporting what should be the best few years of our lives, not writing letters to distant governments expressing our unease at their recycling policy.

I have also been frustrated by the lack of direct contact the AU has with the School; sport is ultimately represented by the four sabbatical officers who tend not to get involved with the AU unless something's wrong. The School and Sabbs should ignore the mindless few troublemakers and their protests, concentrating on providing a real university experience for the majority.



Proposed ban on samurai swords

Keep your hands off my Katana



Simon Horner

In the wake of the recent Virginia Tech tragedy, that we must have better control of offensive weapons has become a familiar refrain.

Guns are less of a problem in this country, but knife crime is frequent. To this end, the government has proposed to add samurai swords to the offensive weapons order, this would render illegal the sale, hire and import of many oriental swords including the widely used Japanese Katana. I say 'widely used' only to stress its ubiquity in the context of Martial Arts, and not 'widely used' like a common switchblade in darkest Peckham, which seems to be the implicit thought behind this knee-jerk legislation.

People have become increasingly worried about knife crime, and whether this can be attributed to media hysteria or not, they have not I'm sure, become worried about youths brandishing Samurai swords. Even if they

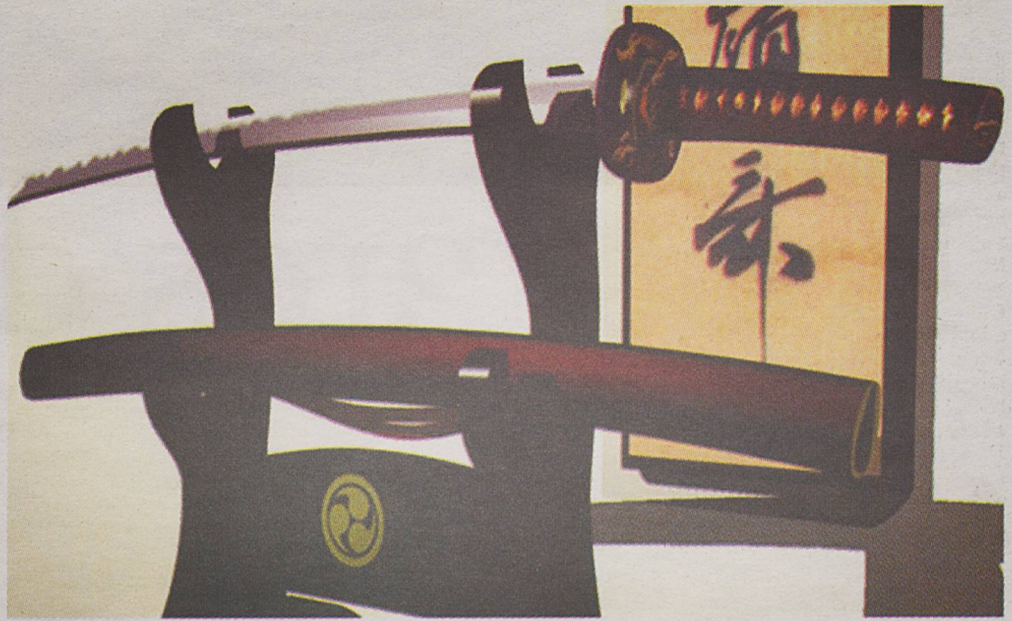
were, they could perhaps rest easy knowing that existing legislation is already more than adequate; carrying a Samurai sword in public could land you with a maximum sentence of four years as a guest of Her Majesty.

Other weapons on the banned list include the knuckle duster, butterfly knife and something called a sword umbrella, which as the name suggests is 'an umbrella containing a blade which may be used as a sword'. My new-found fascination with the last of these aside, it should be obvious that the Katana represents a departure from the theme of the existing list. This is because there is no sport involving knuckle dusters or hand-held knives; their use can only be for the most malign of purposes. No-one from the martial arts community is suggesting that the Katana is not a potentially deadly weapon; that it is deadly is intrinsic to its nature. But nor are they demanding the right to brandish them in the street. They are simply asking to employ them in a controlled environment.

Not only that but some of

the swords have a ceremonial purpose; indeed, the legislation will impact some Sikh festivals, a surprising oversight given this government's fixation on the multiculturalism agenda. Sikhs are permitted under the 1988 criminal justice act to carry the Kirpan, a ceremonial short sword constituting one of the five Ks, but this is now under threat. It seems likely though that as religion is such a sensitive issue, exceptions may well be made. As well they might be, but so should they be made for the Katana's ceremonial and sporting uses. There is no scope for the state to make moral judgments here.

The government should focus, as it has previously, on weapons whose sole purpose is to take human life. To make a brief comparison with our American colleagues, to whom we owe much for our attitudes on crime, the anti-gun movement in America will not be successful in banning all guns; to take one example, hunting rifles have a legitimate purpose. But no-one would try to kill a deer with a MAC-10 sub machine gun, and nor despite claims to the contrary, is any-



one under constitutional obligation to defend their home with one. In short the MAC-10's only purpose is to maim and kill our fellow man and should therefore be universally banned.


To compare hand-held automatic weapons and knuckle dusters with ceremonial

swords is illustrative of the lack of subtlety in the government's agenda. Instead of pandering to the most hysterical arm of public opinion, the government should look beyond mere appearance to the following question; would banning ceremonial swords prevent a man bent on mas-

sacre from achieving his end? This is not to say that his job should be made easier by the ready availability of handguns in Walmart (it certainly shouldn't) but as is so often the case, when a common sense approach is required, our government has been found wanting.

Netball

Netball: the year in review



Libby Meyer

The netball club has had a great season this year. We've quickened the speed at which we down our beloved snackie-b's, spent more time getting to know the Walkabout premises (whether that be the poles or the floor...), we've maintained our supremacy on the fancy dress nights, improved our already fan-

tastic singing skills by embracing Wednesday night's karaoke, but most importantly we've played some awesome netball.

Each team has seen a massive improvement in their league positions compared to last year. A big (and not at all biased) congratulations goes out to the mighty power team (Frolicking 3rds) who were the only netball team to finish top of their ULU division. The Sexy 2nds also has had a very

impressive season. They managed to end the season with a massive 200 goal score difference in ULU and BUSA. The Funky 1st and Sexy 2nd teams reached the semi-finals of the ULU knock-out cup as well. After the Fantastic 4ths promotion this year, they also

played some great matches at a more intense level. The biggest triumph for the Fabulous 5ths would have to be beating Strand Poly in an intense and mighty feisty ULU knock-out cup first-round match. The Social 6ths proved that they could multitask both drinking a t

Walkabout and playing some great netball. After their first year in the ULU competition, the Social 6ths have the great honour of boasting that they are ranked higher in their league than the Fabulous 5ths!

One of the biggest netball victories this year was achieved far away from the Berrylands fortress. Netball club members Asha Ladwa and Rajal Patel were part of a dedicated and powerful LSE team competing in the National Hindu Student Forum's annual sports tournament. All their hard training paid off for the competition since they won hands down! LSE's team won all of their round robin matches and blitzed

Manchester University's team in the finals. The netballers again showed their competitive spirit during the RAG Week pub crawl. We joined forces with the rugby girls to put the boys fundraising efforts to shame and raised over £550 in one afternoon. Who would have thought a boozy afternoon could be so philanthropic?

A bunch of netballers who went through a vigorous selection process to prove their livers were truly immortal were chosen to carry the LSE NC flag to the sunny shores of Spain. My parents still believe Calella is some sort of professional sports tour and I tend to agree with them. This thought is occasionally shattered when someone from outside the AU explains to me that downing vodka and burn isn't a sport. The netballers did take the games very seriously (the card game was probably taken more seriously than the matches on the first day though) and we continued our record of being undefeated from the other end a second year in a row.

I've had a bonza of a time being club captain and I'll be back again next year getting involved in all the antics and pushing for the Calella tri-factor. I'm looking forward to watching the netball family continue to grow next year under the great leadership of Lindsey and Pui. I also can't wait to see what Harry 'the Gary' has planned as social sec to make Wednesday nights even messier. My innocent liver is shaking in anticipation...



End of an era

Sancha Bainton's final Great Debate column

Sancha



Can Gordon do it?

The Punter looks at the Labour leadership election

Matthew JCG Partridge



Women's Netball

From RAG week to Hindu Netball. The year in review.

Libby Meyer

1.05.07 | thebeaver.sports@lse.ac.uk

Beaver

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Footy 3rds do the double



James McGurn

LSE 3rds 2
UCL 3rds 0

LSE 3rds 2
Kings Medics 1sts 0

LSEFC 3rds entire season has been nothing short of exceptional. Our victories over UCL 3rds in the Cup Final and King's Medics 1sts in the final game of the season delivered two pieces of silverware and ensured that LSE will be the only university in London with three teams in the ULU premier ship 1st division.

We have played 23 games in all, winning 19 (and not losing a single match). We have played expansive, attacking and open football scoring 76 goals in the process at an average of well over 3 goals per game. We have punched above our weight, disposing of 1st and 2nd XI's from sworn enemies King's and UCL. The talent within the team is unquestionable but our success has undoubtedly been forged upon an unbending team spirit. Despite not tasting defeat for the entire campaign, our season would be defined by the final two games of the season; the Cup Final at the legendary Motpur Park and our final league game on the hallowed turf of Berrylands.

Upon reaching the Cup Final we had built undeniable momentum; whilst this never became complacency, we had simply got used to winning. It was far from our best performance of the season but on occasions such as this the result is everything. After a fractious opening quarter Dan Holness provided the moment of inspiration which put us on the path to victory. Dave Dallas flighted a teasing ball into the UCL box and Dan surged beyond the hapless UCL centre-back and produced sumptuous volley which arrowed into the bottom left-hand corner. Pedro Abreu had a headed goal unluckily ruled out but went on to have an outstanding game at centre-back, winning absolutely everything in the air and snapping into countless tackles.

The second half followed much the same pattern whereby we were able to nullify any threat UCL posed but seemed unable to get the second goal

which would guarantee the Cup. Andy Ong was calm and assured as ever at right back, his flawless tackling and distribution helping us to control the game from deep. Jaimal Amin, cheered on by half the population of Banstead, was tireless in attack, chasing down lost causes and always providing options for the mid-field. As the game stretched on our superiority began to tell and we began to pick more and more holes in UCL's increasingly fragile back line. With around 15 minutes to go, the ball broke to Will Wilson inside the UCL box; he showed great strength and skill to quickly turn his marker and smash the ball beyond the exposed keeper. Cue wild celebrations and a palpable sense of relief; the cup would be ours. The final ten minutes were marked by the introduction of midfield dynamo Victor Sonier who came on and provided some much needed energy to a tiring midfield. We lifted the cup and all decamped to Jaimal's South London estate to celebrate LSEFC's first silverware of the season.



We had the Cup, now for the League



We had the Cup, now for the league. Cups can be won with a slice of luck and a measure of good fortune but the league is the true test of a team's ability. To consistently perform week in, week out over the course of an entire season marks out the great teams from those who are simply good. We needed all three points against King's Medics 1sts on the final game of the season to become champions



and secure promotion to ULU Premier One. A ferocious opening quarter was marked by the sending off of the King's keeper for handling outside his area, his dismissal seemed to galvanise the rest of his team and we were under pressure for large chunks of the first half. Players' player of the season Raymond Daamen was exemplary in goal once again and Louis De-Ste-Croix was heroic at left-back, playing through the pain barrier after picking up a knock in the Cup Final. We were getting overrun in midfield but Chris McLean was at his uncompromising best at centre back, ensuring that their possession never translated into clear cut chances.

The breakthrough finally arrived just before half-time, Will Wilson picked up the ball just outside the box and produced a sublime finish which sneaked just inside the goal-

keepers right post. Our second half performance was much stronger. Dave Dallas added class and quality from the left flank and Oli Ursino was majestic on the right, causing the hapless King's right-back countless problems with his guile and trickery. With twenty minutes remaining Dan Holness stepped up for the 16th time this season to put the result beyond doubt, racing beyond the King's centre-back and coolly slotting the ball beneath the advancing keeper. Russ Banfi replaced Louis for the final 15 minutes and was instrumental in breaking down King's late breakaway attacks. The final whistle was greeted by champagne-soaked celebrations before the whole team reunited at Pedro's flat later that night to celebrate the championship. The legendary party proved a fitting end to an unforgettable season. 3rd team till I die.

Final League Standings 2006/7 Season

P	Team	Points
1	LSE 3rds	29
2	UCL 2nds	28
3	KCL Medics 1sts	23
4	Royal Holloway 3rds	20
5	Goldsmiths	16
6	Imperial Medicals	14
7	KCL	12
8	Imperial	12
9	Queen Mary's	12
10	UCL	10
11	St George's Medics	9
12	Imperial Medicals	3

"The final whistle was greeted by champagne-soaked celebrations..."