

Debauchery

Inside:

PART B

16 page
cultural pullout

The Beaver

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London School of Economics
Students' Union
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LSE's reputation on the line, students tell school council

Paper on "student experience" presents case for free Wednesday afternoons, library hours

Poor quality of life affects LSE brand - report

Ali Moussavi

Student representatives will present a paper outlining their views on the LSE 'student experience' to the LSE Council in early March.

The document, entitled 'Improving the Student Experience at LSE' was drafted by Students' Union General Secretary Aled Fisher with the help of other elected student governors.

The paper outlines its support for changes in several areas of student life which include academic and teaching support and services, student enrichment activities and the student social experience.

According to Fisher, the recommendations to Council, the School's highest decision-making body, are based on consultations with governors, Students' Union officials, course and programme representatives. The paper also encompasses views expressed by students through UGM motions and the Union's contacts with students over the last few years.

"The student governors originally discussed the idea of putting a paper to Council at the end of Lent Term last year," he said. "The paper is designed to bring together the wide range of unsatisfactory issues concerning the student experience at the LSE."

"This was timed alongside the Annual Report from the Students' Union, which is going to the same Council meeting," he added.

The paper also specifically quotes students and makes references to the concerns of the recently launched LSE Not for Profit campaign. The campaign had highlighted similar issues with regards to the LSE student experience and gathered approximately 500 signatures for a letter voicing those concerns to LSE director Howard Davies.

Some of these concerns have attracted national attention after the LSE's performance in the National Student Survey, highlighting the reputation risk to the School among employers, alumni and donors.

Several of the paper's recommendations call for further development of existing reforms which the School is implementing. These include the recommendations of the Teaching Task Force (TTF), which has highlighted problems such as lack of access to tutors, contact time with academics, class sizes and poor feedback. However, the paper notes the long-



The Students' Union paper quotes several students' bad experiences of LSE services

term nature of the existing reforms package and calls for making short-term changes which students can feel more immediately.

The paper says: "There is also a perception that the TTF is a long-term project that will only reap benefits to future students, and many current students feel that they are effectively financing benefits that they will never see."

Other prominent issues raised in the paper include the 24-hour library, where the recommendations include an increase in opening hours should a 24-hour opening remain unfeasible, and the availability of Wednesday afternoons for student sports.

The paper points to recent National Union of Students research, which indicated that 63 of the top 100 institutions in Britain schedule no teaching hours on Wednesday afternoons. These institutions include Imperial College London, University College London and Warwick University.

In tackling problems with the induction of new students in the opening weeks of the academic year, the paper recommends a more gradual approach where induction is more of a 'transition'. Ideas include more comprehensive academic induction process in individual classes and improvement of departmental common rooms so that students can integrate better into their respective departments.

The paper builds on some changes which the Students' Union has been lobbying for in the Your Union consultation, such as the integration of course representatives and halls representatives and their elections into the Students' Union so that they are better trained and more able to cooperate with existing Students' Union initiatives.

Fisher said: "Having discussed the issue with senior members of the School, I believe that Council will take the issue very seriously. The issues that are close to the hearts of students need to be heard on the LSE's highest decision-making bodies, and the need for a drastic change in the approach of the School is urgent and necessary."

Raising and giving week

Splattered students help raise thousands



Students' Union communications officer Dan Sheldon joined other students in being slimed for charity last Friday as part of Global RAG Week.
Cherie Leung

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Photo page 21

Comment



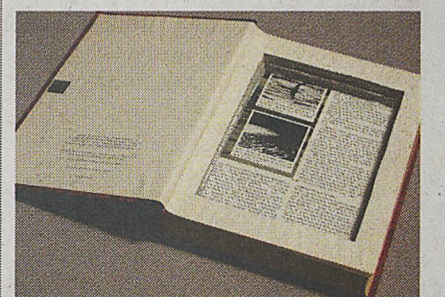
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Collective

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LSE events

Highlights of this week's public lectures and talks

Democracy in America: Jefferson, Tocqueville, and Lincoln
Professor Peter Onuf
Tonight, OT, 1830

Asia and Russia in the Age of Globalisation: the impact for Europe's future
Joschka Fischer
Tonight, SZT, 1830 (Ticketed)

Climate for Change: global warming as political opportunity
Professor Ulrich Beck
Wednesday, OT, 1830

Many Voices: understanding the debate about preventing violent extremism
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears
Wednesday, HKT, 1830

The Story of the Euro: past, present and future
Karl Otto Pöhl
Thursday, OT, 1830 (Ticketed)

LSE Space for Thought Literary Weekend
For list of speakers and events, see <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/spaceForThought/literaryWeekend/>
Friday to Sunday, NAB

Positions of the week

LSE careers service's pick of the best jobs

PricewaterhouseCoopers
Graduate positions

Banco Santander
Actuarial positions in Madrid

Allianz Insurance
Graduate training schemes in Finance, Corporate Management, IT

Whitbread
Finance Graduate Scheme

Vestas Europe Graduate programmes
Corporate Social Responsibility, finance, government relations, IT, Human Resources

Thierry Apoteker Consultant
Macroeconomist/ financial analyst positions

Energy Market Consultants
Research Assistant - Oil and Energy consultant

Risk Management Solutions
Risk Analyst Graduate Programme

Teach First
Teaching opportunities

Anti-slavery International
Child Domestic Workers conference translator

The Condé Nast Publications Ltd
Graduate recruitment scheme July 2009 - media sales executives

HP
HR Management Associate Programme 2009

YBJ Productions
The Yunus Movie Project
Internship opportunity

International SOS
Intern - Corporate Marketing Communications

Barclays
Graduate programmes and internship opportunities

Nickelodeon UK
Intern position in Research and Planning Department

Badoo Ltd
France Business Development Manager

International Crisis group
Various positions

Eurostaff Group Ltd
International Trainee recruitment consultants

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Albanian week celebrates Kosovo freedom

Vivek Kotecha

Kosovo's independence was feted on Houghton Street and money was raised for charity during LSE's first ever Albanian Week last week.

Public lectures, a film night and drinks receptions were also laid on as the LSE Students' Union Albanian Society sought to promote understanding of Albanian traditions and culture.

Society president Alfred Kovaci said that the week had raised over £2000, of which £700 would go to charities that support disadvantaged children in the western Balkans.

The remaining money would go towards the running costs of the week and for future Albanian society events, he added.

A Kosovo independence party celebrated the former Serb province's first anniversary as an independent state last Tuesday in the Quad, to the accompaniment of Albanian folk music and singers. Albanian students from across London attended.

Both the Kosovan and Albanian ambassadors to the UK gave public lectures as part of the week, speaking on the increased international recognition of Kosovo's status to the benefits of potential NATO membership for Albania and other western Balkan countries.

Kovaci said that the Albanian society, which won the "Best Overall Society" award from the students' union last academic year, was "on good tracks" for the future.

"Raising money for the disadvantaged is something that took off especially last year, but this year we see some improved results and in the future we hope to see an increased trend in the same direction," he said.

Union General Secretary Aled Dilwyn Fisher said that the society was "one of our best societies that continues to be engaging students at LSE."

Union poet laureate position created

Joe Rennison

The Students' Union will soon appoint a poet laureate to sing the praises of LSE and declaim its tragedies.

The appointment has been mandated by the Union after a motion sponsored by the Union education and welfare officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang was passed at last Thursday's Union General Meeting.

The motion came a week before the opening of Space for Thought, the LSE's first literary festival, in the New Academic Building this weekend.

A meeting will be held, with representatives from the Beaver, Pulse radio, the Clare Market Review, the Literature Society, Space for Thought and chaired by the Union communications officer, to select a student for the position.

The poet laureate will compose verses that commemorate "events of significance in the LSE calendar."

When asked during the UGM whether "dirty limericks" would be included in the poet laureate's repertoire, Akpan-Inwang, a former president of the Literature Society, said that they did. During debate on the motion Akpan-Inwang successfully recited his favourite poem, 'The Raven' by Edgar Allen Poe, to rapturous applause from the audience.



The LSE Debating Society. Photo: Madeeha Ansari

Debaters host world tournament

Joe Rennison

The LSE Open debate tournament – the most prestigious event organised by the Students' Union Debate Society – was held on campus this weekend. The programme spanned three days, with registration of teams being conducted on Friday. Cambridge won the open.

Over seventy local and international teams entered the competition, many of whom came in from as far away as California. Since it was categorised as a "high-level" debate with working graduates also competing, the panel of main adjudicators was correspondingly qualified. A large number of volunteers from the LSE also attended, under the supervision of Deputy

Over seventy local and international teams entered the competition, many of whom came in from as far away as California.

Convenors Shanti Keleman and Pantellis Palividas.

Society members planned the logistics well in advance and organised accommodation, breakfast and entertainment for all participants. The first four rounds officially kicked off on Saturday, after the consumption of an astonishing number of free bagels by participants and volunteers alike. Speeches were of a standard seven-minute duration, with the first and last being closed to points of information.

Motions ranged from the economic to highly political – from "This House would print money", to "This House believes Israel should be treated like apartheid South Africa". Whether or not they represented the views of the debaters, the subjects were handled in a logical and analytical manner that often allowed for humour. According to Peter Barton, convenor of the event,

"The Debate Society works hard to promote productive debate on and off campus, and we hope to be able to replicate the high-level of constructive discussion in an effective forum at the LSE."

The fifth round continued on Sunday, followed by the announcement of those who "broke" to the quarter-finals. The finals were held at the Knights' Templar pub, the motion being "This house believes that the consumption of luxury goods is morally corrupt".

In all it was deemed a successful event, with generally positive feedback. Worlds' University Championship finalist Daniel Warrants went as far as to declare it "The biggest and best debating tournament in Europe".



Tamil demonstrators outside Bush House and the Indian Embassy protested last Wednesday against the war in Sri Lanka. Photo: Cherie Leung

Raising and giving reach new heights during week of mayhem

James McGibney

A week of raising and giving on Houghton Street has brought in several thousands of pounds for charity.

Seventy volunteers put up over 35 fundraising events on campus and in residences from Monday to Friday last week, under the aegis of the Raising and Giving (RAG) Executive, Students' Union Communications Officer Dan Sheldon and International Students' Officer Ayushman Sen.

RAG, now in its second-year since its creation, will donate the proceeds to three children's charities; Wings of Hope, Rainbow House and Link Community Development.

The week-long charity festivities have proved a success, according to RAG President Ben Jones. He said: "Innovative ways of organizing the week combined with RAG's growing presence on campus allowed for a brilliant cohesion of so many different aspects of the SU, making this year's the best RAG week ever, both in terms of the events, and money and awareness raised."

Global RAG Week was given a strategic overhaul this year setting it apart from any previous years efforts.

The combination of LSE Global Week and RAG Week, done for the first time, was Sen's brainchild. "I spoke about making Global Week more charitable in my manifesto and joining with RAG was the perfect way to do this," he said. "I thought there might have been some conflict between the two groups but there have been no ten-

sions thanks to Ben and Dan's fantastic management."

Preparations began at the start of Lent term, when RAG advertised for volunteers to form a Global RAG Week taskforce. "It used to be a bureaucratic process done through the UGM, and then we got people who just wanted to boost their CVs. This year it was much more open, and we got a much more enthusiastic crowd", said Jones.

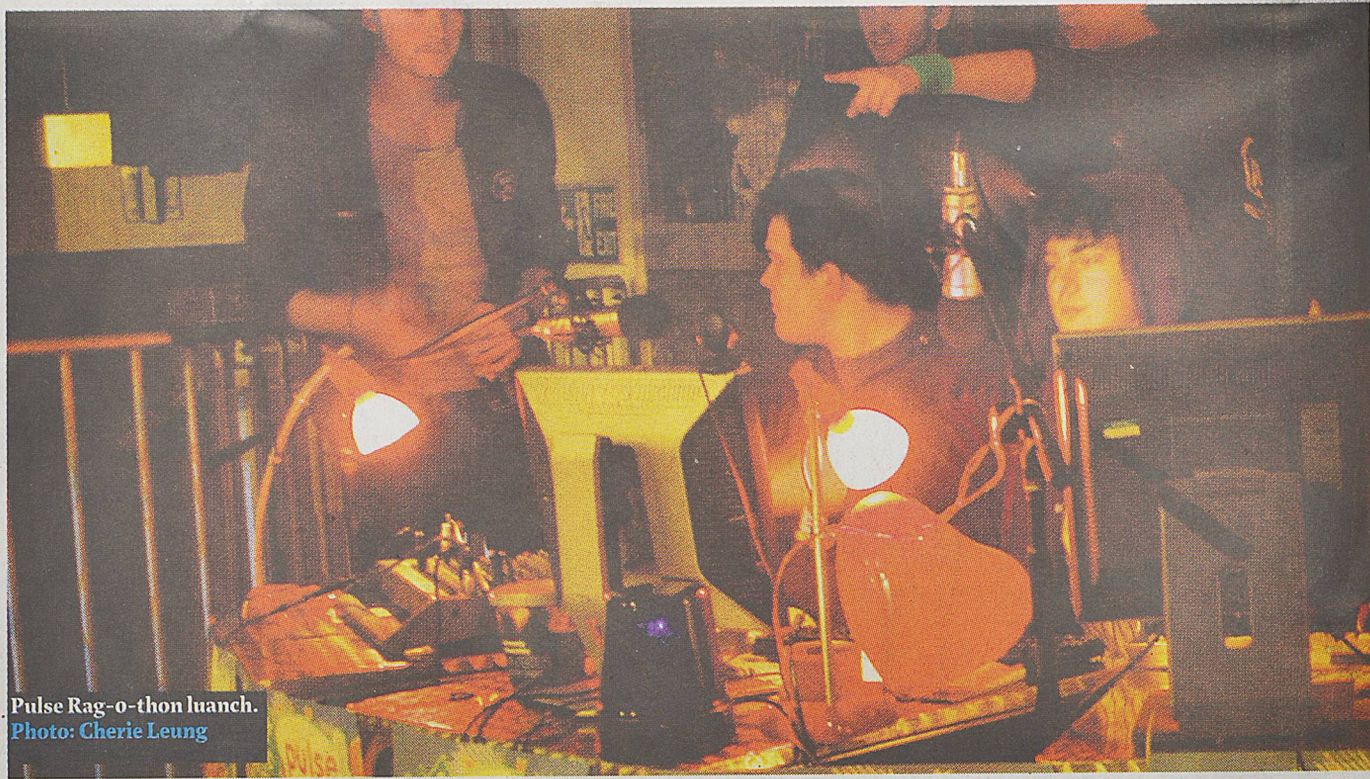
The taskforce decided which charities were supported and which events were put on. RAG Week Coordinator Helen Roberts said: "It's a democratic process. People had ideas for charities and we came up with a shortlist, which was then put to a vote. Similarly, people suggested events and together we assessed them for feasibility."

She added: "The main point is obviously to make money for charity, but we need events that are fun too, so that we get maximum participation and people become more aware of RAG on campus."

Each event was assigned a leader, several volunteers, and a member of the RAG Week Executive who oversaw their activities. This "micro-management" approach allowed the Executive to streamline the preparation process.

According to Sheldon, who coordinated the different groups involved, "this has been the most important factor in making things run smoothly. The Week has always had great potential, but it's lacked organisation in the past".

Roberts added: "This year has been great, but I want RAG to become entrenched in LSE student life so fundraising becomes a central part of the fun of university. Next year will hopefully be even better."



Pulse Rag-o-thon luanch.
Photo: Cherie Leung

Howard Davies sold off at RAG people auction

Vivek Kotecha

Every man has his price, and School director Howard Davies would not go on the cheap.

Following a raucous round of auctioneering, Davies was snapped up by a pair of students for a princely £300, who now have the chance to go on a dinner date with the director.

Davies' 'sale' was just one of the many deals sealed at the People Auction held in the Quad last Wednesday.

Bidders parted with over £1,000 at the annual charity fundraising event organised by the LSE Students' Union Development Society, each going away having secured with a dinner date with the person they had bought. Amongst the participants who put themselves up for auction were Students' Union communications officer

Dan Sheldon and Miss LSE winner Keelin Gavaghan.

All proceeds went to the United Nations Youth Development Organisation and Hope for Children, a charity that assists disabled, orphaned, poor and exploited children living in developed countries.

The director, who is no stranger to the experience, was pleased to have taken part. "It was fun," he said. "I like to support student events for charity."

Davies raised less money this time round compared to the £969 he fetched last year. When asked if this was indicative of a decline in his popularity among the student body, he replied: "My price was, I think, the second highest in the five years I have done it."

Davies' buyers, Union education and welfare officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang and second-year Government and Economics undergraduate Jonathan Damsgaard, each parted with £150 in their joint winning bid. Both said they would take the director out to dinner.

Akpan-Inwang said he would use the dinner as an opportunity to "sit down and have an informal chat in a personal capacity" with Davies. It was important to build a good rapport, he said, though he added that he would give his opinion and talk about LSE issues as a Students' Union officer.

Damsgaard said: "It was all in good fun. It was a charity event and a great opportunity to meet Howard Davies in a more informal environment."

When asked if he thought Davies was worth his share of the bid, Damsgaard said: "We will have to wait and see." Damsgaard declined to comment on the maximum bid he would have placed for Davies.

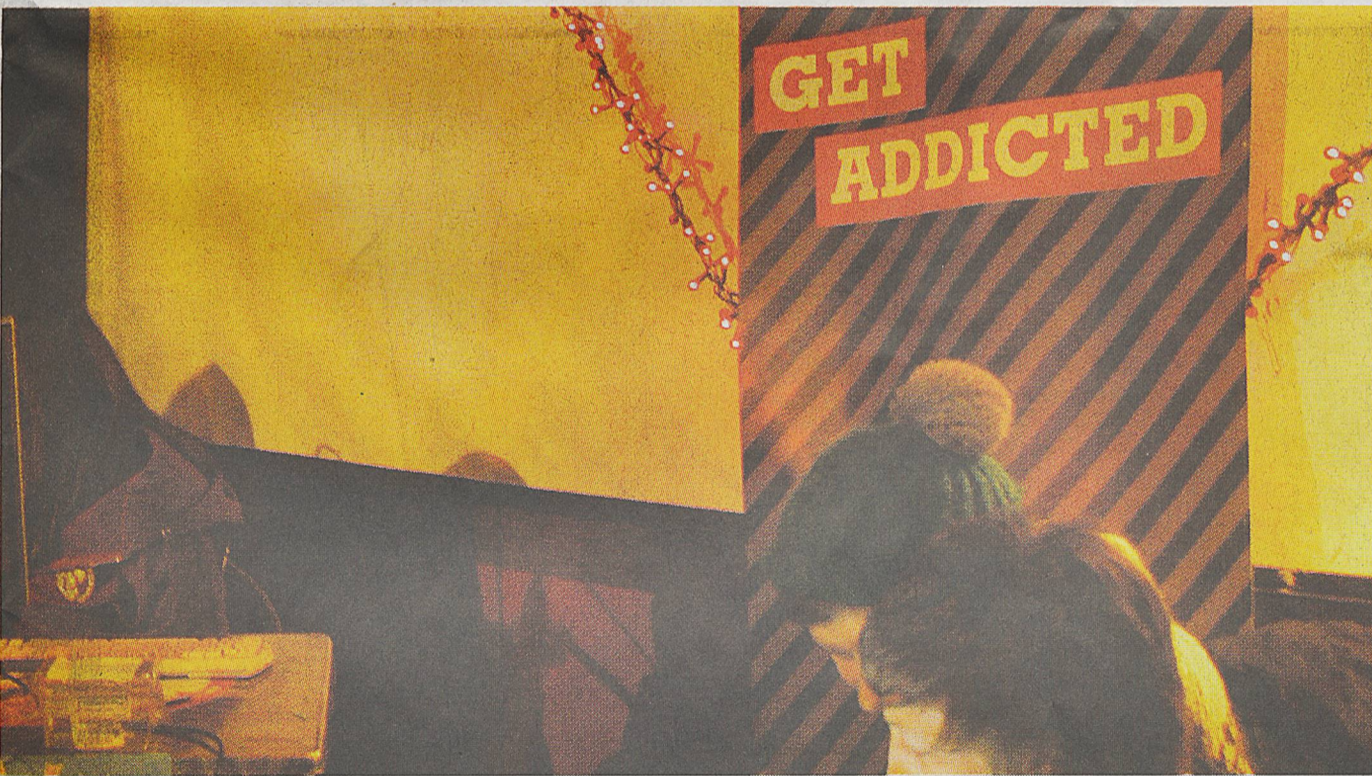




Tug-o-war on Houghton Street.
Photo: Katy Staten



Hacks vs. Jocks
Photo: Ben Phillips



Hacks vs. Jocks
Photo: Ben Phillips

Britney youtube skit ends Pulse radio-athon

Marie Dunaway

Non-stop live radio broadcasts may take a heavy toll on the DJs, but they certainly can rake in the money for charity.

Following a 120-hour live broadcasting marathon, the LSE Students' Union radio station Pulse added over £1,000 to the Global RAG Week coffers.

The amount represented a record-breaking year for Pulse, who have never breached the £1,000 mark in previous editions of their annual "Ragathon" charity fundraising drive.

Outgoing Pulse Station Manager Mark Harrison was delighted with their achievement. "The support from students has been fantastic," he said.

Harrison was one of seven members of Pulse participated in the "Ragathon", which lasted from midnight last Sunday to



last Friday evening. Throughout the broadcasting marathon, the participants did not leave the LSE grounds - all daily activities from sleeping to showering were confined to the School campus.

Apart from broadcasts from the Pulse studio and Quad stage, the activities of the group were streamed live on webcam.

This year's participants, who are all members of the Pulse committee, included new Station Manager Rob Charnock, Devrim Dirlik, James Bacon, Adam Utting,

Lewis Ahlquist and Eddie Hollis.

For Charnock, living at the LSE was "surprisingly not that weird".

"I haggled with the cleaners to get extra hours sleep, although now I am pretty sleep deprived," he said.

Dirlik, Pulse head of administration, was the only female participant. After several days of sleeping on the Quad stage and showering in the East Building, she was looking forward to her own bed and duvet, she said.

The participants were given daily challenges as part of the Ragathon. The most successful of the challenges, which included a fitness test and a Dragon's Apprentice task, involved a remake of Britney Spears' "Hit Me Baby One More Time" music video.

The video remake, themed around the 1990s in honour of Pulse's recent tenth anniversary, involved various Pulse members, with Bacon playing the leading role. Entitled "It's Bacon, Bitch", the vid-

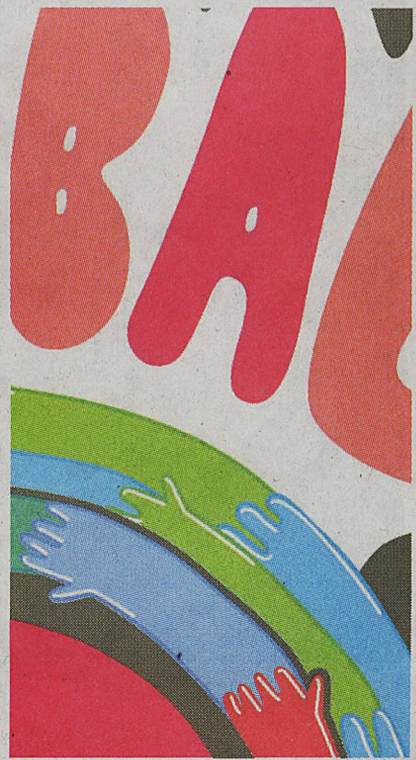
eo was filmed around campus and also starred Union sabbatical officers Dan Sheldon and Aled Dilwyn Fisher. Upon completion, Pulse were able to rapidly raise the £100 target, set as a condition for the video's release.

After its first screening at the Development Society People Auction on Wednesday, the video has garnered over 600 views on Youtube.

Harrison added: "Britney day was a highlight. Filming, editing and putting the video on YouTube has raised so much money."

"Looking back no one would have thought the night it was announced how great the end product would have been," Bacon said. "I have to say we are lucky our only female RAGamuffin remembered to bring her skirt."

"I hope RAG builds on the Bacon Bitch success. Next year perhaps the Sabbaticals can perform Wannabe by the Spice Girls," he added. "I'm certainly in."



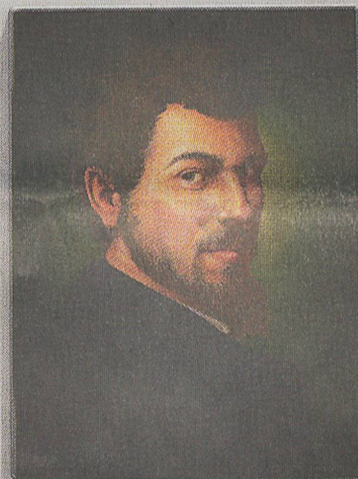
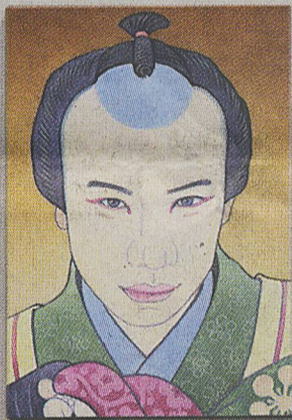
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GREAT MINDS DON'T THINK ALIKE



Blizzard of motions leaves Union General Meeting in doldrums

Higher Education & Research

LSE and sector news

Obituary - Professor Sheila Allen

Professor Sheila Allen studied her first degree at LSE as well as staying on as a postgraduate and senior research assistant. She later pursued her career, first at Birmingham University, then at Leicester before finally finding a permanent base at Bradford University where she spent three decades.

Her working class background led her to value the opportunities she'd been given and inspired a lifelong commitment to widening access to education regardless of class, race or gender.

Despite long-term ill health and diabetes Professor Allen maintained active participation in many interests even after her retirement in 1996. At the start of this year she contracted pneumonia and sadly passed away on 16 January.

She leaves behind two daughters and three grandchildren.

Possibility of caps on mortgage lending

The deputy governor of the Bank of England Sir John Gieve presented a talk at the LSE in which he has said that caps on mortgage lending could help prevent a boom in the housing market like that seen just before the recession. Caps, he said: "could have provided an effective brake on the excesses of the last boom. If problems are concentrated within the property market then caps on loan-to-income and loan-to-value ratios might be effective."



Postgraduate student Michael McGhee observes the Union General Meeting from the balcony of the Old Theatre last Thursday.
Photo Cherie Leung

Joe Rennison

An LSE masters student has called for the dissolution of the Students' Union on the grounds that it "no longer, nor did it ever, represent the students of this School."

Michael McGhee, a mature student studying conflict resolutions, also accused the Union of being "close to a criminal entity" and claims that it discriminates against people on the basis of "national origin".

"The functions of the Students' Union should be turned over to the administration of the LSE," he said. "[It] should go through a probationary period where it is overseen by a group of [School] governors."

"This probationary period should last until all of the inept and criminal elements have been identified and purged from the Students' Union's system," he added.

In making this claim, McGhee made reference to a motion he proposed unsuccessfully at the Union General Meeting two weeks ago. "The Students' Union refused to pass a motion that the Students' Union would uphold Her Majesty's terrorist laws and the laws of the United Kingdom; this means that the [Union] may be dangerously close to being a criminal entity or enterprise."

Union General Secretary Aled Fisher has spoken out against McGhee, saying: "[He] seems to believe that all societies, campaigns, sports clubs, welfare provisions and media applications open to students on campus should be shut down. I expect that every other student at the LSE disagrees with him."



The UGM.
Photo: Cherie Leung

"The idea that an organisation is a 'criminal entity' because it opposes certain laws is absurd", he added. This notion would render many charitable institutions, political parties and other universities as criminal entities as well.

Fisher criticised McGhee for "misrepresenting the motion" and that he was proposing that students "endorse the anti-terror legislation, which is in fact very controversial for large sections of society, and indeed major political parties."

McGhee caused uproar in the UGM last week with his proposal of four motions, entitled; 'Support of Human Rights'; 'Free Tibet'; 'Support of Tonga'; 'Support of the Vatican'. Only the second of these motions were passed.

Third-year International Relations undergraduate Peter Barton, who spoke in support of the 'Free Tibet' motion but

against those on 'Human Rights' and 'Tonga', said: "There is no point in us taking stances that do not represent the majority student view. Recognising states is not the place of a Students' Union."

"It's good to politicise these issues but not to take specific stances that alienate the student body. The UGM format doesn't allow people to discuss these issues in depth," he added.

While speaking against the 'Vatican' motion at the UGM, Fisher had said: "The union becomes more irrelevant with every motion like this that goes through... The union is not dying it is being killed by motions like this."

Fisher later added that he thought that the motions proposed by McGhee were a "joke" and "a waste of time".

A final motion at the UGM, entitled 'A Healthy Body means a Healthy Mind',

proposed by the Union Education and Welfare officer Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang, received solitary opposition from McGhee.

Akpan-Inwang said: "It is unfortunate that Michael McGhee took offence to my motion, especially considering the high proportion of students who suffer from mental health problems in their time at LSE and the high likelihood that it is related to their diet and amount of exercise that they do."

McGhee remains firm despite having received much opposition to his recent stance.

"I am a student exercising my freedom of speech rights," he said. "It is everybody's duty to speak truth to power; even if it's unpopular and goes against all your little friends' ideas."

Union Jack UGM sketch



Jack is the Beaver's anonymous mole at the Union General Meeting, every Thursday at 1pm

Weathered and weary, battered and tired. But the legs had yet to go from beneath the old sea dog. Yo-ho-ho and an axe to grind, Captain Mussels McGhee lumped onto his elevated perch upon the quarterdeck.

Below him, upon the forecandle, the flabattical chaplains floundered on with their weekly sermons. The crew, a true motley of socialists, louts and uninterested deckhands, busied themselves with self-important murmurings and verbal onanism. The captain sighed. What a wreck this ship had become.

But with a little finesse, skulduggery and good old-fashioned flogging, he might make fine work of this boat. "Anchors aweigh, my boys," muttered the captain to no one in particular. "Anchors aweigh."

With nothing to lose but his weight and some salty pride, Mussels McGhee cast forth his orders. His first decree was

met with dismay from the crew. With a paltry smattering of brain cells to share amongst the hundred odd ratings that lined the deck, not many of the bewildered seahands could comprehend the massive missive the retired captain just issued.

Recognise the right of nations and peoples to exist? The highbrow language was beyond them. Nonetheless a brighter one amongst the rabble managed a quibble about the absence of Wales from the Mussels' list of his favoured dominions. The crusty old captain smirked.

Tibet? Strangely enough, the near-illiterate sea dogs knew of this landlocked region and found enough compassion within their alcohol-ravaged guts to acclaim Mussels' declaration. Oh dear, he certainly didn't expect that. The crew had excelled themselves.

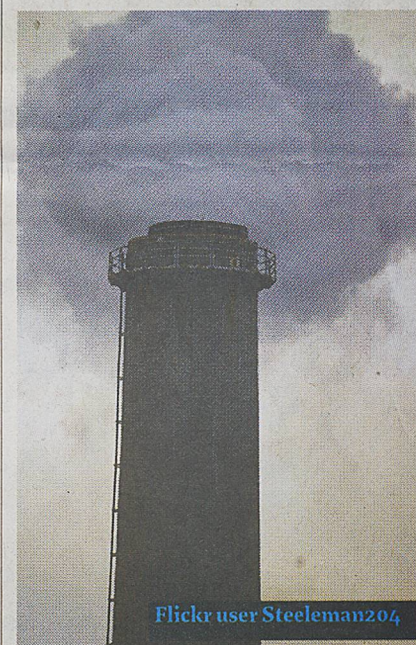
But by the time it came to discuss the eminence of the Tongan kingdom, it had become plain that the captain was fish-

ing in troubled waters. Aled Angler had enough. The leading fisherman amongst the crew would not stand for his title being brazenly challenged by a decrepit old sailor. Storming up the forecandle, and bellowed his disapproval of Mussels' fishy plot to rebrand the Union vessel as a firebrand and dangerously renegade pirate ship.

Mussels stuttered. His smirk vanished. His grand plan didn't look so rosy now. But the old captain still had some fight left in him. Some stern words and a forceful swagger might still do the trick.

But the aura and authority had long left the once growling voice of the proud sailor. A sterling effort in rousing rhetoric from Emmanuel the flabattical landlubber dealt Mussels a crippling blow, drowning his pride in his own phlegm.

The old sea dog was foiled. But only for this day. Jack's fine gut tells him it won't be the end of this charade.



Flickr user Steeleeman204

The business of Climate Change

Dr Sam Fankhauser of LSE's Grantham Institute on Climate Change and the Environment doesn't think that we can expect people to become environmentally friendly on a voluntary basis but that we need to use money to alter peoples behaviour. Fankhauser said: "There needs to be price signal to get people to change their behaviour. This can be achieved by putting a cost on carbon emissions - either through a carbon tax which is politically difficult because of the word 'tax' - or through a cap-and-trade system such as carbon trading."

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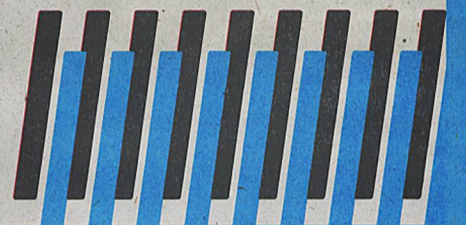


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Comment

We've come far, but student experience can be improved

Better teaching will add to the already high quality of learning and living while at LSE

Janet Hartley

Pro Director,
Teaching and Learning



The 'student experience' is a woolly expression, even slightly toe-curling, which none of us like very much. But it does acknowledge the fact that that every area of activity in the LSE, from catering to IT facilities, on Houghton Street and in halls of residence, is important to students and should be of high quality. I have overall responsibility for the student experience as the Pro Director for Teaching and Learning, so I have to try to outline what it means.

I think the LSE is a very exciting institution to attend as a student (I went to somewhere a bit shabbier up Gower Street). There is always a sense of something going on: there are some inspiring teachers at all levels (recognised by students who nominate teachers for the LSE Student Union's Teaching Excellence Awards); the library is simply world class; the careers service is outstanding; our support networks for students are expanding all the time; we have opened the New Academic Building and facilities in other parts of the School are constantly improving; the amount of activity going on – from public lectures to events run by student societies – is astounding; the student body is exceptional in its diversity, its energy and its intellectual quality (well, most of you) and that is invigorating both for teachers and for fellow students. But that doesn't mean that we don't recognise that some areas need improvement and that others need to be reassessed from time to time to see if they are still meeting the changing needs of our students.

It won't surprise you to know that I think that teaching is the most fundamental aspect of the 'student experience'. We acknowledge that we have done badly in the National Student Surveys and that we do need to address this. That is why we set up the Teaching Task Force last year, and that is why we are devising a new, compulsory, course for all first-year undergraduate students which will introduce them to 'big questions' in the social sciences.

The Task Force recommendations were accepted in full by the Academic



Photo: Erik Lang

Board and are now being implemented: more resources have been given to the Teaching and Learning Centre and the Language Centre for training and support; there is more support for Moodle; LSE For You is being extended; we are reviewing our course surveys; we are conducting a survey of good practice with office hours; we are piloting a new 'feedback form' in two departments this year – Sociology and International History; we have given financial support to some enthusiastic lecturers and graduate teaching assistants to implement innovative ways of teaching first-year compulsory courses in Accounting and Statistics; we are planning to revamp our induction activities radically next year.

Most importantly, we have allocated resources to appoint some twenty new lecturers so that we can reduce class sizes at Masters' level and increase contact between permanent staff at undergraduate level.

We are also looking at other key areas which we know matter to students. Plan-

ning the new student services centres is central to this, and I personally think that improving facilities for sport and fitness should be a key part as well – and not merely for depressingly fit twenty-year-olds. But we recognise that we don't have much space, and we must use what we have imaginatively and sensibly to enable students to work and relax. I am also working with the Students' Union to ensure that all students feel they can participate fully in the vibrant social, political and cultural activities which take place on campus.

None of this will, however, significantly enhance the 'student experience' unless the whole LSE community – students, academic and administrative staff – know what is happening, contribute to the debate and support these initiatives.

We have student representatives on all the key committees involved in this process – there are five students on the

The whole LSE community needs to contribute to the debate on how to improve the student experience

Student Affairs Committee, and final decisions on most of these matters are taken by the Academic Board, where we recently increased the number of students to six representatives. We are also looking for input from the student fora, from staff-student liaison committees and from focus groups set up by the Students' Union and Student Services. You need to tell us what the student experience is.

I should know all about the problems of making things work in practice – I spend my time as an eighteenth-century Russian historian studying tsarist decrees and then trying to find out if they were implemented either at all or in the ways intended. Two of my favourite decrees are personal ones issued by Peter the Great, precisely on teaching and learning issues: one instructed that parents whose sons ran away from his new Navigation School should be put to death; the other forbade young noblemen from marrying unless they had passed a test in Mathematics first. Come to think of it, I might have an idea for a paper for the Academic Board...

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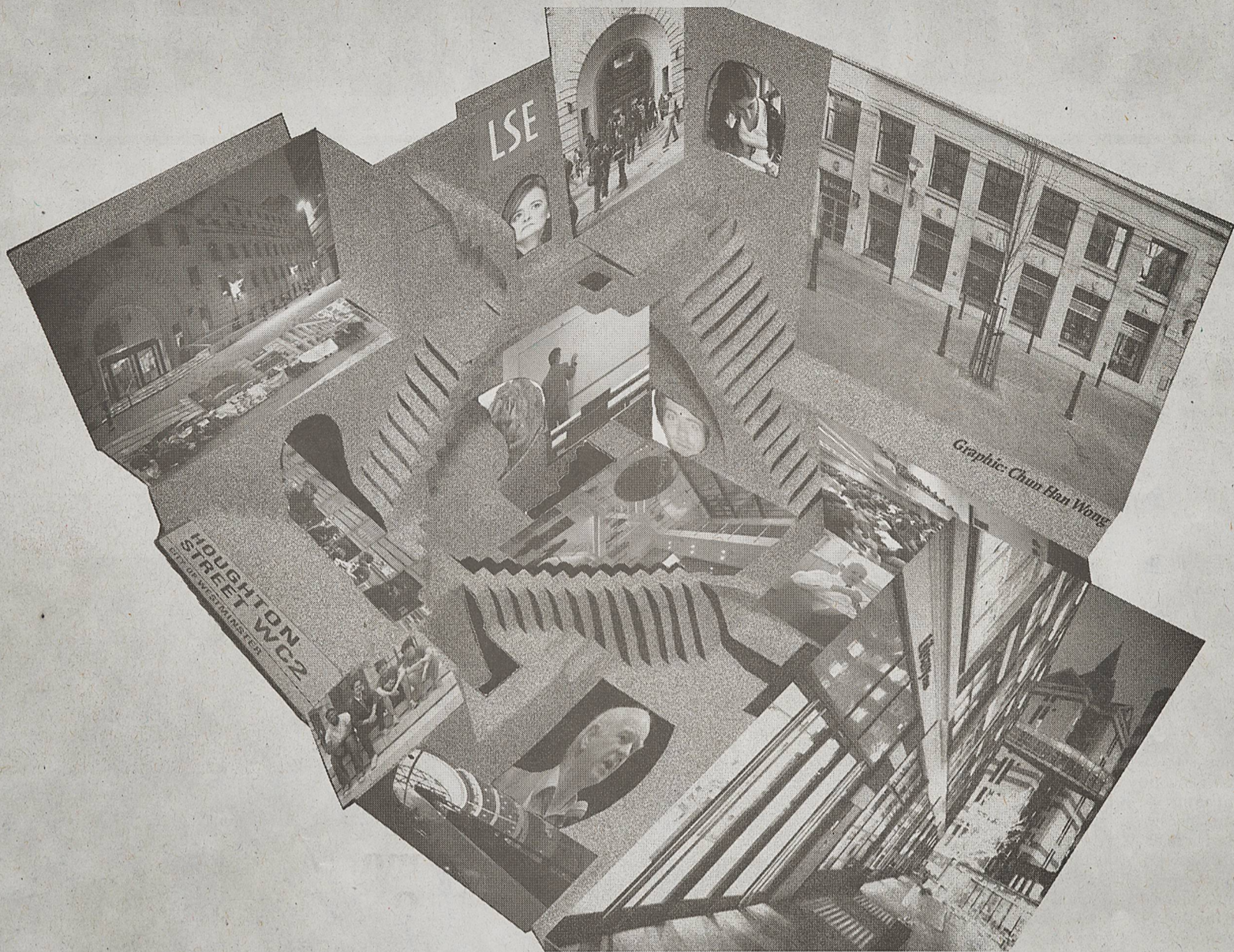
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The Beaver

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Risking LSE's reputation

It has come to something when LSE classifies teaching quality and the student social experience at the school as "High Likelihood Risks" to its reputation. That is one surprising revelation from the students' union working paper being submitted to the school's council today, on "improving the student experience". Sadly, most students will not be surprised at how bad the situation has become, and how much improvement needs to be made.

The working paper is a good start. It has come at least a term later than it should have. Students' many problems with lack of attention from tutors, lack of access to sports on Wednesday afternoons, lack of study hours in the library, and lack of welcome in halls of residence have been obvious and heavily covered in the Beaver since the start of the academic year. However, the report is better late than never, and many of these issues have never been raised by

students at the highest levels of the school before.

They should have been raised well before now. The human face of the LSE experience has been allowed to atrophy away in recent years, hollowing out the school's world-beating reputation from within.

That reputation will indeed be left in serious danger if the LSE council disregards this working paper. As the report itself makes clear, the annoyed and alienated students of today will be the uninterested alumni of tomorrow, removing a major source of support and renewal for the school. Employers are already noticing a lack of personal skills on the part of LSE student applicants. Neither will prospective students want to join a school awash in a surfeit of world-class research and well-attended public lectures, but lacking basic teaching substance. So what is to be done?

Firstly, it just has to be reiterated: Wednesday afternoons must be kept free for students

who want to play sport. University College London does it; Imperial College London does it; the University of Sheffield does it. Why can't LSE?

The school should finally join the students' union and indeed, Greenwich Mean Time in defining the afternoon as beginning at 12 o'clock. Moving the start of the Wednesday afternoon free period just one hour back from 1 o'clock would finally enable many students to travel to Berylands in time for the start of games. This is especially urgent on a campus that so far lacks alternative and decent sports facilities on site. The council must use the working paper and its proposals to set out a policy in time for the next academic year.

Even more students are frustrated at the current state of teaching than at the limbo into which Wednesday afternoons have been shoved. The existence of the Teaching Task Force and the receptiveness of many individual academics to change show that LSE is far more ame-

nable to improvement here than on sports times, at least. Every LSE student knows an inspirational lecturer or class teacher. Unfortunately, every LSE student also knows a class or lecture they would rather just avoid entirely out of sheer disengagement.

The working paper's recommendations would go some way to creating an LSE-wide strategy which could be applied to all academic departments and support teaching change across campus. The "Thinking Like A Social Scientist" lecture series to be piloted next year shows one way forward.

But the school should go further. LSE should not be promoting, or hiring in the first place, academics who lack basic teaching skills but who add points to its research status. Research alone is an unstable foundation for academic excellence and the school's focus on it has short-changed students.

Extending library opening hours towards students studying through the night should also be

part of creating a more welcoming teaching environment at LSE. Again, the beginning of twenty-four hour opening a month early this week shows that change is already on the way.

Above all, the working paper should be applauded for addressing what was for a long time a great taboo on campus: the rise of what was described by one student in last week's edition of the Beaver as the "multi-mono-culturalism" of the student body. The increasing national and cultural segregation lies at the heart of LSE's wrong direction in recent years, the shadow that lies behind the diversity and intense activity of students on campus.

Yet let he who is without sin cast the first stone. While LSE has become an ever more impersonal place over the years, the Students' Union itself is not doing enough to bridge cultural divides in its own house. Union officials should concentrate on this after they submit to council.

Obama's first month has set high standards for his presidency

The new president has already confronted problems and made progress in essential areas

Brett Noble



Despite lingering problems from Bush's failed tenure, after Obama's victory and inauguration last month, he seemed – to me at least – realistically prepared to implement goals to bring the country forward. I wasn't the only one optimistic: Obama entered office with a whopping 82 per cent approval rating among Americans.

Now, here we are, just over one month into the Obama presidency. Although pundits often stress the importance of the first 100 days a president spends in office for setting the tone for their administrations, I've decided to provide a review of Obama's first month in office to critique how he has addressed key issues, where he has succeeded, and where he could improve.

Unlike British Prime Ministers, who must land with their feet running, President Obama had from early November until late January to plan how he would start his administration, beginning with selection of staff. Unlike Bush – who surrounded himself with a staff of ideologues and enablers – Obama selected experienced, well-educated officials to staff his cabinet: Hillary Clinton as Secretary of State, Timothy Geithner for Secretary of Treasury, and LSE alumnus Peter Orszag as Director of the Office of Management and Budget. Obama's cabinet also win points for diversity: Susan Rice as Ambassador to the United Nations and Eric Holder as Attorney General both mark the first time African-Americans have held the positions.

There have been a few bumps along the road, however: prominent Democrats Bill Richardson and Tom Daschle both withdrew their nominations amidst personal controversies, and on February 12, Judd Gregg – a Republican tapped for Commerce Secretary – withdrew his nomination due to "irresolvable conflicts." In short, although Obama has selected some of the best and brightest, it remains to be seen whether they'll be able to work cohesively to tackle challenges.

As for the economy, in December



An Amnesty International protest against the prison in Guantanamo Bay last year. Obama has already promised a review and suspended trials
Photo: flickr user casmaron

the National Bureau of Economic Affairs officially announced that the US economy had entered a massive recession "with no end in sight." In January, nearly 600,000 US workers were laid off from their jobs. This was a problem that Obama obviously couldn't fix overnight, and so it does not come as a surprise that the economy has continued to decline. On the morning of Obama's inauguration, the Dow Jones Industrial Average stood at 8,281.22. By last Friday, the volume was 7,365.67 – marking an 11 per cent loss.

Obama's response to the crisis – an \$865 billion government stimulus bill – was on the table before he even took office. Obama characteristically emphasised his willingness to listen to suggestions from across the aisle: "[I]f Congress has better suggestions where they can show me that one approach is going to be better than another approach, I'm happy to take it," he told CBS News on 15 January. However, Obama struggled to find support from Republicans. After his \$787 billion stimulus plan ultimately passed, John McCain spoke out against the plan, calling it "generational theft" and a failure of bipartisanship.

Meanwhile, the national debt has increased from \$163 billion to \$10.789 trillion – and although I'm no economist, these numbers bother me. While I commend Obama for boldly working to get measures in place to help families (read: biggest economic bill in US history), I'm worried that this won't be achievable in

tandem with his proposed \$300 billion tax cut. Instead of rushing to put solutions in place, I hope Obama can realistically acknowledge the limits of the government to bring an early end to periods of financial turmoil.

Addressing the issue of women's rights and workplace discrimination, President Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law that allows women to sue up to 180 days after receipt of their last paycheck, rather than the previous limitation which ended 180 days after a person started work. Reaching out to struggling communities, Obama established an office of faith and community-based programs. Most prominently, Obama immediately issued a 120 day suspension of terrorist trials at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and has created a task force to review its policies. Yet on January 30, a military court rejected Obama's proposed suspension of the trial of Abd al-Rahim al-Nashiri, a suspected bomber of the USS Cole. The future of the detention centre remains up in the air. Although Obama will inevitably encounter more roadblocks in his drive to improve civil and human rights, I am satisfied by what he has accomplished in his first month in this area.

Obama's approach to presidential communication is far more innovative and transparent than the Bush administration – even if he has only held one White House press conference since taking office. His website – Whitehouse.gov – has been expanded to include a blog, videos of his

There are 47 months left of Obama's current term: this past month has laid the groundwork for the rest of the presidency

weekly briefings to the country, legislation before it is signed into law, and copies of executive orders and proclamations.

Obama himself has spent relatively little time in the White House since taking office, preferring instead to travel the country and promote his agenda. Since taking office, he has already taken 16 flights on Air Force One and visited seven states. While costly, I think that it is a noble gesture to reach out to constituents.

Finally, Obama's communication to foreign nations – stretching out a hand of partnership to the leaders of Spain, Japan, and Australia, to name a few – is another welcomed change from the Bush administration that should not only raise the image of Americans around the world, but keep them safer. Just as Obama was able to revolutionise campaign communication techniques, he has truly brought change to White House communications.

There are 47 months remaining in Obama's current term, and although each will undoubtedly present the 44th U.S. president with challenges and opportunities, the last 30 days have helped lay the groundwork for what will determine the success of his presidency. Although there have been a few setbacks and evidence of risky spending, nobody can say that Obama has been lazy. By putting the American people first and balancing his options carefully, I hope that his idealism that helped him surge in the polls and win the election can bring the United States forward.

We must work for the right to die with dignity

The recent debate about abortion on campus has similarities with the controversy in Italy

Beatrice da Col



There has been, in the past couple of weeks, increasing debate on campus – captured by the Beaver – following the installation of pro-life campaigners' stalls on Houghton Street. Essentially, pro-life advocates (as opposed to pro-choice ones) believe that life, no matter at what stage and in what conditions, is sacred and should be protected. Alex Peters-Day, in last week's edition of the Beaver, highlighted that the scare tactics used by such campaigners are nothing but counterproductive. Abortion has always been matter of passionate debate and controversy, and will continue to be so; opinions of abortion bring together an individual's position on ethical,

moral, biological, and legal issues, which interplay with his or her value system. On top of this, religious ethics come into play, influencing not only personal opinions, but often also the debate at large.

Throughout the discussion, I couldn't help but think about the debate on the 'right to die' which raged, most recently, on the Italian political and media scene, in the form of what one could call – without risk of exaggeration – a national drama. The 'right to die' refers to those issues related to the decision of whether an individual who could continue to live with the aid of life support should be allowed to die. The debate on abortion interlocks with that on the right to die. Some argue that withdrawing a feeding tube or performing an abortion unjustly bestows the power to take another's life; others that fundamentally personal decisions about whether to have a baby or to continue living in an irreversible coma are best made not by a government, but by an individual or a family. Both debates evoke conflicting ethical, moral and religious consid-

erations that arise with matters of life, death, and destiny. Opinions within both debates therefore see the combination of beliefs on either act's morality, and beliefs on the responsibility, ethical scope, and proper extent of governmental authorities in public policy.

The debate in Italy was sparked and had at its centre the vicissitudes of Eluana Englaro, a woman who, following a car accident in 1992, entered persistent vegetative state and became the focus of a court battle between supporters and opponents of euthanasia. Doctors had made it clear that her brain damage was too severe and that she would never regain consciousness or awareness. Her father fought for ten years a court battle for the removal of artificial life support to let her die naturally. Shortly before Englaro had the accident, she had visited a friend in coma, and the father recalled a conversation in which she determinately told him she would never have wanted to be left alive in those conditions.

The authorities initially refused the

father's request, but the decision was, much later, reversed. Early this month, as doctors started reducing Englaro's nutritional support, the debate, already dominating the media and dividing the country's public opinion, turned into a constitutional question. Prime Minister Berlusconi, backed by the Vatican, started saying that "murder" was taking place and made last-ditch efforts to stop Englaro's death. In the attempt to reverse the high court ruling allowing Englaro to die, he issued an emergency decree that would prevent the clinic from withholding Englaro's sustenance. President Napolitano refused to approve the decree on the grounds of unconstitutionality, saying it clashed with the supreme court ruling – fiercely opposed by the Catholic Church – giving Bepino Englaro permission to find doctors who would end her life. Subsequently, the Berlusconi government, again backed and pressured by the Vatican to 'stop such a crime against humanity', persisted in the attempt to stop Englaro from dying by trying hastily to push a law through

Parliament. On 6 February the Italian senate was in the middle of reviewing Englaro's case when the clinic announced she had died.

Englaro's case and the interaction between her family, the State, the Church and public opinion highlights well the complexity of the matter. In this case, as well as in other similar cases which occur daily throughout the world, we should not be debating about the morality of performing euthanasia; words such as committing murder or crime should not even be part of the discussion. Within the tragedy, we should be speaking about the right to making a personal, if controversial, choice, which does not affect other people's rights or liberties, and which could be made in respect of others' opinions and beliefs. There is no national constitution or international declaration I am aware of which includes the right to die with dignity as one of human's fundamental rights. Maybe it is time to consider whether the issue should be viewed under new terms.



Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi attempted to block the removal of Englaro's feeding tubes
Photo: flickr user Alessio85

Letters to the editor

Pastoral care at LSE

Dear Sir,

As LSE Roman Catholic chaplain, I have been asked to comment on the presence in Houghton Street of a display by Created4Life, and on the subsequent objections by certain SU members. I had not heard of Created4Life until The Beaver approached me, but I have now examined their website, www.Created4Life.org. If their behaviour accords with the website, I see no legitimate grounds for outlawing them. (It would be different if Created4Life had been rude or insulting, but The Beaver report did not suggest this.)

Apparently the display included models of the human foetus at different stages of development. The objectors consider that the display of these models is distressing and upsetting, indecent and ridiculous, and that Created4Life should be excluded from Houghton Street. The virulence of the response suggests that Created4Life is touching some kind of wound which needs to be addressed. Unless the objections to Created4Life are completely off the wall, the episode is revealing real pastoral needs among students, which should not be just buried.

What needs? 1) there may be a need for better post-abortion counselling. The parents of an aborted child may suffer deeply and unconsciously. That pain needs to be received in a caring way.

2) Genuine information: Care4Life evidently aims to inform people about what a foetus is and therefore what is happening when it is being aborted. This freedom of information, and discussion of values, is vital for young people.

3) Pregnancy care: for a woman who finds she is expecting a child, and for the father of that child, life-affirming listening, support and guidance is a gift, not a curse. It can make all the difference to their future life.

4) Philosophy of the human person. To draw a veil over the reality of abortion gets us nowhere. I write now as a Catholic Christian. The Christian vision of the dignity of the human being from conception to natural death is a very life-giving perspective, which can bring a lot of fresh air to a rather clammy debate.

My main point in writing is this: the RC Chaplaincy welcomes any student who experiences such pastoral needs. I would welcome a text or email to arrange to meet; or I would be pleased confidentially to refer her or him to meet professionals who will receive them lovingly and constructively at this time.

Here are my contacts: iainmatthew@yahoo.com, 07776457392.

Yours,

Fr Iain Matthew ODC, D Phil.

An informed right to choose

Dear Sir,

I would like to respond to Sam Burke's call for a more robust debate on abortion in his letter published on 10 Feb.

On 28 Jan, your columnist approached the Catholic Society and Chaplain for our response to her article dated 27 Jan. After appropriate reflection and deliberation, both the society and chaplain replied in writing on the weekend of 30 Jan. Our feedback was unfortunately deemed unworthy of any mention in her follow-up feature dated 3 Feb. Nor was it directed to the editor for publishing in the forum section.

I would like to share our view on this matter.

The Catholic Society appreciates the SU's promotion of responsible free speech on campus. However, we do not support the SU's initiative against pro-life activities on Houghton Street. There is nothing intrinsically irresponsible in promoting awareness of the humanity of unborn babies through foetus models.

Each child in a mother's womb has an intrinsic right to life, and should be given due respect, voice and protection. It is to that end that the pro-life movement must be allowed to continue raising awareness.

Upholding the right to choose LIFE is not incompatible with secular society's assertion of a right to choose. Just as the School's Right to Choose fund is also there for women who choose to continue with their pregnancies, our welfare officer should try to maintain a more balanced perspective on the matter.

Those who view abortion as a fundamental women's right should give others the chance to help women make an informed decision.

Michael Lui
On behalf of LSESU Catholic Society

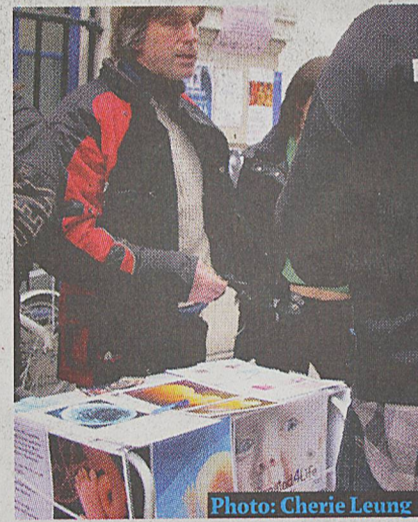


Photo: Cherie Leung

Mistakes stifle debate

Dear Sir,

I am writing in response to Sam Burke's letter. Whilst I appreciate the views and opinions of LSE alumni, it appears that Mr. Burke is not aware of the full context of the Student Union's issue with Created4Life.

First, let's be clear: nobody, as far as I am aware, is advocating gagging people who take a pro-life stance on abortion. LSE is a bastion of free speech and I believe that pro-life students and groups do have a right to express their opinion. Unfortunately, Created4Life, an external organization which has no link to the LSE whatsoever, has decided to target our students in a way that is not conducive to any form of debate.

Their website and pamphlets compares abortion to the Nazi Holocaust and therefore makes the claim that a woman having an abortion is tantamount to committing genocide. In addition, they state that the fact that abortion has been legal for 41 years is equivalent to the legality of slavery. Along with that, they make the appalling assertion that having an abortion is worse than rape. Finally, their literature contains false information which suggests that doctors are forcing women to have abortions. None of these assertions promote dialogue or open debate about the issues.

The basis for my opposition of this group is that their literature is incredibly offensive to those students who have to make a very difficult decision. They should be given helpful and accurate information and support to allow them to make that decision. Accusing them of being Nazis, committing genocide, supporting slavery, and feeding them false information undermines the work of the school and the Students' Union. The Students' Union is a pro-choice organization as evidenced by our Women's Campaign, Advice and Counselling Centre, and the approval of the Right to Choose Fund in the Union budget presented at the UGM; pro-choice means that the Students' Union will provide support, services, and advice to students regardless of what choice they make. That is why it is called pro-choice; the services and support are their no matter what the person chooses. Students are always welcome to put forward motions to shift Union policy at any Union General Meeting through democratic debate and deliberation. Unfortunately, using terms like Holocaust, genocide, and slavery strongly undermines the necessary debate and dialogue which could take place on this issue.

Many thanks,

Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang
LSESU Education & Welfare Officer



Are the SU sabbs worth more to you than a free beer?
Photo: flickr user Steven Burke

Beer would be more useful than sabbs

Dear Sir,

I propose we abolish the paid positions of sabbatical officers at the UGM, and pass on the savings to all LSE students in the form of coupons for free beer at the Tuns. We pay these four officers roughly 98,000 pounds a year. Divide this by the price of an average beer at the Tuns, 2.20, and again by our student body of 8,810 students, and we get about 5 beers a person. We could even set up a marketplace for those who wish to sell their coupon, if, for example, they do not

drink alcohol. Nobody really cares about the UGM, shown by dismal attendance at meetings, and the fact 75% of the student body does not know who the General Secretary is. All it does is make proclamations on issues entirely outside of the sphere of the school, which are then ignored. Thus I believe the move to substitute the paid sabbatical officers, who could be replaced with volunteer officers, with 5 free beers would be popular. So let's put it to a vote at the next UGM meeting, and the people the UGM is supposed to be for can decide whether it is worth a few free beers.

Kindly,

Andy Rougeot

Selfless service to others is a way of life

The Hindu principle of Sewa shows us how to learn to help others in all aspects of their lives

Tinapriya Viswanathan



Wake up each and every day to such tragic headlines that it is sometimes easy to turn the other cheek and merely be thankful that we are in a better place. As students living in one of the most expensive cities in the world, one is hardly in the position to support a starving child for a week, let alone a whole month. So you're not a CEO of a big corporation and no one is really going to acknowledge that penny you put into the donation box, why bother? Well, as Robert J. Furey once said, "To become acquainted with kindness

one must be prepared to learn new things and feel new feelings." While it is in fact human nature to crave recognition for the deeds that we do, kindness is more than a philosophy of the mind. It is a philosophy of the spirit.

Sewa essentially means "selfless service", and is an integral concept of Hindu Dharma. The motives that inspire human beings to do an act of sewa have been varied and many. The feeling of compassion, humanity, and sympathy are usually mentioned and it is also possible that in some cases, these motives could be a desire for a name or reputation, an expectation of a return, or the advancement of a certain faith. All these motives imply that the server and the served are separate and distinct entities. In Hindu thought, things are looked at in a different way. The cardinal principle is that God is residing in all beings - human, animal, bird, plant or inanimate, and if the same God who is present in me is also present in other



Photo: Ashnavi Bijkajee

human beings, therefore serving another is serving God. This concept is the basis for sewa work in Hindu thought. The acts are ultimately done not for recognition or credit, but for one's own joy and comfort.

In commemorating the national Sewa Week next week, the LSE Students' Union Hindu Society has arranged a host of exciting events to raise money for two charities - Hope For Children and Saraswati Vidyalaya. The focus of this year's sewa fundraising is on children and educating, as we strongly believe that education is a companion which no future can suppress.

Yesterday is not ours to recover, but tomorrow is ours to win or lose, so by helping the leaders of tomorrow, we aspire to create a better future. Hope For Children aims to assist children who suffer through being disabled, orphaned, poor and exploited, particularly those living in developing countries. This is achieved through providing, promoting and advancing children's rights and access to

basic necessities, including education and health care, aimed at sustaining their long term development. Saraswati Vidyalaya - whose mission statement is to banish illiteracy from the face of tribal India by 2012 - aims to achieve this by bringing primary education to all 100,000 rural and tribal villages in India. They have thus far been successful in providing education to 604,260 children by establishing thousands of primary schools.

Among the events that the Hindu Society have planned for the week are an introductory prayer and a brief talk on sewa, a movie screening with drinks and snacks, a penny trail competition between first, second, and third years, a quiz night with an amazing dining experience awaiting the winners, and finally - splash! - a chance to throw water balloons at your fellow LSE students! Keep an eye out for the posters all week and come along for a chance to have a good time while doing your bit for charity.

Hindu philosophers have attached a very great importance to selfless and loving service to others. The Vedic dictum, "Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu" - may the entire world be happy, gives us insight into the spirit with which sewa should be rendered. When carried out with the attitude of humility and selflessness, sewa is capable of destroying all barriers and ultimately reveals the intimate bond between all human beings. We suffer from the misconception that to reach out implies feeding and clothing the masses, but too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around. Every accomplishment large and small begins with the same decision: I'll try. Keep in mind that kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see, and that is all the motivation you need to extend that helping hand.

Features



Flickr User Swifty

The ironies of independence

Chiara Bartoletti discusses the problems facing Kosovo a year after declaring independence

On Tuesday, 17 February, two million people in the Balkan's smallest nation, Kosovo, celebrated their country's first year of independence.

Many observers predicted an eruption of violence last year, but Kosovo has remained relatively stable. There has been no military confrontation with Serbia; no mass exodus in the Serbian enclaves. Kosovo has been through a series of reforms and institution-building, and it has even established a constitution. Despite these steps forward, how much progress has been made on the ground? What are the main problems facing Kosovo today?

Primarily, Kosovo still faces problems of recognition. Unsurprisingly, Serbia hasn't recognised the unilateral declaration of independence. The Serbian president Boris Tadic has affirmed that 'Kosovo is not a country' and still considers the region as part of Serbian territory. Serbia has asked the International Court of Justice to issue an advisory opinion on the legality of Kosovo's independence. On the other side, Kosovo has accused Serbia of being uncooperative, hiding war criminals, and pressuring Serbian minorities living in Kosovo to be uncooperative. On a visit to the LSE in November, Kosovo's president Fatmir Sedjii declared that 'Belgrade's interference will only bring problems and further hinder the application of the rule of law throughout Kosovo'.
Out of the United Nations' 192

member states, only 54 have recognised Kosovo, among them the United States, Great Britain and France. Problematically, Russia protected its Serbian brother and has vetoed every Security Council resolution that would have recognised Kosovo's statehood. Since it is not yet recognised by a sizeable number of states, Kosovo cannot gain membership in major international organisations, like the United Nations, to name just one.

Even within the European Union, consensus has not been reached. Out of its 27 members, Spain, Greece, Cyprus, Romania and Slovakia have not recognised Kosovo. These five countries have all internal separatist movements or border disputes, and fear that Kosovo's independence will set a precedent and have an impact in their country.

As if this was not enough, Kosovo is one of the poorest economies in Europe, with an estimated income per capita of €1611 in 2007. Approximately 45 per cent of the population lives in poverty (below €1.42 per day). In addition, the unemployment rate is at 45 per cent; 70 per cent of these being active youth. These figures explain, in part, high crime rates and black market problems.

Kosovo's transition to a marked economy has been more difficult compared to other post-communist states for several reasons. The war and the international protectorate on the region have delayed the transition process. War in Kosovo has destroyed the majority of assets and infra-

structure. In addition, the state has inherited an economy which has not enjoyed the boost of investment for a long time. There is a fundamental and very practical reason that explains the poor economy: a lack of electricity. The electricity system faces constant problems and shortages that paralyse the entire economy. Alternative energy sources are the only means of solving this particular issue.

Pristina also faces an education problem. Half of Kosovo's population is under the age of 25, but the education system in the burgeoning state is not equipped to cope with this. Kosovo lacks experts that are vital for the development of its economy.

All of these remaining issues suggest that it will be very difficult for Kosovo to be truly independent and to be able to stand on its own feet. For the moment, the economy is largely dependent on the help it receives from the EU, the international community and the Kosovan diaspora. Despite all these problems, there have been some modest economic improvements. The EU's Commission report in 2008 stated that real GDP grew by 4.5 per cent in 2007. However the situation is far from being satisfying, it is certain that Kosovo could not survive economically if it was left alone. Combined with the current economic crisis, foreign investment is decreasing everywhere and unemployment is rising. This certainly won't do anything to help the region achieve stability.

Since it is not yet recognised by a sizeable number of states, Kosovo cannot gain membership in major international organisations

However what is apparently helping to guarantee a long lasting peace is the prospect of European Union membership. As President Sedjii said, European integration is the first of Kosovo's priorities. To fulfil EU's conditions for membership, Kosovo is trying to build democratic institutions, foster respect for human rights and in particular minorities rights. Minorities are also integrated and represented in institutions.

Pristina has emphasised its commitment to building a free economy without barriers, and enhancing regional cooperation. To help them attain that goal, the EU has deployed its biggest mission ever under the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) - EULEX, a police and justice mission. Furthermore the European Parliament has recently adopted a resolution by 402 votes against 133, urging all EU member states to recognise Kosovo's independence.

Some analysts believe that Kosovo still fundamentally lacks a credible EU membership, since the EU member states are still divided on Kosovo's recognition. If the prospect of joining the union becomes more and more uncertain, what will guarantee peace in the Balkans? What will stop the triumph of nationalism? The EU has a big responsibility, and should not forget that stability in the region is closely tied to stability in Kosovo.

FOCUS ON THE GREEN

How to help the environment at the LSE

Rosalie Ray and the Environmental and Ethics Forum give us a guide to identify environmentally friendly corners of the LSE

Bike Racks

- 16 in New Inn Passage
- 34 in Clements Inn Passage
- 24 in Grange Court
- 32 between Parish Hall and Peacock Theatre
- 28 in the basement of St. Phillips between the north and south buildings
- 12 in Clare Market by the Student Services Centre
- 66 in the basement of Tower 1 (access permission required)
- 48 in John Watkins Plaza
- 40 in the basement of the NAB
- 32 on the NAB corner of Lincoln's Inn Fields (public)

Fairtrade

As a Fairtrade university, all of the LSE's catering facilities offer fair-trade products. They are:

- New Academic Building*
Cafe 54
Mezzanine
- Old Building*
Fourth Floor Restaurant
Fourth Floor Cafe Bar
Staff Dining Room and Coffee Bar
- The Garrick (Houghton St)
Café Pepe (Clement House)
Plaza Café (John Watkins Plaza)

George IV pub (Portugal St)

The SU shops in the NAB and in East Building and the SU Café in East Building also sell Fairtrade products. Other Fairtrade vendors in the area include Starbucks on Kingsway. The Fourth Floor Restaurant and the lobby of the Library have Fairtrade coffee vending machines.

Reusable Mugs

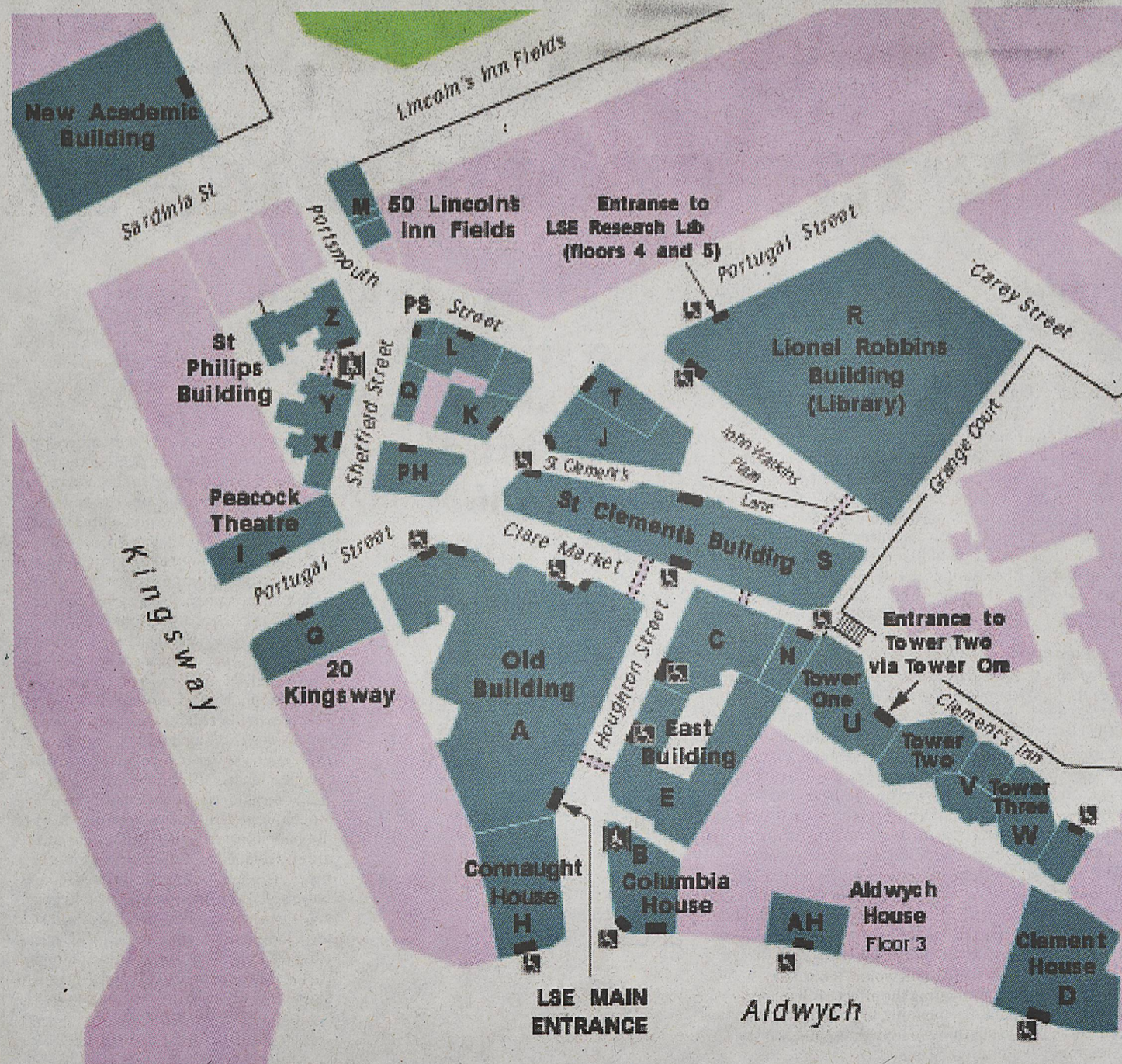
Hot Gossip and Starbucks on Kingsway and Wright's Bar on Houghton Street allows customers use a reusable mug instead of providing a

disposable mug. Negotiations with LSE Catering Services are ongoing about whether or not a reusable mug can be used.

Showers and Locker Rooms

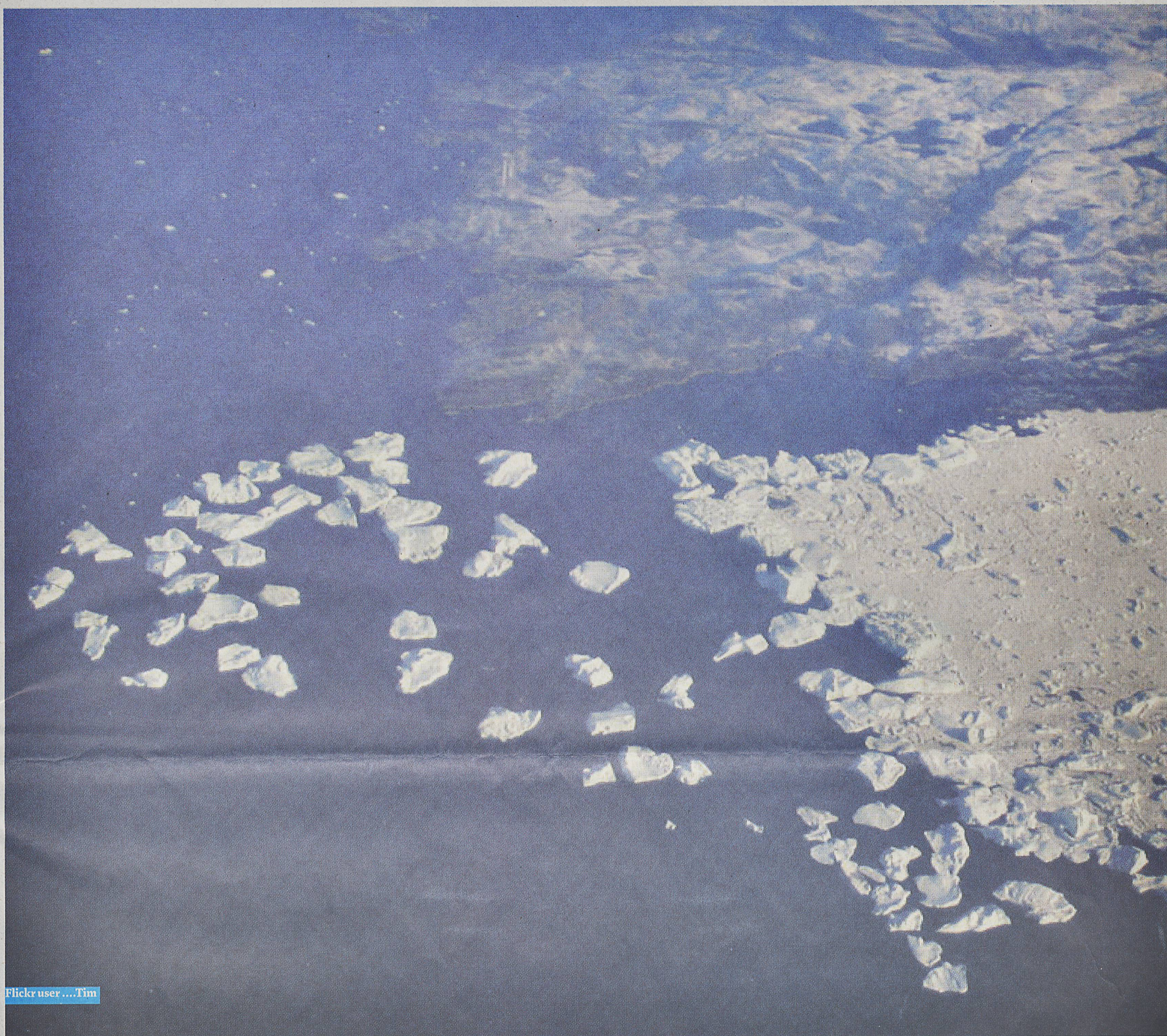
- First floor of Parish Hall
- Sub-Basement of NAB
- Gym facilities in Old Building
- SU Gym in East Building (users only)

For more information on the facilities at LSE, visit the website of the Estate Division: <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/estatesDivision/>



Water Fountains

East Building	None
Old Building	Fourth Floor Restaurant (2), A054 and outside Old Theatre
Columbia House	B100 (male toilet), B200 (female toilet), B300 (male toilet), B400 (female toilet), B500 (male toilet), B600 (female toilet), B700 (male toilet), B800 (female toilet)
St. Clements	S222 (female toilet), S422 (female toilet), S519 (male toilet), S603 (female toilet)
Clement House	D701, D601, D501, D401, D301, D200 (female toilet), D18 and D17
Connaught House	H818 (female toilet), H718 (female toilet), H618 (male toilet), H518 (female toilet), H418 (male toilet), H319 (female toilet), H218 (male toilet), H118 (female toilet)
Lincoln Chambers	L206 (male toilet)
Library	1st, 2nd and 3rd floor near disabled toilets
Latakos Building	Kitchen area - 3rd floor
NAB	Lower ground (2) Ground (2) 1st floor mezzanine (1) 2nd floor mezzanine (1)



Flickr userTim

Reducing the size of our footprints

Rahim Rahemtulla explains why environmental issues should remain central to our concerns

The problem of climate change is one which affects us all. As we continue to burn fossil fuels and release greenhouse gases which get trapped in the Earth's atmosphere, our planet continues to heat up. Undoubtedly, a solution can only be found through a co-ordinated global response. Should climate change be allowed to run unchecked however, its consequences will fall disproportionately upon the countries of the developing world.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its Third Assessment Report, found that the Earth's surface temperature rose by around 0.6°C over the twentieth century. If nothing is done to reduce the levels of fossil fuel usage, this trend looks set not just to continue, but to get worse; it is predicted that by 2100, global temperatures will have risen by anything from 1.4°C to 5.8°C since 1990.

These numbers may sound small, but the effects of such increases could have profound and far-reaching effects on both environmental and socio-economic levels. Of particular concern are the tropical and sub-tropical regions; exactly where the majority of developing countries are located. These regions, with their reliance on climate-sensitive industries

and resources (agriculture accounts for around 70 per cent of employment and 35 per cent of GDP in sub-Saharan Africa, for example), are most at risk from the ravages of climate change.

Water, that most essential of substances, lies at the heart of many of the forecasted problems. It is purported that in the absence of any corrective measures, the Earth will continue to experience – with increased severity – those phenomena which are currently already showing signs of emerging. From the point of view of agriculture – the economic mainstay of the developing world – it is the changes in rainfall patterns and the increase in the frequency and intensity of both droughts and flooding which are the chief cause of unease. Moreover, given that developing nations are often those which, in terms of infrastructure, are least able to cope with the effects of such water, weather and climate-based natural disasters, the effects on human welfare could be potentially catastrophic.

There is cause for hope, however. The binding targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions placed upon 37 industrialised countries under the Kyoto Protocol are a good start. As are the market-based schemes such as tradable emissions permits and the clean development

mechanism. Under the latter of these, an industrialised country with an emission target can gain credits towards its target by implementing an emission-reducing project in a developing country. One such project in Malaysia, set-up with the help of the Japanese, will capture the methane gas produced by a palm oil factory, which otherwise would have been released into the atmosphere. The predicted average annual reduction in CO₂ emissions as a result of the project is estimated at 43,152 tonnes. To put this figure into perspective, consider the fact that it was recently reported in the Guardian newspaper that public buildings in England and Wales currently pump out around 11 million tonnes of CO₂ per year, more than the entire carbon footprint of Kenya.

Non-state actors too, such as the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) group of development agencies, are working to turn the tide of climate change. At last year's Governors' Global Climate Summit – hosted by California's Governor Schwarzenegger – Dr. Tom Kessinger, the AKDN's deputy chairman, pledged that the foundation would, "continue its work on mitigating the effect of changes that are already apparent, and strengthen its work on disaster preparedness in rural communities." Indeed, the AKDN's projects,

There is still much to be done if the 2012 Kyoto targets for the industrial world are to be reached

such as its support for the building of the 250-megawatt Bujagali Hydropower plant in Uganda, represent significant steps towards weaning the world economy off of fossil fuels. Other nations would do well to follow Uganda's example – a developing nation but still committed to fighting the ill effects of climate change.

There is still much to be done if the 2012 Kyoto targets for the industrialised world are to be reached. The recent outbreak of horrific bush fires in Australia and its accompanying decade long drought are taken as evidence by some of the torrid times which lay ahead, if the international community does not act quickly. If any greater incentive were needed, it should not be forgotten that the lives of the poorest 40 per cent of the world's population, or 2.6 billion people, may depend upon workable solutions being found.

In a speech at London's Palace of Westminster last month, Yvo De Boer, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) proclaimed this year to be, "the moment in history in which humanity has the opportunity to rise to the challenge and decisively deal with climate change." Let us hope that he is right.



Photo Illustration by Mike Carlson. Pictures from Flickr users Chattanooga Endeavors, Inc (Madoff), thesecretcircus (Brand), and Marcopaco (Phelps).

The sorry state of apologies

Oliver Courtney reveals the reverse logic and celebrity factor behind public apologies

Watching the mega-bankers squirm during their show trials last week wasn't as gratifying as I'd hoped; perhaps because they didn't actually squirm very much.

Having issued cursory statements saying how sorry they were about the "turn of events", the architects of the financial crisis spent the following two hours denying that they were actually to blame for it. Which is galling, but it also raises an interesting question about public apologies. After all, it is hard to express genuine contrition if you've been caught with your hand in the cookie jar, or you would have taken it out already.

An Economist report last year claimed that the number of public apologies from individuals and corporations had rocketed in recent years. Does this mean that we are much sorer than before? Clearly not, but this shift towards what they described as "a global culture of apology" speaks of change in perceptions of the line between personal and public responsibility. It seems that the public apology serves the opposite function to the personal one; allowing one to distance responsibility and insist on a particular reading of events that suits one's own interests. The apology offers an escape route, a way of conditioning and qualifying your involvement in a big mishap rather than admitting culpability. Looking at the nuances of recent high profile apologies provides an interesting window to how we form and

frame our values, and the appeal to consensus involved in identifying norms. The evidence suggests none of us really know right from wrong. These are a few of my personal favourites.

The bankers and Jacqui Smith

The Home Secretary's crafty manipulation of her ministerial expenses emerged this week, running on a market logic as she profits from the public purse through an intricate game of switch and disguise that creates wealth without substance. Her justification also throws up interesting parallels with the banking fiasco. In refusing to apologise she takes the same attitude as the bankers with their carefully qualified apologies: I played by the rules. This an intriguing defence, insisting on a world view in which right and wrong are not matters of personal responsibility and judgement, but of hard and fast rules. The problem is – like the financiers – she's one of the people responsible for making these rules. Conflicts of interest aside, the refusal to distinguish the spirit of the law from its letter is a troubling example from such an eminent figure. Its logic invites a Big Brother approach to government, with laws micro-managing every single decision and moral responsibility sidelined in favour of legal box ticking – which sounds hellish. More practically, as Robert Peston and others have noted, the refusal to account for and provide a narrative explanation of how these things have happened means we're never going to correct our

It is hard to express genuine contrition if you've been caught with your hand in the cookie jar, or you would have taken it out

past mistakes.

The BBC, Russell Brand and Jonathan Ross

The trademark of Brand's comedy is outrage, so it would be foolish to expect him to issue a straight-faced sorry for his part in the prank phone call saga. Explicitly apologising for the public response to the scandal made it clear how Brand felt about the overreaction, something he's now confirmed by using the fallout as material for his new show. For a comic with vision, it's a rare opportunity to prime yourself with good material. And if it's the job of the comic to highlight and mock the hypocrisies in society, Brand is serving his function well enough here.

Rarely has the call and response mentality that Brand is mocking been as explicit as in the BBC's apology for the affair. It altered its initial statement after Andrew Sachs complained that there was no reference to his wife or granddaughter in the statement. Sachs' complaint was reasonable enough, but to alter the statement in accordance with his wishes surely undermines the point of apologising in the first place. If you can't recognise what's wrong, how can you be sorry for it? The BBC's blank-cheque approach neatly showcases the confused logic at work in the politics of the public apology.

Sorry I got caught: Michael Phelps
Merman Michael Phelps' getting

busted smoking a bong earlier this month provides an intriguingly different angle, mostly because most people didn't think he did very much wrong. The reaction to what he called his "regrettable" behaviour was largely indifferent to the fact of his smoking dope, and more concerned with his stupidity in getting caught. His crime was one of misjudgement, and a PR scripted apology followed. But many people supported Phelps because they felt his transgression made him seem human and mortal, rather than the cardboard cut-out that marketing professionals had made of him. He has not really suffered, but the Phelps story carries a stark warning for the hyper-mediated Facebook generation and is testament to how different privacy is today.

These examples, and the plenty of others, show how public apologies reverse the logic behind apologising. Instead of attempting to correct the implications of what's been done, public apologists seek to exploit and capitalise, either securing your identity like a brand or your interests like the bankers and Phelps. Forged in the world of marketing and political PR, it's a game that's here to stay; throwing an interesting light onto the way in which values and norms exist are constantly shifting in accordance with public moods and perceptions.

From Right to Left: the political columns

Hayek

Alex
Blance



Please, leave it to the experts

As we all know, politics is a career that attracts our very brightest and best. Hazel Blears, for example, or John Prescott. Which is lucky, as the government seems to be on a mission to tell professionals from every other walk of life how to do their jobs.

Last week, our highbrowed titan of a Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, slapped down the evidently intellectually inferior Professor David Nutt for 'trivialising' the dangers of drugs when he recommended downgrading ecstasy to a Class B intoxicant. After all, what would he know; he's only a neuroscientist, while Jacqui read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford. Professor Nutt's inconvenient report, commissioned, hilariously, by Jacqui herself, was overruled when it failed to produce an appropriate, Daily Mail-friendly result. After all, Jacqui and Gordon know best, don't they?

The government was at it again last Friday, when they pooh-poohed the biggest study of primary education for the past 40 years, headed by another nobody, Professor Robin Alexander of Cambridge University. The report dared to criticise the government for, yes, telling professionals how to do their jobs - in this case

teachers, who after 11 years of Labour government are hardly allowed to tie their own shoelaces without strict guidelines from Number 10 and an Ofsted inspection of the finished product.

Professor Alexander's report came to the extraordinary conclusion that our primary education is 'impoverishing' the lives of British children. The culprit? The government's "we know best" attitude, and in particular their bossy insistence on prescribing literacy and numeracy classes at the expense of creative teaching.

Labour have massively increased school centralisation, telling teachers not only what to teach, but how to teach it. Literacy and numeracy classes now said to take up half the school week. The report's authors make clear that the obsession with these subjects is severely detrimental to a rounded education. As Professor Alexander put it, "Our argument is that their education, and to some degree their lives, are impoverished if they have received an education that is so fundamentally deficient." The report also points out that despite the focus on basic skills, schools are still churning out children who are unable to read or add up properly.

The report recommends exactly what teachers have been begging for for years:

that schools be freed from the counter-productive restrictions of National Curriculum assessment or SATS exams, and teachers given greater control over the content and style of their own lessons. The report argues that up to 30 per cent of class time should be spent on activities planned by the teacher, rather than by government bureaucrats miles away from the classroom in Westminster.

We all know we are in the death throes of an incompetent and failed administration, but this report is one of the saddest comments yet on Labour's time in office. Tony Blair promised to put "education, education, education" at the top of his list of priorities; after twelve years of incompetent meddling, our schools seem to be in an even worse state than he found them.

But it's not just education. It's time politicians realised that they are not necessarily cleverer than everyone else. Every profession has its share of intelligent, passionate and competent people, and those on the front line probably know better than politicians how to do their jobs. Let's hope that the end of the New Labour 'project' means the end of politicians trying to run everything

Laski



Vlad
Unkovski-
Korica

Revolution or bust for Chavez

Last weekend, Hugo Chavez celebrated victory in the form of a constitutional referendum that has removed limits on presidential terms in Venezuela. Chavez's own reputation and the continuation of the Bolivarian revolution were resting on triumph in the hard-fought referendum campaign.

The massive number of 'yes' votes is a sign of the vitality of the movement that has kept Chavez in power for ten years. This comes despite two recent and significant warnings to Chavez that the revolution must move beyond fiery rhetoric and social programmes in order to succeed.

Chavez had first held a referendum to remove limits on presidential terms in December 2007 and failed to win a majority. In addition, local elections in 2008 witnessed the return of several key states as well as the mayoralty of Greater Caracas to the right-wing opposition.

While the ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) had won in 17 of 23 states, in the most populous areas it had lost ground to the opponents of the revolution.

In both cases, the opposition had successfully played on fears that PSUV rule was turning corrupt and authoritarian.

Just when Chavez's revolution seemed to be running out of steam, the popular classes moved once again to save the man they associate with the clean break from Venezuela's neoliberal past. They had done so before; during the April 2002 coup and the December 2002 Petróleos de Venezuela, S.A. bosses' strike. The mass mobilisations that defeated the alliance of big financiers, industrialists, military officers and church elites pushed Chavez heavily to the left.

As a result, the government made significant moves in the direction of socialist rhetoric and social reform. Chavez declared at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2005 that he was building 'socialism for the twenty-first century'.

Simultaneously, military investment was lower than under previous governments. It comprised less than 1.5 per cent of GDP - in comparison with almost 15 per cent for social programmes. To all those who had lived in shanty towns all their lives, reforms brought new housing, running water and electricity, and even readily available medical care in the form of Cuban doctors.

These were not insignificant moves in the direction of desperately needed wealth re-distribution. The trouble is, however,

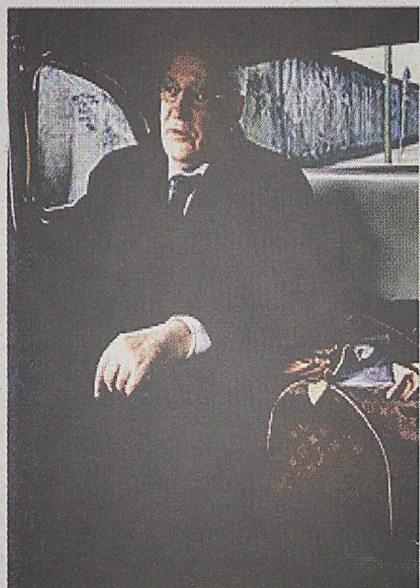
that Chavez never moved decisively beyond reform or 'socialism from above'.

He has always seen himself as an arbitrator between the different forces behind the Bolivarian process. He has taken significant experiments in self-management for workers, such as in the Alcasa aluminium plant, but Chavez has also sought a base in the burgeoning state apparatus.

For instance, the huge influence of the state-owned oil corporation has invited accusations of a state within a state. Moreover, Chavez also allowed local governors to seek unlimited terms in office, and grassroots activists have complained bitterly against the top-down appointment of representatives of the old regime in the PSUV. Similarly, Chavez has been overly lenient with big businesses, whose profit rates actually increased during the oil boom.

Crunch time has now come, however, with the global price of oil dropping, Chavez will be forced to choose between a step beyond capitalism or the threat of a new coup. Let us hope he will turn a new leaf by decisively empowering the real dynamo of the Bolivarian process: the forces from below.

Measured musings



As shameful and nerdy as this may sound, it has become a ritual every Friday for me to pick up the mail on the way to school, eagerly anticipating the latest issue of the Economist.

With a magazine of such a reputation, esteem and quality, I expect nothing but the best in terms of content and even advertisements from the Economist - thus my surprise and slight disappointment when I opened this week's issue, only to find what I consider to be the most absurd advertisements of all time on the second page.

The said advertisement is the one so creatively thought of by Louis Vuitton and Ogilvy & Mather, its ad agency. The ad depicts Mikhail Gorbachev in a black taxi, driving past the Berlin Wall with a poignant look on his face, and, yes, with a Louis Vuitton travel bag next to him, and the catchy caption emblazoned below

- "A journey brings us face to face with ourselves".

Yes, it is far from uncommon to have celebrities model for high-end fashion brands such as the likes of Louis Vuitton, Prada or Gucci. But surely there is something different, strange and ironic about the last president of the Soviet Union, a man that once presided over 22,402,200 squared kilometres of land, modelling for Louis Vuitton, arguably a brand name that is synonymous with the capitalist world.

This is not the first time that Gorbachev has appeared in an advertisement - a decade ago he appeared in an internationally-screened Pizza Hut commercial with his granddaughter Anastasia. This commercial, however, lacks the painfully blatant historical references and pensive-present in the Louis Vuitton ad, with a Russian publication sticking out of the luggage for good measure. A visual history lesson accessible to the masses is never

a bad thing, but history turned into pop culture is slightly harder to stomach.

There is nothing nauseating about the visual aspects of the ad in itself; photographed by Annie Leibovitz, the concept behind the theme of luggage and journeys is one that would make the casual reader stop and ponder for a while (which is the point of ads anyway). However, what would possess an ex-President of such a powerful union, who was even awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, to associate himself with the likes of Keith Richards and Madonna by modelling for a fashion brand? If there was not enough criticism by historians, Russians, and average citizens of the world for being too much of a pawn of the Western world during his term as President of the USSR, this decision will definitely not help.

The monumental significance of what Gorbachev did for the world and for his country should not be doubted. Along

Viridian Putting our water woes first

Katherine Ripullone



Water security has risen to the top of the United Nations agenda over the past couple of months. Last week experts from the UN, Member States and representatives from the corporate, medical, scientific and NGO communities met at a high-level symposium at UN headquarters to discuss the escalating issue of water security.

Some extremely shocking statistics rose out of the symposium: two-thirds of the world's population will face a lack of water in less than 20 years. Civilisation has developed around sources of water - the Nile, the Tiber, the Seine, the Thames. Water is the crux of successful economic and social development. On the other hand, a lack of safe water and adequate sanitation is directly linked to poverty and malnutrition, especially among the most impoverished.

It is not only a question of the world's poor being affected more severely than those in OECD countries, but particularly of women in less developed countries, being disenfranchised. A lack of access to safe water limits girls' attendance in school and exacerbates maternal mortality.

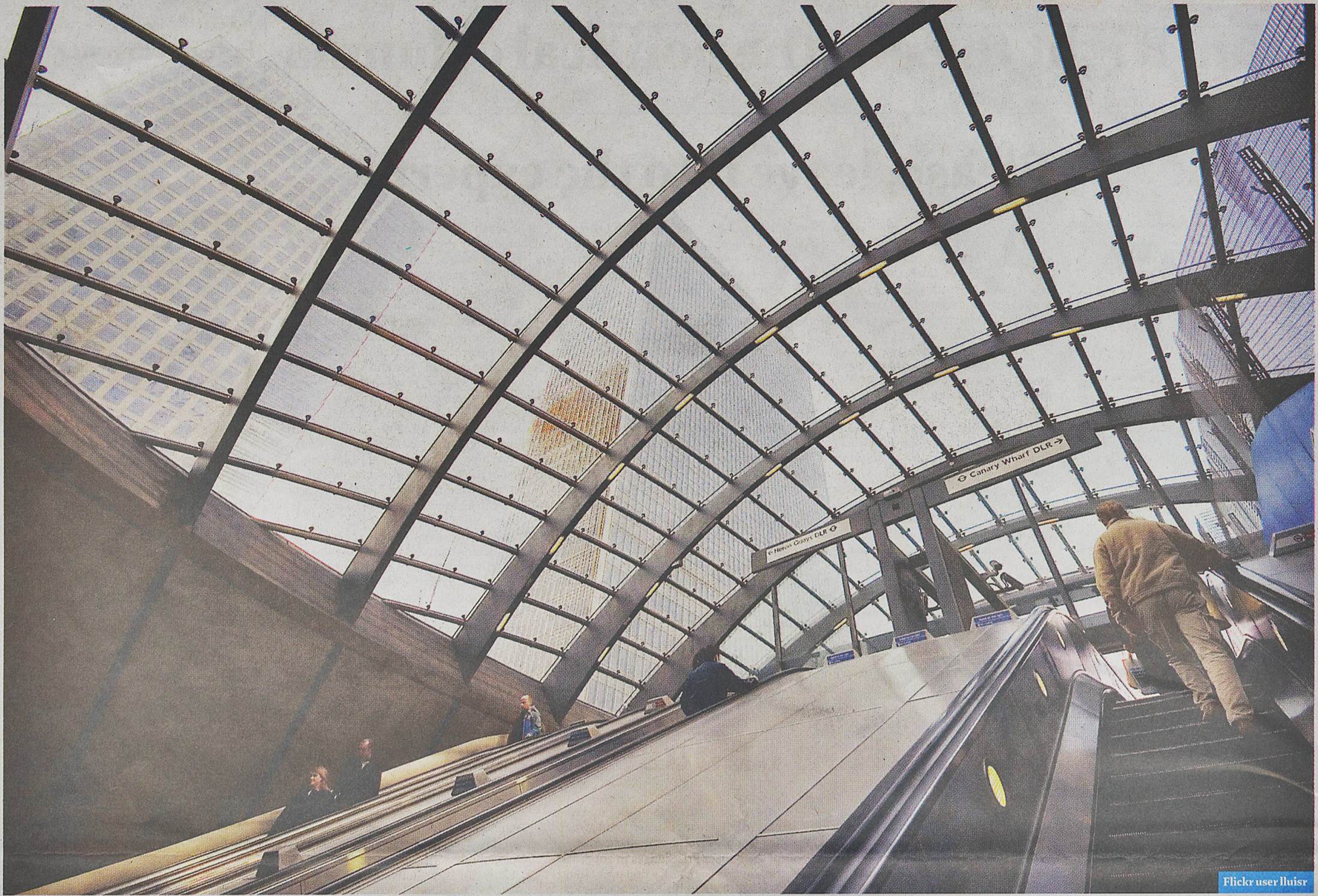
Exhaustion of water resources also proves disastrous for the environment. At present, 1.4 billion people live in river basins where water use exceeds the minimum recharge levels, causing the desiccation of rivers and depletion of groundwater. In addition, two thirds of the global fresh water supply is used for agriculture - with this proportion closer to 90 per cent in Africa.

The symposium established a Millennium Development Goal of reducing the number of people without access to safe drinking water and sanitation by half by 2015. Unless drastic action is taken, the conflict between water supply and demand will only get worse.

Water security means more effective water management and enhanced food security through equitable distribution of water for agriculture and food production. It means ensuring the integrity of ecosystems, and promoting the sharing of water resources (especially in cases of boundary and trans-boundary resources).

So - how long was your shower this morning?

Shibani Mahtani
Features Editor



Flickr user luuisr

Alumni interviews: Victor Haghani

Richard Dewey talks to hedge fund pioneer Victor Haghani about his alternative path in the finance world

Victor Haghani is a hedge fund pioneer and 1984 graduate of the LSE. He worked for Solomon brothers first in fixed income research and then in proprietary trading. He was a founding partner of Long-Term Capital Management and moved back to London in 1993 to open their London office. Post 1998 Victor stayed on for the liquidation of LTCM and then became a founding partner of JWM Partners which manages a successor fund to LTCM.

For the last seven years Victor has been taking a break from the markets. He is currently a Senior Research Associate in the Financial Markets Group at LSE and spoke at last month's LSE Alternative Investments Conference. He recently established a family office wealth management firm called Elm Partners.



What year did you graduate and major?
1984, Economics (finance and accounting)

What was the motivating factor for attending LSE?
Great school in London to study economics

Favorite professor at LSE?
Michio Morishima - magical use of mathematics in economics. Mervyn King was head of my department and very kind to me. Richard Layard - I wish I had known when I was there.

Any special memories or a crazy story from LSE?
The combination of a course on international trade and the collapse in Sterling (\$2.39/Pound at the end of 1980 to \$1.62 at the end of 1982) led me to get into a small business of buying late 19th century English sterling silver objects and sending them to the US. Prices here in the UK didn't move at all as the pound collapsed against the dollar, and so these items basically became about 35 per cent cheaper in \$ terms than they had been, plus a little rally in the price of silver off the lows helped too. I didn't make a huge amount of money, but it was really encouraging to be able to make any at all. Otherwise, there were all the usual, dumb university stories of aimless wandering about.

What was your first job out of LSE?
A research role in Salomon Brother's New York office in the BPA department (bond portfolio analysis)

Did you always know that you wanted to work in finance?
No, didn't think of it until about 2 months before I graduated. I was hoping to do computer science at MIT, but that didn't work out. I had enjoyed a summer job at a subsidiary of Motorola in Silicon Valley the summer before I graduated and was hoping I could launch a career in computer

“There needs to be a lot more progress made in understanding finance and economics - a huge amount really”

technology.

Was there something special about the culture of Salomon Brothers that attracted such successful, creative interesting people? (i.e. the LTCM group, Michael Lewis, Michael Bloomberg)

Absolutely - much more entrepreneurial and open minded than other organizations. Lots of great and open minds and big personalities made the company a terrific place to work. In fact, it felt like a partnership, not a company, even though it had turned into a public company just a few years before I joined.

Give us an interesting anecdote from your 20-plus years in the markets.

Well this is a story I've rarely recounted. On my last day at Salomon we were playing Liar's Poker. On the last hand there was a huge pot and through some luck I ended up winning it. I thought it was a great way to go out - win the last hand, on my last day. A week or so later I was at home and the CEO of Salomon, John Gutfreund called me at home. He said "Victor I hear congratulations are in order." I thought it was a bit strange to congratulate me on leaving the firm, but he went on to say "I hear you won quite a big and of Liar's Poker the last day." It was a great gesture and helped ease my feelings about leaving a place that had been so special to me.

Compare the global markets when you started in the 1980's to what you see now? What have been the most surprising changes or developments?

It seems to be a lot less fun than it used to be. The most surprising development to me is that we haven't seen the markets become more efficient and rational over time - it seems like things are as crazy and inefficient as they were when I started (if not more so) despite the widespread acceptance and dissemination of the ideas of modern finance. I think that's telling us

that there needs to be a lot more progress made in understanding finance and economics - a huge amount really.

Who has been the biggest influence on your career?

I have been lucky to have had many wonderful people take an interest in my development. They have given me all that I have really - I'd be nowhere without them. For instance, I don't think I've really ever had an original idea - just a reworking of the ideas of one of my teachers. If I had to choose just one as the biggest influence though, it would have to be my dad. At one level he was inspirational, at another level he was a nuts-and-bolts, detail oriented sort of tutor. He taught me many lessons that have been invaluable. Although he passed away at 84 and lead a very full life, it would have been great if he were still with us.

I could write a long list of things that he taught me, but here are three tasters:

- 1) Try to spend your life surrounded by people who are more experienced and insightful than you are
- 2) It's easier to make money than to hold onto it. (I originally doubted the truth in this one, but now I agree)
- 3) He said it once, I believed him; he repeated himself, I started to doubt; he swore it was the truth, I knew he was lying.

What have you been doing with your time on sabbatical?

Family time, reading, learning to fly a plane, investing.

What's next on the horizon? Could we see a Professor Haghani at the LSE?

That would be fun. I just want to keep learning, having fun, and trying to be helpful to others. I've been very lucky in my life and hope I show my appreciation by giving something back.

The literary legacy of the LSE

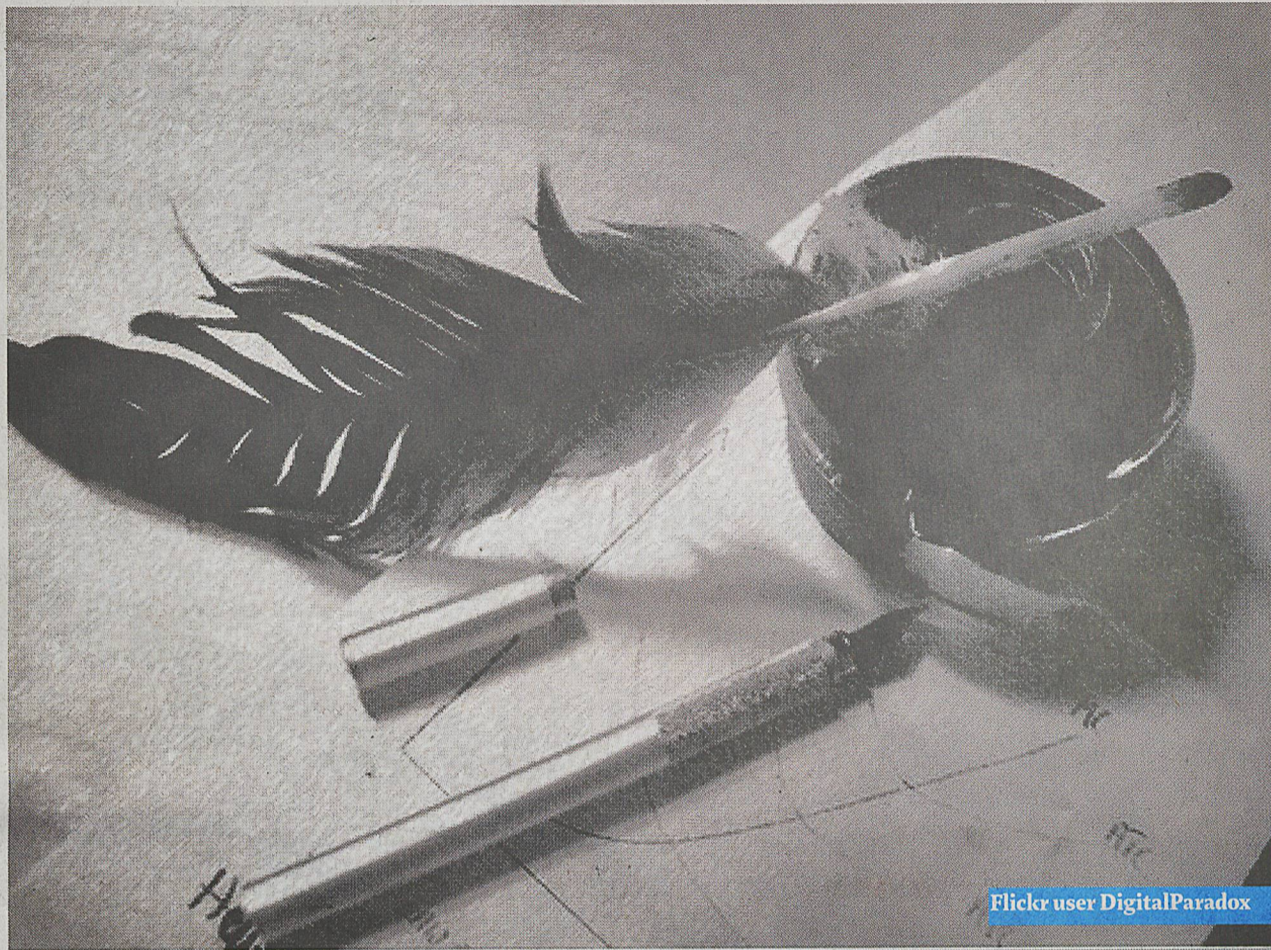
Jack Blumenau strains to see how far the school lives up to its Fabian and literary origins

LSE is an institution dominated by economics and politics. From its eponymic title, to the curriculum vitae of its director, to its reputation and renown in domestic and world affairs, the school is perpetually associated with its relation to financial and political matters. And for good reason.

When the school was established in 1895, the Fabian cohort, who gave both time and money to the project, wished to create a reformist institution aimed at the betterment of society through the reduction of poverty and inequality – two distinctly politico-economic problems. Furthermore, much of the School's rise to academic eminence and popular notoriety came from the impassioned clashes of two great economic minds. The debates of the 1930s between LSE's Friedrich Hayek and Cambridge's John Maynard Keynes largely shaped two major schools of economic thought, which continue to mould and define government policy across the globe today.

An oft-quoted remark of N.M. Perera, a prominent Sri Lankan cabinet minister, shows the central (though not always successful) part played by the school in economic affairs: "All the great economic ills the world has known this century can be directly traced back to the London School of Economics." Finally, the political and economic creativity of former director Anthony Giddens demonstrates once more the prodigious pedigree of LSE in matters of the economy and of government.

However, the history sketched above – a history largely representative of public opinion and knowledge of the school – neglects a rich and important theme in LSE's narrative. The role that literature has played throughout the development of the institution is central to understanding its history. The birth of the establishment gained early support from two literary giants: George Bernard Shaw and Herbert George Wells. Shaw and Wells, both committed socialists, lent intellectual weight and popular appeal to both the Fabian



Flickr user DigitalParadox

movement and LSE, and their support is indicative of the rich literary tradition of the school.

It seems, however, that this tradition has been largely forgotten (or, worse, ignored) as the university has developed in such a way over the past one hundred years that it now exists only at the very periphery of formal LSE activity. I say 'formal' because there is an encouraging array of extra-curricular, non-academic, literary activities and successes that show-off a vibrant artistic side of the School. Included in this literary 'civil society' is the

yearly publication of *The Muse*, a creative writing magazine by the LSE Students' Union Literature Society; a prolific drama troupe; a director who, while having a résumé that reads like a *Yellow Pages* of the business world, was also chairman of the Booker Prize judges in 2007; and, finally, this year, LSE's first ever Literary Festival. Thus, while there is a clear and exciting melange of artistic appreciation and practice here at LSE, only a very little of this has filtered through to the formal levels of the School.

Beating quietly, yet persistently, on the

sixth floor of the Clare Market Building is the heart of the LSE Literature department. The department comprises just two academics, who persistently and passionately deliver a programme of modern literature from three thematically structured courses: English Literature, Comparative Literature, and Global Literature. Two academics. Three courses. Is this all that is left of the legacy of Shaw and Wells?

Giving partial reprieve is the festival itself as it aims to bring traditions of literature and politics together at LSE. As festival coordinator Louise Gaskell

suggests, "Literature is a powerful tool for such exploration and dissemination and, ultimately, as LSE founder George Bernard Shaw and other Fabians argued, a means of provoking social change." The academics of the literature department have organized and cajoled students into bringing an example of this 'powerful tool' to the centre of the festival.

However, it strikes me that while it is something to be commended and supported, the festival does not go far enough. Literature, and, more generally, the arts, have had and continue to have a profound transformative effect on society – one easily comparable with the effect felt by politics and economics. Literature, in this sense, does not merely document social change; it also strives to bring it about. Therefore, in order for LSE to successfully become "a laboratory of the social sciences, a place where ideas are developed, analysed, evaluated and disseminated", it must more fully embrace critical study of literature and the arts. That is the way to reach a comprehensive understanding of the problems that it aims to address – and to live up to the description quoted from the website.

The festival's title, 'Space for Thought' is therefore very apt indeed; what we need most is to create greater space within the university for academic thought on literature and the arts, and the transformative effect that they can and do have on society.

And so, (in a shameless piece of publicity on the part of the play's director), on 25 February a little known Shaw play will be performed (fittingly) in the Shaw Library at 6.30pm. Written just after the October Revolution, 'Annajanska, The Bolshevik Express' is Shaw's reaction to the cataclysmic changes that were occurring beyond Europe during the First World War. It helps us to understand the causes and progress of social change; how ideology influences action; and how revolution can be both from the 'top-down', and from the 'bottom-up'. Thankfully, then, the legacy of Shaw and the literary Fabians is not lost entirely to LSE.

Literature as a Social Science

Marion Koob confirms the place of the arts at LSE

More often than not, Literature has been lost in the midst of different areas of studies. It is usually seen as an independent section in itself, loosely associated with "the Arts". This removes it from the more concrete, 'useful' subjects, generating an aura of other-worldliness. These perceptions of the subject are not fully valid: if taken as lying within the realm of social science, written works can provide a wealth of wisdom on how we lead our lives.

"What is the purpose of literature?" one may ask, responding to this claim. Some will argue it ought to entertain, others that it is a form of artistic expression and hence, that its purpose solely lies in existing and being exposed to an audience. As a class in school, it is most commonly perceived as a means to develop writing technique along with textual analysis skills. If enough attention is paid, however, especially within the genre of novels, one will distinguish comments, sketches of criticisms or questions posed towards our society - or rather, the society that is written about. And it is this exercise that we, as social scientists,

should pay heed to.

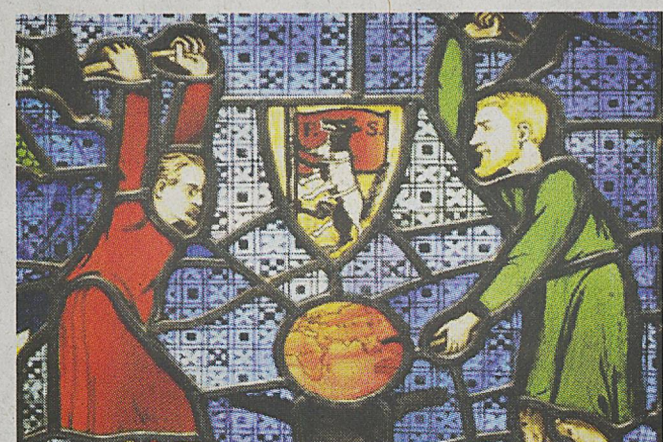
It is true enough that literature is not a mathematical matter, supported by the data-loaded theories and carefully constructed logical reasoning that is found in the wide array of courses taught at the LSE. But that, I believe, is where its strength lies. Literature brings down all these abstract concepts to a human scale: political ideologies, theories of consumer behaviour, anthropological arguments on how society shapes the world around us, all are brought within the context of everyday personal life.

Let us admit it - we are rather self-centred creatures. This is easily proved by our inactivity in the face of threats like global warming and horrors like those in Darfur. That is why applying general studies of populations to 'people like us' on a smaller scale makes things easier to see. You may, for instance, study the history of the Great Depression of the 1930s, or examine its causes and consequences on the economy of the world, yet it will not bring you the experience of how it may have been felt on an individual scale. While it may seem superfluous to your studies now, but if fact it is quite the opposite - there needs to be some meaning behind what we learn. The perspective that literature provides can bring a purpose, a reply to the existentialist question: "All right, an increase in supply will result in a decrease in prices - but why should I, or anyone else, care?" Hence, writing as an art can teach us why we ever had the

urge to apply to the LSE in the first place.

There exist other roles which literature can fulfil. Aside from giving us a reason for our studies, it can also place society - our subject matter - under the light of doubt and criticism. Economics teaches us that 'More is better'. But are units of consumption truly what we should be using to measure our well-being? Do physical possessions not trap us within an endless circle of desire and necessity, rather than generate contentment? All of these are questions which can be found in the narratives of novels, or politically oriented poetry. For instance, the work *Revolutionary Road* by Richard Yates, recently put into film, shines a harsh, truthful, beam on the idealized world of suburban life. Is the white picket fence really what we seek, or is it a pre-packaged nightmare which we are all destined to march onto at some point in our lives, full of our investment banking confidence? The much acclaimed 1984, by George Orwell raises similar qualms. We laugh at the overused phrase 'Big Brother is watching you', trivialised by reality TV programs. Is the statement not justified though, when you are on average filmed three hundred times per day while walking through London? Or when boundaries of privacy are crumbling in the face of the anti-terrorist measures taken after 9/11, and the spreading of personal information through Facebook is growing at an exponential rate?

All of these may be exaggerations, I concur. Even if preposterous, these questions must be asked so we can better refute them, as John Stuart Mill would have claimed. Literature has the capacity of questioning the meaning and the structure of our society and still be taken seriously, something that other subject matters do not have the license to do. For this, we can indeed consider Literature as a social science in itself and conclude that its place at the LSE is indeed well-earned.



REMOVING US NEARER TO THE HEARTS OF DESIRE

Bringing back books

Professor Angus Wrenn and Professor Olga Sobolev - the much-loved pioneers of Literature at the LSE - introduce what they teach and why they felt it to be necessary

Literature is being celebrated in the forthcoming LSE Literary Festival and so it is timely to mention that it now also features strongly among the options available for LSE undergraduates.

With the addition in 2007-2008 of LN250 Comparative Literature and Society and in 2008-9 of LN251 Contemporary Literature and Global Society, LSE undergraduates now have a total of three courses on which literature is taught. "Literature and Society", a course covering literature in Britain in the twentieth century, has existed for many years and proved consistently popular with students in all departments. Comparative Literature and Society reflects the influence of the Cold War upon literature in Europe on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the period up to the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, featuring authors as varied as Zamyatin, Solzhenitsyn, Shaw and Huxley. Contemporary Literature and Global Society reflects Europe post-Velvet Revolution and the global cultural dimension of

contemporary Britain - authors featured include Georg Szirtes - who gave a reading of his poems to LSE students this term - Milan Kundera, Zadie Smith, and Mohsin Hamid, author of *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (appearing at the LSE Literary Festival next week.)

Having taught literature at LSE for some ten years I must say the experience proves constantly stimulating and surprising. It is clear that students very much value the opportunity to express their response to works from the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries, in the light of their studies of a wide range of social sciences. It is very interesting, for example, to see ideas gained from reading of Weber, Simmel or Durkheim applied to analysis of the modern novel. I must also say that this is the only college where I have worked where I have taught an undergraduate who was simultaneously standing for election as a member of parliament - testimony to the uniquely vibrant culture at LSE.

A little piece of life

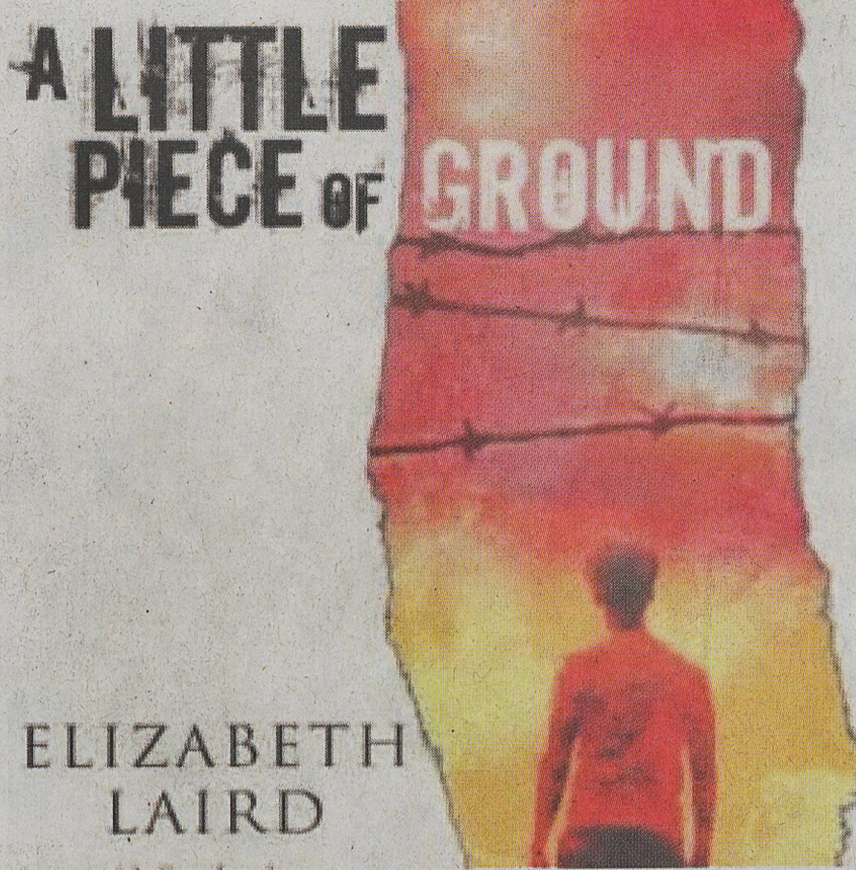
Mehek Zafar recalls how she read meaning into the world

You can press many things between the pages of a book – bruised pride, the shards of a shattered future, freshly picked flowers, and sometimes even an entire nation. Elizabeth Laird, author of 'A Little Piece of Ground', packed the life of twelve year old Karim in war-ravaged Ramallah into the 240 pages of a children's novel, and in doing so unveils the experience of all those children whose lives are blighted by war.

Reading this book as an eleven year old was my first introduction to literature that explored 'issues' – social, cultural, psychological and most importantly, human. 'A Little Piece of Ground' is set in Israeli-occupied Palestine and views life through the eyes of a Palestinian boy. Ambitious about football and charmed by the world of movie stars and video games, Karim is forced to confront the chasm that lies between himself and his goals. Through Karim's interaction with friends and family, Laird reveals what it means to live in an occupied land, deftly capturing the horrors of curfews, army tanks and checkpoints, as well as the instances of compassion and patriotism.

It was the first time I was introduced to the vast impact that writing, even fictional writing, can have upon an individual. Curled up on a couch in a snug corner of my living room I opened my eyes to a world that was entirely separate from mine – where families could be fragmented in the blink of an eye and where homes breathed a collective sigh of relief every time you returned safe and sound.

The enchantment of the story lay in its simplicity. The characters delighted in little things that were familiar to me, and yet unfamiliar enough to subdue me. The little piece of ground that Karim and his friends cleared out to play in was any young persons fantasized retreat, and yet where some have to clear away bushes or garden chairs, the characters in the story scrambled through rubble and other painful reminders of continuing violence. A tribute to the power of the written word lies in the fact that a scene from the novel forms one of the most vivid pictures in my



I opened my eyes to a world that was entirely separate from mine.

mind: Karim's father and idol, standing stripped bare of his clothes as well as his dignity, unable to look into his son's eyes. Elizabeth Laird introduced me to literature that exposed segments of the world and laid bare realities distinct from the ones I knew. Since, I have come to firmly believe in the whole plethora of literature that is based upon societal concerns and change. Books forced me to take notice, and to care as a child. They still compel me to seek awareness and to struggle for reform. Mostly, they allow me to sympathise with people who would otherwise just have been names or numbers somewhere far away.

Art and Drama

DramaSoc president **Sophie Marmont** explains how arts overlap on campus

If you have walked down Houghton Street this week you may well have heard the calls of 'Are you crazy for us? Because we're crazy for you!' The LSE Students' Union Drama and Music Societies' production of Crazy For You, a musical by George and Ira Gershwin, is imminent. Starring LSE director Howard Davies as the father of the lead role, it is pertinent to question why it is that so many of us feel the need to spend our time on things other than our studies at university.

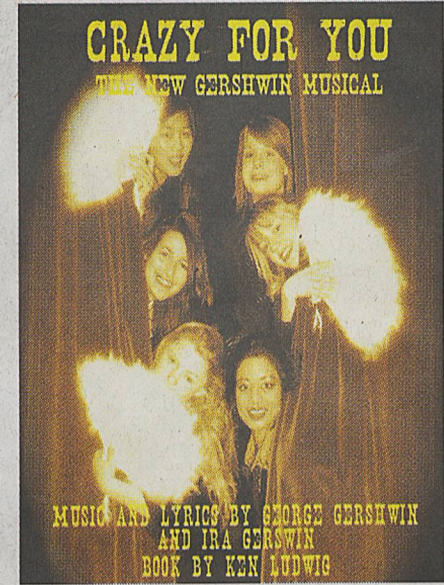
In an institution which prides itself on its academic excellence and is often criticised by its own students for being too business-centric, artistic expression is a much needed creative outlet. Both important and enjoyable, the Arts societies at the LSE provide an alternative to the drudgery of economic textbooks and legal cases. Whilst the Drama Society may not boast the thousand plus members that the Finance or Business society can, it has over 250 members and is putting on five productions this year. The Arts societies such as the Music, Literature and Drama societies are amongst some of the most active at LSE, staging large-scale productions and organising a variety of weekly workshops, social events and trips.

Perhaps the best indication of the role of the Arts societies in university life is the level to which their members overlap and contribute to each others events. They cannot be isolated. The musical Crazy For You is a joint event, hosted by the Music and Drama Societies and also including contributions from the Visual Arts and

Dance societies. Its last production of the year, "The Overambitious Project", has been written by an LSE alumnus and is an attempt to encompass all forms of artistic media. Including a mock-up of a Marilyn Monroe film with a brief but arousing cameo from the infamous LSE director, the play includes elements of projection,

film, music, dance, visual art and drama with contributions from many of the relevant Arts societies. With a creative team of five directors it is a clear example of the level of participation in Arts societies at LSE and an illustration of the amount of organisation required to stage such an ambitious creation.

Nevertheless, while for many students this is an enjoyable outlet, it should also be remembered that it constitutes a valuable contribution to the life of the university. The amount of time and energy invested by many LSE staff and students to the artistic societies is a testament to the level of dedication required to stage any production. At the same time, the value of the artistic societies lies not only in the outlet they provide for their participants but also in the enjoyment of their efforts by the wider LSE community. That they are appreciated to such an extent means that they are part of the identity of this university. After all, the success of a play is not only a laurel for its actors, but also says something about the audience that comes to view it.



"Crazy for You" performances: 25th-28th February Venue: Old Theatre

Listings: This week around campus

Friday 27th February - Sunday 1st March: LSE's first ever Literary Festival

Tuesday 24 February

Finance Society presents: **Speaker: Randall Willette, Founder & Managing Director, Fine Art Wealth Management Ltd**
Lecture: Fine Art Wealth Management: The State of Art Investment Funds in the Global Economic Crisis
H102, 12-1pm

ety and Amnesty International society
Underground Bar, 7 pm
(£3 members, £4 non-members - all proceeds going to charity)

'Fiesta Caliente' hosted by RAG and Salsa Society
Walkabout, Temple at 9.30 pm

Friday 27 February

LSE Crush
8pm to 2am, Underground Bar.

Saturday 28 February 2009

LSE Literature Society Book Swap
First floor of the NAB, 11-1pm

Hong Kong Theatre, 6.30-8 pm

Monday 2 March

Amnesty International Society presents
"Working in Human Rights: Answers from the Field"
Human Rights Careers Event
NAB 2.04, 6.30 pm

Wednesday 25 February

Summer Internship Conversion Panel
Hong Kong Theatre, 11 am - 1 pm

Poetry readings and play: *Annajanska, The Bolshevik Empress*
Shaw Library, 6.30 pm

Thursday 26 February

LSE lecture: *The Future of Banking in a Global Economy*
Speaker: Vikram Pandit
Chair: Howard Davies
Sheikh Zayed Theatre, 1-2 pm

Global Dinner
Hosted by the People and Planet Soci-

Mr Jinnah, welcome to the LSE

Fahad Humayun presents the softer face of Pakistan



The skies are dotted with paper kites. The evening campfire is surrounded by the stirring acoustics of village sitar players. The food doesn't get any more "organic". Unfortunately, this isn't one of the first pictures that come to mind when Pakistan is mentioned.

In this politically aware institution, the kind of conversation that people have with Pakistanis about their native land is generally quite dismal. The subject is greeted with a shrug or a sigh, whether it over one's morning paper and bagel or standard 9:00pm news. The white crescent and star emblazoned on green cloth has been given a raw deal by the international media over the past few years, and it is the Pakistani spirit and culture that have had to bear the brunt of it. What your news channels forgot to mention, however, is that this particular flag is a symbol that truly challenges provincial archetypes.

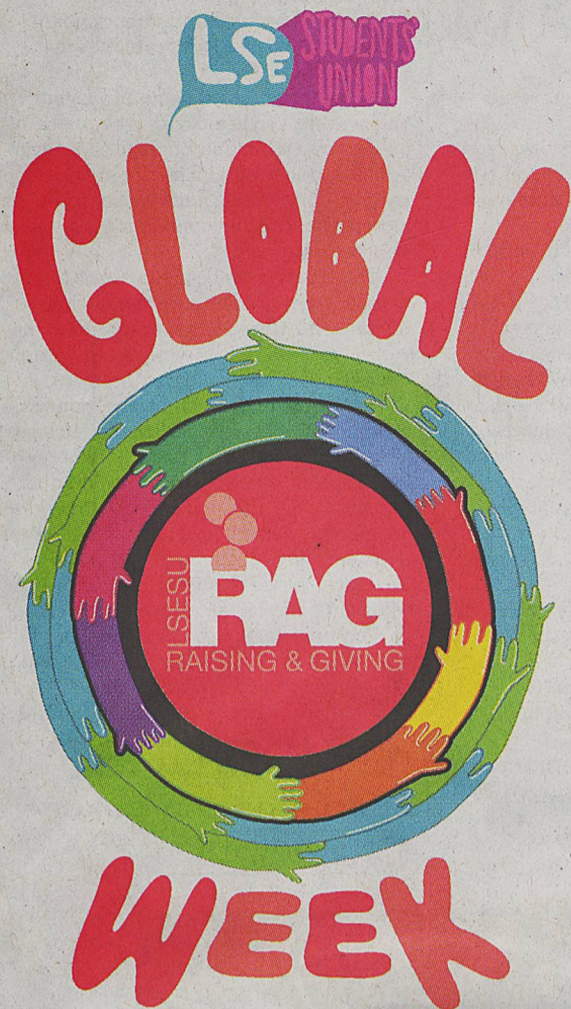
Welcome to Pakistan: a nation of 160 million patriotic, cricket-crazy, kindred souls that is ready to embrace the world. Ladies and gentlemen, give the whirling drum-beater a chance. Roll the dice. Take a leap of faith. Odds are that you will end up falling in love with the soul stirring nights of Pakistan's cultural metropolises. Start from the intricately carved domes and minarets that characterise the Mughal architecture of Lahore and wander into the bustling bazaars. Taste the hospitality of Punjab - abandon your diet plans in favour of the heavy paratha brunches followed by cold lassi, (the local version of the smoothie). Keep eating, eating till it is time for afternoon chai. Cross the plains and find yourself in magical wilderness of contrasting kinds, depending on the direction taken. From the world's highest snowcapped mountains to the greenest valleys, to the undulating sands of Balochistan, to the surging coastal tides of Sindh

- you can have it all. Whatever your taste, you can find something to interest you in Pakistani culture. Sufi music promises to entrance; the new generation of Pakistani bands satisfies the frustrated teenager's need to headbang. While each province has a distinct literary identity, fresh Pakistani writers such as Mohsin Hamid (Moth Smoke/The Reluctant Fundamentalist) and Mohammed Hanif (A Case of Exploding Mangoes) are creating waves in English literature as well.

It is time to look beyond your cookie-cutter evening headlines. This week is **Pakistan Week** at LSE, and we offer a whole lot of Pakistani entertainment that will leave your head spinning. We'll show you why we're proud to be Pakistani - all we're asking for is a chance. You've heard the story, but never like this. Mr Jinnah, welcome to LSE. It's time for a revival.

Correction:

Last week's article, "The Truth about Documentary Film" by Annika Weerasinghe was incorrectly attributed to Annika Maya. We regret the error.



Gunge bath at Hacks vs Jocks Photo: Ben Phillips

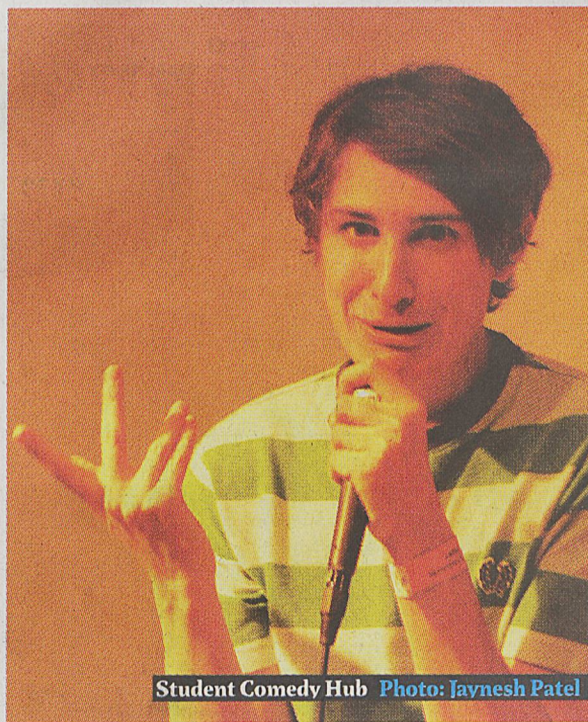
Cherie Leung, Ben Phillips, Katy Staten and Jaynesh Patel brings you a look back at LSE's week of Raising and Giving



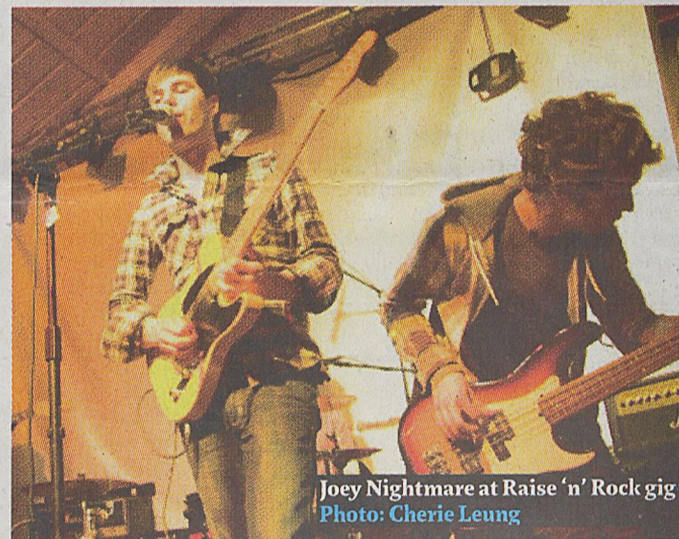
Gunge galore at Hacks vs Jocks Photo: Ben Phillips



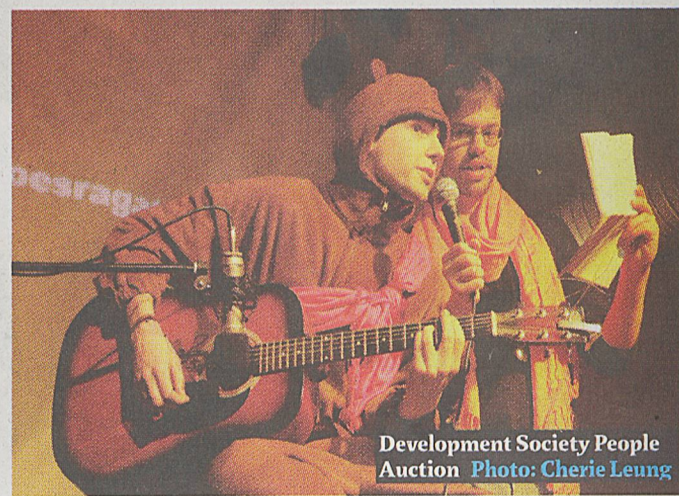
Development Society People Auction Photo: Cherie Leung



Student Comedy Hub Photo: Jaynesh Patel



Joey Nightmare at Raise 'n' Rock gig Photo: Cherie Leung

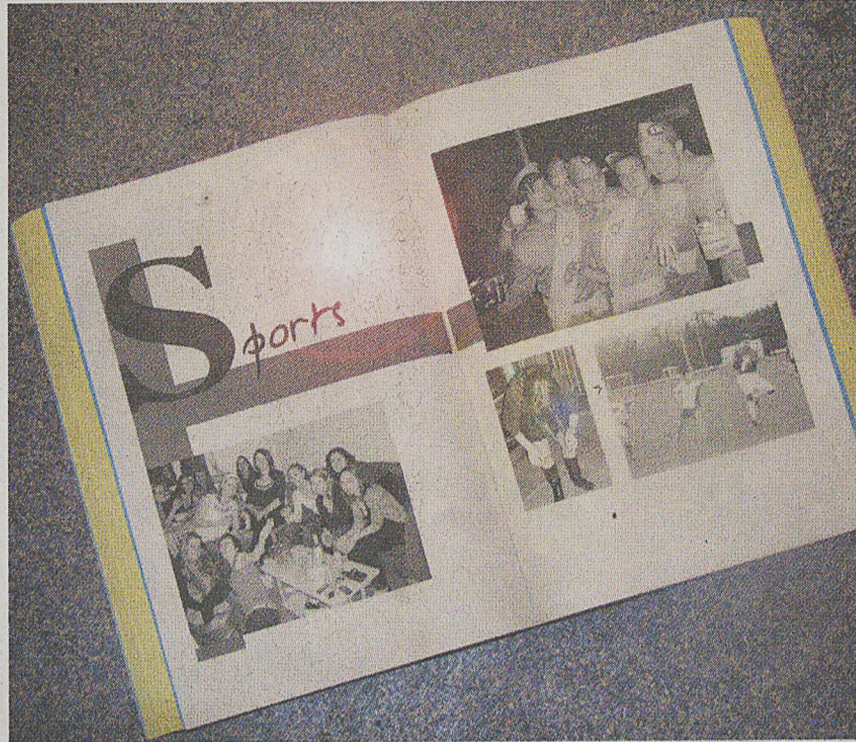


Development Society People Auction Photo: Cherie Leung



Tug of War on Houghton Street Photo: Katy Staten

AU Scrapbook needs you



Alice Pelton

The AU Scrapbook is the brainchild of exemplary LSE students, third years: Jenna Tan, Fiona Mansfield, Sarah Martin, and Manav Frohde. After entering the competition 'Profitunity' held by Ernst and Young, to raise funds for the Princes Trust, they have been given £500 and set with the task of fundraising as much as they can over the next five month period. Their competing against other universities, so the competition is fierce.

The scrapbook is more than just an excuse to embarrass your team members. The Princes Trust is the UK's leading youth charity, formed in 1976, it helps young people overcome barriers and get their lives working again. The scrapbook team's aim is to raise £5000, as this is the amount it costs the Trust to enable one disadvantaged young person to start up a business. All profits made will be donated to charity.

So what do they need you to do? They intend to give every team a page, so get

everyone in your team to dig out some incriminating photos from this years AU antics. Collect them up, along with any memorable beaver articles and paraphernalia; even sit bare-arsed on a photocopier and send in the resulting picture.

Make sure you collect stuff from a whole range of events; the welcome party, the infamous carol, Mr LSE, the AU Ball etc. They are thinking about creating entire pages devoted to these events, depending on how much stuff you guys submit. Also send in any league tables, brilliant/atrocious results, and quotes.

The book, once made, promises to be a high-quality, hard-covered bible for all AU members to pore over. It will be on sale from the first week of Lent term, with pre-orders being taken in the last weeks of this term.

All your submissions need to be sent in by the 1st of March, the Sunday of Week 7, so make sure you get a move on.

Join the facebook group 'LSE AU Scrapbook 2008-2009' for more information, and get submitting.

Send all your team memorabilia to au.scrapbook@googlemail.com.

Gamblers Anon

In the sixteenth century Francis Drake made a fortune from the waters of the Caribbean. Last week, another group of Englishman so nearly repeated the feat. That team was the GA.

Broad fell six short of our projected half century, Gayle looked set before being bowled by a jaffer and England came ever so close to scoring a victory in the final session. Things may not have been good as they could've, but confidence is high nonetheless.

The Champions League returns this week as Europe's finest go toe to toe in the most prestigious club tournament the world (sorry FIFA, the world club championship is really just a load of bollocks).

Firstly ten of dear old Lizzie's pounds are going to be placed on Juventus to beat Chelsea at home at 5.2 (4/1). Let's hope Juve have the gusto to overcome Hiddink and the men from the Bridge. Secondly we are going to show about as much ambition as a depressed alcoholic in putting £5 on the much-hyped clash between Inter and Man United to end in a draw at 3.15 (11/5).

Our final bet is to place the last of our £20 on Arsenal, Atletico Madrid and Barcelona to all win at 7.2 (6/1).

Gamblers Anon: Mes Que un Club.

betfair
sports casino poker

18+ Please gamble responsibly. Visit www.gambleaware.co.uk

Football Fourths funny, frisky and in fine fettle

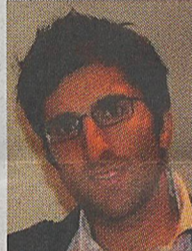
Matt Perkins

Team Mates

The reputation of the fourth team with regards to footballing prowess, quality of banter, and dedication to AU nights precedes its players wherever they go. Matt Perkins reveals the characters behind the faces...



Most Intelligent – Ashish Mehta (a.k.a. Ash) Crisis in the city? Never fear, because Ash has secured himself a job with a top investment bank in the city after graduation. He will get money pouring back into our economy, or maybe just into his own pocket...



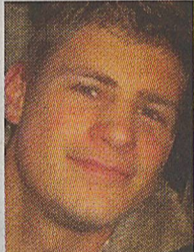
Biggest Moaner – Nadir Gohar (a.k.a. Gonads) From "I'm sooo tired", to "I'm sooo hungover", to "this floor is sooo cold", it's moan moan moan from Nadir. He can be quite upbeat at times though – "come on LSE!"



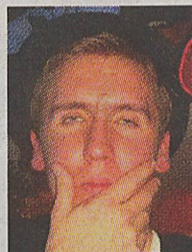
Least Likely To Score In A Game – Palvir Athwal (a.k.a. the first swear-word that comes to Al's mind) Gilt-edge chance after gilt-edge chance have fallen to Palvir, without him ever managing to convert. What more could we expect though? Nothing good ever came out of Birmingham. It also recently came to our attention that he has never converted off the field either...at least Rog isn't alone.

Best Trainer – Jon Bown (a.k.a. Bowny)

If we had training in the fourth team (which we obviously don't) then Bowny would clearly train the hardest...he didn't get that hench overnight you know. He has literally been FUMING over his recent lack of action on the pitch.



Least Intelligent – Andy Rogers (a.k.a. Rog/Roggo) Rog may well feel hard done by, having been awarded this undesirable title, and perhaps it is a touch unfair. On the other hand, he does study geography...and even with a map he doesn't seem to be able to find his way into a girl's pants!

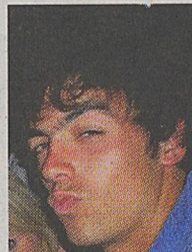


Worst Dress Sense – Joe Watson (a.k.a. BJ)

Think of the skinniest jeans you have ever seen on a guy. Now imagine them to be about twice as skinny, and you will start to envisage the pièce de résistance of BJ's wardrobe. Some may disagree with my assessment of that as bad dress sense, those with sense won't.

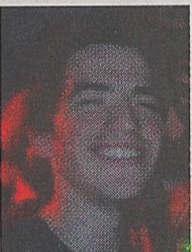


Worst Trainer – Scott Jarrett (a.k.a. Scotty J) Most of the team would be pretty poor in training, but it's safe to say that Scotty J would much rather practice having team showers after the game than playing football. What a lad!



Worst Taste In Music – Andrew Simpson (a.k.a. Simpo)

Ever heard a white Irish guy rap? Not great, I assure you. Potentially better than hearing the same guy singing assorted gos boy band hits though. Maybe he's just trying to get into the old limelight again...apparently he was in some film...at some point...hasn't he ever told you?!



Most Likely To Score In A Game – Vik Nayar (it's just Vik)

Vik has finally found his scoring boots, and it couldn't have come at a better time in the season. More hat-tricks on the way I feel...



Most Skilful – Mig Patel (a.k.a. Miggy Pop) With a first touch to die for, Mig relies on this to give him a bit of extra time to look for the perfect pass. Sadly, it doesn't take too many drinks for absolutely all coordination to desert him...easy come, easy go.



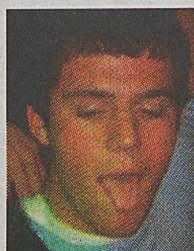
Craziest Character – Berni Schultz (a.k.a. Schultz)

Half German and half Korean, Berni didn't really have a chance did he? Comes out with some cracking stories and emails, and deciphering them can be just as much fun as the intended content. Berni is definitely one of a kind.

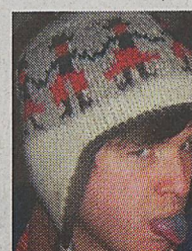


The Joker – Al O'Brien (a.k.a. O'Brizzle)

Never short of something to say, Al is the most vocal member of the team. He will never tire of making fun of Palvir's accent, Nadir's demeanour or BJ's tendency to jump on the bandwagon...



Best Dancer – George de-ste-Croix (a.k.a. G Crow) Anyone who puts enough energy into dancing to actually injure themselves surely deserves this title. Or maybe it should be worst dancer, hmmm.



And Finally...Longest In The Shower

Well that would just be telling girls wouldn't it! Try and find out for yourselves on a Wednesday night...



Results

Women's Netball
2s 28 - 7 London South Bank 2s
2s 49 - 15 Canterbury Christ Church
5s 12 - 15 RUMS

Men's Hockey
1s 6 - 6 Greenwich 1s

Women's Hockey
1s 3 - 1 Reading

Women's Badminton
1s 4 - 4 Bath
(won 242 - 230 on points)

Men's Rugby
2s 13 - 10 Christchurch Canterbury 3s

Ladies Squash
BUCS cup trophy quarter finals:
LSE 2 - Southampton Univ.
Win by point advantage
ULU Challenge Cup:
LSE 3 - 2 Royal Holloway

Men's Tennis
BUSA Knockout cup:
1s 6 - 5 UWE

Women's Football
LSE 4 - 1 St. George's

Golf
LSE 3 - 3 Surrey (Draw)

People change and mad things rearrange



Philosophical Barry

Like many avid football fans, I was very sad to see big Phil Scolari leave Chelsea this week. While he may not have been able to produce the results that those who run the modern game demand, the man had something about him. His honest approach, something that all too often goes unrewarded these days, was unacceptable to the people who find themselves in a desperate search for those

moments which are destined never to arrive.

Yes, managers in the Premier league are probably not given enough time to prove their true value, in much the same way as many small businesses are devoured by multinationals before they can establish themselves. Yes, Alex Ferguson is the longest serving and most successful manager in the history of the league. Yes, clubs like Tottenham and Newcastle should probably have revolving doors fitted at their training grounds, forever touched by the taint of controversy. All these seem to vindicate arguments for longevity over expediency.

However one must resist the temptation to use the assumptions inherent in many of the models taught at this institution. Government and Economics students will be all too familiar with the ideas of self-interested office seekers and utility maximisers; labels that are often thrust upon all those involved in the back offices of professional sports franchises. It is easy to stand on the sidelines or in the terraces and berate those 'suits' hell bent on undoing the rich history of a club in favour of short term personal or economic gain. What is much more difficult is making tough decisions, standing up and suffering the wounds left by the wrath, spite and vitriol from the fans as the consequences

unfold.

But the situation could be worse. As the NBA trade deadline passed on Thursday, some players awoke to the news that they had been dealt to another team on the other side of the country, forced to say a rushed goodbye to cherished companions, required to uproot their families and sell their homes, asked to learn to play with a new group of players at the same time as trying to settle in completely alien surroundings. All in the blink of an eye.

Even worse is the team move phenomenon, witnessed as recently as last year when the Seattle SuperSonics transformed into the Oklahoma City Thunder (while I may be the biggest fan of American sports outside the US, this has to be the worst name change since Pizza Hut opted to trial Pasta as their prefix, another example of boardroom madness). Granted this is only possible because of the sheer size and population of the States, but it is still symptomatic of a world where loyalty means far less than it currently does in the UK.

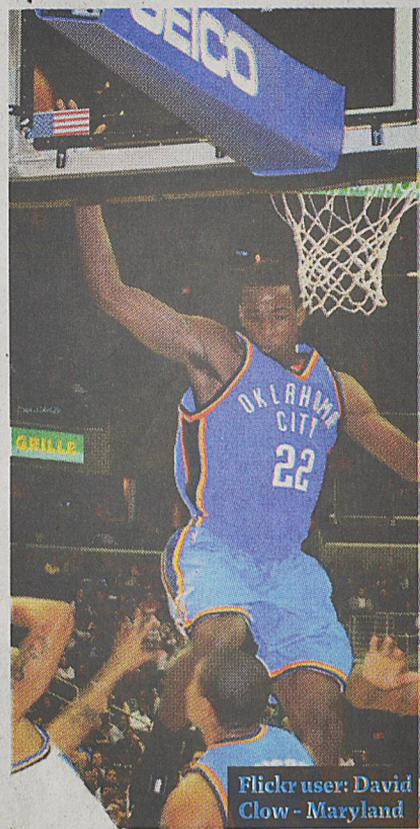
I am not saying that Craig Bellamy's behavior in engineering a move to Man City wasn't disgraceful, or that it is good that Haskell, Palmer and Flutey have decided to swap the gorgeous surroundings of Wycombe for those of Paris and Brive. What I am saying is that players

should have a right to disassociation, well argued by people like Chandran Kukathas as a key element in any liberal democracy, but this right does not extend to clubs themselves. These are the vehicles of the type of collective interest, or general will in the words of Rousseau, the lifeblood of which lies in the body of each an every man and woman who finds their own soul intertwined that of their club.

No man, whatever their business acumen or bloated reputation, who fails to understand this fundamental responsibility will ever be able to succeed in the world of sports. While the economic paradigm seems to have spread beyond the factory and office walls onto the fields and courts, there remains an aspect of sports within this country which refuses to give in. Fans and board members may have wildly different class interests, styles of living and ways of communicating but when it comes to the club, the thing they most definitely hold in common, their decision to act must always depend on the feelings of the other. That way we're all kept honest.

So beware Manchester City, in this author's humble opinion, a grave threat to the current status quo.

philosophicalbarry@beaveronline.co.uk



Flickr user: David Clow - Maryland



Photo: Victoria Satterthwaite

Women's hockey avoid motorway poly's spell

Danielle Priestley & Alison Chadwick

Last Wednesday, the LSE Women's Hockey Club finally redeemed themselves after two losses in a row. We got ourselves down to Battersea to face the coven of witches from the motorway poly, i.e. the 'University' of Reading. They were remarkably less tan-tastic than last time, clearly wearing their winter colour.

The game got off to a cracking start as one witch hit another in the face with the ball. The swelling was a great improvement, though. She soldiered on - we'd take our proverbial hats off to her if she wasn't such a bitch.

Some excellent defending from player-of-the-match Caroline, backed up by Vicki, kept them away from our goal, and it wasn't long before we made a break and Alex, our jolly Jamaican, slotted it in - clean and smooth.

After Alison came a cropper in the middle of the pitch, the witches showed us new lows of their callous personalities. We responded with a further goal from lightning-bolt Alex, now having less wind

She soldiered on - we'd take our proverbial hats off to her if she wasn't such a bitch.

resistance from her hair-free thighs.

Right before the half-time whistle, the so far flawless Emma Heap made a dodgy deflection into the D, right onto a witch's stick. Fluke.

In the second half, we dominated, our midfielders barely letting it out of their half. After some good injections into the D from Christina, Emma Haugh eventually got a well-deserved goal, and the game finished 3-1.

After wolfing down enough Chilli to feed all the Turks in London, it was onto the Quad for the Development Auction. We wanted to bid for Howard Davies but, unlike many LSE students, we don't have more money than sense.

There was a pretty low turn-out at Zoo bar, but it's quality, not quantity, that counts. Heap got some Tesco Finest quality, while Dani found plenty people to practice her English teaching skills on. Kathryn keeps tight-lipped about her evening, but we wonder whether she kept tight-legged.

There may be none of us left next week, as the number of people with broken bones is increasing faster than Captain Fish Finger's golden balls score, and Hotchkiss's Bush.

Rediscovering the winning formula

Weilong Liang laments the loss and celebrates the odd recovery of form

What have Ronaldinho, Adriano and the England cricket team got in common? They have all recently taken to their respective sporting arenas to reverse their decline. While Ronaldinho has successfully recaptured some of the samba magic that made him the world's best, English cricket languishes in turmoil and Adriano is still trying to regain fitness and confidence after some personal problems.

Last season, Ronaldinho's fitness issues and his spat with Samuel Eto'o caused him to fall out of favour at Barcelona. But since moving to AC Milan he has played with a renewed flair, taking up more central positions and orchestrating the Milan attack with his passing. Although he is struggling to reproduce the brilliance that earned him comparisons with Johan Cruyff, we should be grateful that we still have the privilege of watching one of the most entertaining footballers of our generation play to such a high standard.

Unfortunately Adriano is still an overweight spectre of the player that was destined to be the world's best centre-forward. Alcoholism badly affected his form last season. Consequently he rarely featured for Inter, and was sent back to Italy prematurely after being on loan at Sao Paulo. He looked off the pace for Brazil against Italy, and he spurned a chance in the Milan derby that he wouldn't even have contemplated missing at his peak.

Having said that Adriano's form has improved slightly and he has contributed some important goals this season. This means that he will probably start tonight in the Champions' League, where only the Adriano from three years ago will be good enough to penetrate Manchester United's watertight defence.

Meanwhile English cricket stumbles from one disaster to the next. The departure of the captain and the coach on the same day is bad enough, but then England are humiliated by a West Indies team that hasn't won a Test Series since beating Bangladesh in 2004. Last week England were on the verge of squaring the series before grabbing a draw from the jaws of victory like only England can.

Last week England were on the verge of squaring the series before grabbing a draw from the jaws of victory like only England can

A big problem is the lack of continuity; four of the current England side have been captain in the last three years. When the new coach is appointed, he must dissipate the tension in the dressing room caused by the rift between Andrew Flintoff and Kevin Pietersen, and rekindle the togetherness shown in the Ashes win of 2005. Poor team selection has led to complacency amongst the players, but the selection of Owais Shah ahead of the persistently mediocre Ian Bell is a positive step towards competition for places.

The road to redemption is a long one; only Ronaldinho seems to be on it.

Sport

Women's hockey

<< page 23



Quality not Quantity for WFC



Photo John Eyson

Abi Uglow and Laura Ellis

As our captain Astrid once so eloquently said, "Let's not beat around my beaver". Travelling out to Thames Ditton early on Saturday morning, the numbers weren't in our favour. 8 players. No goalkeeper or discernible strike force. Not to mention that we'd only have seven for the second half. Things weren't looking promising.

But there was a strange sense of optimism sweeping through the team, and a feeling that today might just be our day. This was all but confirmed when we spied one of the other team sporting questionable neon pink sunglasses – a surefire

sign that she would be terrible.

A 'solid' formation of 3-3-1 left us all with a little more space than we were accustomed to. But straight from the off we were all over them. Our back three perched on the halfway line nervously as Janelle pounded St George's defence into the ground. Keina and Elisabeth were doing a sterling job of picking up the loose balls in the middle of the park, although the lack of strikers was telling in front of goal.

Lunna, our resident Brazilian goal-hanger, was hanging around in the wrong goal. Stuck between the posts at the other end of the pitch, she's so hardcore she plays without gloves. That's just how she rolls. Unlike Alice, who'd had a peculiar case of 'no glove, no love' last weekend. The match was deadlock for the first

half hour, leaving St George's absolutely panting. Debbie, Abi and Laura patrolled defence, leaving Lunna virtually redundant in goal. Janelle left us to see out the half to go to work and we were down to 7.

This is when we thought things would start going tits up. Reverting to a 3-3-0 formation, a lucky break from a goal kick allowed Abi to make a well-timed pass out to Astrid on the left wing. Powering towards goal, a superb cross trickled around the box, before coming back out to Astrid to slot home. A goal up, we were left ecstatic whilst the opposition picked their jaws up from the floor. Defence remained hench to see out the rest of the half, before coach John fed us magical Haribo.

Heading back out with amazing confidence, we picked up where we left off. A concrete penalty for a blatant handball

in the box by sunglasses girl wasn't given, much to Keina's disgust. Astrid's free kick was tantalisingly close to sailing over the keeper's head, somehow managing to stay out of the onion bag.

A dubious decision from the ref, which saw three of their players offside, wasn't called. Never mind the vast amount of daylight between them and our defence – they were almost in a completely different time zone. John was fuming on the sidelines, engaging the ref in a slanging match, before being branded a pussy by the opposition.

Pain is fear leaving the body, and LSE's women broke through the pain barrier

Undeterred, great link up play down the left wing between Debbie and Astrid saw Debbie make up for missing an absolute sitter earlier in the game by sinking a beautifully unexpected goal. Another offside decision that went unnoticed gifted them an undeserved goal, completely against the run of play. Never mind their bitching about defence's superb offside trap; sunglasses girl displayed a not-so-hidden talent for ear-splitting belches. Ladies' football it ain't.

Spurred on by their goal, Elisabeth and Keina's hard work in midfield saw Keina set up Astrid with a peachy ball to hit home. Keina herself bagged a goal to put the game to bed. St George's scurried off the pitch as quickly as humanly possible, being shown up by our magnificent seven, while we paraded around on the pitch performing some sort of victory dance-cum-warm down.

When asked to comment on the WFC's fantastic performance, Coach John responded that 'All year LSE's women have graced the uni league with beautiful football, but this week they knew that they had to dig in, with only 7.5 players available, to keep their hopes of becoming top of the division. Pain is fear leaving leaving

the body, and LSE's women broke through the pain barrier.'

Wednesday night saw the second annual WFC margarita night. Copious amounts of tequila topped off with Mexican fare was the perfect prequel to a trip to the Zoo. Host Jade opened her doors to the pure carnage of the drunken WFC, providing us with paint stripper-strength margaritas on arrival. There was much drunken chair dancing and dubious karaoke, with a notable effort of 'Ride on Time' by Abi, which shocked the team in its pure brilliance.

Some members of the team had more of a problem holding their drink than others, *coughharrietcough*. Anna had a strange case of 'chilli finger', which remains unexplained to this day, though the sight of her dunking her finger in milk was sketchy to say the least.

Moving onto Zoo we met up with part-timer Alice who skipped the night to sell herself under the premise of a charity auction. Although she wasn't long in Zoo, being chucked out for petty beer theft – such loose morals. Laura managed to make it home with an unnamed football seconds player, via Burger King; needless to say she's got a lot to learn.

WFC are on a winning streak. Prior to our aforementioned thrashing of St George's we traipsed out to Berrylands last Sunday, disheartened by only scraping ten players together. But much to our surprise, GKT strolled into the Fortress with only seven team members.

We embarrassed them 9-0, but given that we were only allowed to play 35-minute halves – referee's rules due to their depleted team – we weren't able to truly humiliate them by getting the score-line into double figures. LSE played the last 50 minutes with only nine players, Alice being gallantly swept off the pitch by coach John after a brutal ankle injury.

Lunna was the brave (read unlucky) soul who filled the missing position of keeper in the first half, followed by Precious in the second half after she thumped home four goals in the first. Allison (2), Anna, Lunna and Elisabeth rounded off the goal scorers.

Wednesday sees our last fixture at the Fortress. If this article hasn't convinced you to come and see us in action, then maybe the sight of eleven, but probably just seven, LSE girls in shorts, will.

Seldom used seconds exorcise demons

Oliver Townsend gives us the inside track on the Rugby 2s fight for promotion

Having promised Sam before the game that I would write a match report should we win, I was expecting get away without having to submit anything. The rugby seconds have had a rollercoaster season, with far more downs than ups. In 16 weeks of term time, we have played just six league fixtures, owing mainly to referee and opposition cancellations. Since the Christmas break, we had had just one fixture, and that was only against the 'savage' thirds of Felix 'Captain Hook' Lahaye (which we won 53-0).

It was then, lacking match sharpness and team cohesion, that we headed down to fortress berrylands to face Canterbury Christchurch Thirds, a team we hadn't played formally. The ref didn't show up or even tell us that he wasn't going to, but we reckoned Christchurch would be a fairly even match for us. With exactly eleven players, we arrived and got changed, hoping that the other four who had 'confirmed' would actually show up. After the unexpected but very welcome arrival of former club captain Murderer, we got to kick off with a sub to spare.

After a promising start where we saw glimpses of the team's potential, we were thrust onto the back foot after some ill

The rugby seconds have had a rollercoaster season, with far more downs than ups

discipline from Alex Hill saw him sin binned for deliberate cynical play. In the ensuing 10 minutes during which we were a man down, we conceded a try, which fortunately went unconverted.

With Alex back on we proceeded to find a bit of consistency and rhythm. A beautiful flowing move ended with a try in the corner from Aquil, courtesy of some extremely slick hands in the midfield from Sayo. At 5-5, we continued to press, but failure to take any of the multiple chances we created cost us dear, as we conceded again against the run of play just before half time.

The second half started brightly, yet we were still unable to make our superiority count. With the introduction of Murderer to the field of play we began to completely dominate the lineout. Some fine moves involving strong forward running from Faz and Jem, and creative movement from Finn and Greg in the backs opened up the opposition like a netballer on a Wednesday night, but, like Dewi (sadly missing this week), we couldn't convert.

With time running out, we were gifted a penalty in front of the posts, which brought the score to 10-8. Continued pressure yielded another kickable opportunity with 5 minutes to go. The ensuing



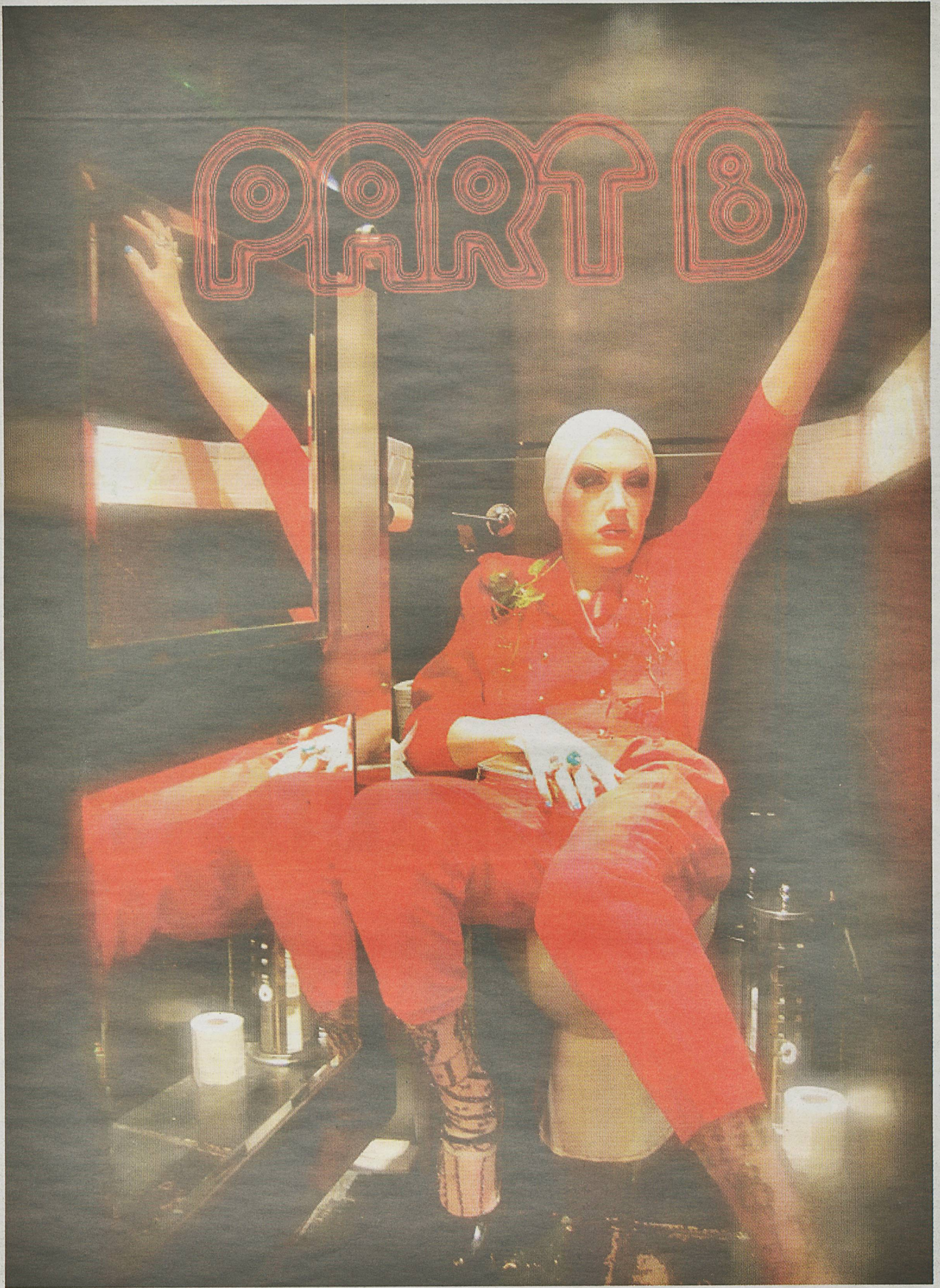
Photo Tom Jackson

attempt at goal floated inches wide, but from the resulting, 22 drop out Daryl Li popped up with his second charge down of the game. The loose ball fell to Greg, and from the ruck 5 metres out Sayo powered over with a flying finish superman would have been proud of.

The score was 13-10 with minutes to go. Some strong defence and superior fitness saw out the last minutes of the game,

and with the final whistle came relief and joy.

It was our hardest fought game of the season, but easily our best performance, and the most satisfying too, with excellent performances from 1 through 16. The seconds remain firmly in contention for promotion this season, and with more performances like this will surely go up.



24.02.09

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put them away boys



Yesterday we descended into the seventh circle of hell and witnessed scenes which made our eyes melt with repulsion and jealous excitement. Here we try to recreate it, but concerns of decency limit us.

Hedonistic excess used to be my middle name; then, on the advice of leading economists, I abandoned the material world for Buddhism.

It's working out great, thanks for asking. Anyway, join us on our next day-trip down to the fiery fun place, meet outside the library at 5am on thursday. Bring a change of clothes and an anorak.

**SACHIN PATEL &
JULIAN BOYS**

FAQ! FAX! FACTS!

Dear Julian,

In between bouts of lucid dreaming and anthropology lectures, I've somehow chanced upon a new chemical element. If you could name it after anyone, who would it be? The element is yellow in colour; highly magnetic; and smells of sour grapes.

Post haste,
Colin Paul Overton

Dear Sachin

Whilst wading in the Thames in the wee hours of friday morning (I was foraging for crustaceans, i'm not weird or owt lol), I had a vision of Notorious B.I.G. descending from the sky surrounded by a choir of cherubic angels. He spoke with the voice of Chris Eubank and said some pretty boring things. Cool eh?

Freddy Brittledump

DID SOMETHING STIR INSIDE YOUR DANK SOUL?

THEBEAVER.PARTB@GMAIL.COM

FIND OUR DEBAUCHEROUS ONLINE COUSIN FROlickING AT
PARTBONLINE.BLOGSPOT.COM

THE SORRY STATE OF DEBAUCHERY IN BRITAIN

louisaevans asks what happened to the pleasure?

Veisalgia. This is the actual medical term for a hangover, and can be used, quite confidently, to keep employers at bay. This interesting and handy term comes from the Norwegian 'kveis', meaning 'uneasiness after debauchery'. (Apparently it is also used to describe parasites that live in or on some fish too, but we'll ignore that part.) "Debauchery is a fabulous word, not only for the entertainment value derived from hearing different people say it, (Russians in particular) but it actually sounds naughty.

Bless my mother, when I told her I was writing an article on debauchery, even over the phone, I could feel the pursing of her lips and her discomfort. After I managed to reassure her that actually, I wasn't going to be drawn into some crazed cult during my 'research' on the internet, I asked her what sprang to mind when I said 'debauchery'. 'Well... Roman sex orgies, I suppose.' My mother, ladies and gentlemen.

While the Romans were quite badly behaved, (they had celebrations for the genitals), they really had nothing on the Marquis de Sade, 'the famous sexual pervert', of eighteenth century France. The Marquis is known for his experimentation with brutal fetishes, particularly whipping and sodomy, and the intense pleasure he derived from destroying the innocence of young girls from La Coste. In fact, the terms sadism and sadomasochism are derived from his name - it's nice to leave your mark on history, isn't it?

Despite these rather debauched beginnings, the French and Italians have cultivated themselves, for the most part, into alluring sexual beings. Just about anything in Italian sounds like an amorous advance, and they have opera, wine and delectable dishes. (The way to a man's heart is, after all, through his belly). The French have 'l'amour' down to an art: you wouldn't respond to Charlize Theron's Dior advert, 'J'adore Dior', in quite the same way if it were whispered huskily in English. The French also gave us the can-can: risqué, yes, but theatrical, and so they pull it off without it being degrading. Heck, they even smoke in a sensual, languid way.

But sadly, the British seem to know how to take the sensual sexuality out of just about everything. Think about smoking in Britain and it may conjure up the mental image of fifteen-year-olds standing outside the local off-licence on a Friday night, scrunchies and loud abrasive

'speech'. Your typical Vicky Pollard. We don't have Thierry Henry telling us about his 'va-va-voom', we have David Beckham (no complaints there) standing in front of a mirror, shaving - is it just me or did they deliberately keep his advert mute? Our culinary efforts are hardly scintillating either. Curry and chips? Not really the thing to get you in the mood, is it? Alas, some don't seem to mind foul curry-breath - we have the highest teen pregnancy rate in Europe by miles. Not the sexually adventurous/promiscuous/Casanovas of Italy or France, but Britain, the society of prudish reservation ...and apparently horny teenagers.

Who wasn't shocked, or at least morbidly



fascinated, when we heard of Alfie Patten who became a father at 13, after the baby's conception when he was just 12? If this wasn't bad enough, and as many fear, an unfortunate indicator of British society, two other boys have come out, aged 14 and 16, both claiming to be the baby's father. Why has the way we view sex changed so much that children as young as this, seem to think it's OK to be having sex at such a young age?

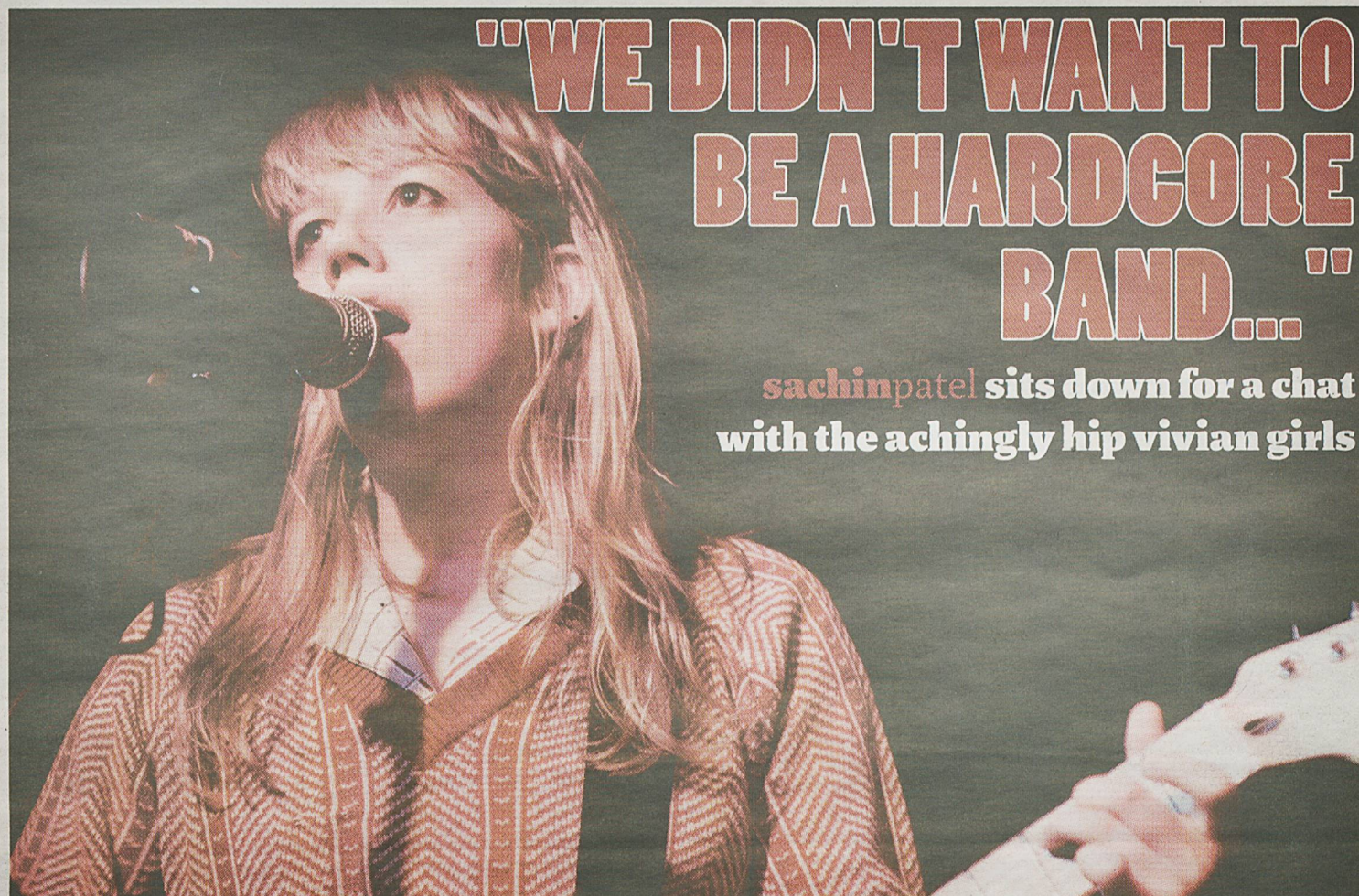
Sex generally serves two purposes: procreation and pleasure. A child was not what any of these youngsters had in mind, but pleasure? Some women make it to 30 without ever having had a proper orgasm and men are widely regard-

ed as not being too fussy about who they get their 'rocks off' with and so I find it hard, nay near-impossible, to believe that these children had sex in search of the elusive orgasm. I went to an all-girls school until I was 12 and, while the question of 'sex' came up, usually through stories Jas's older brothers had told her, it was accompanied with mild curiosity and confusion. In fact, most of us were largely repulsed at the thought of boys and girls touching and kissing. They were, after all, horrid: they pulled your hair and had scabby knees.

Being 12 wasn't that long ago and while my interest in boys has increased somewhat, it was a gradual process. In fact, it was rather 'textbook' - unfolding exactly how we're told it's supposed to. However, it increasingly seems that having sex, especially for the first time, is not a question of 'lust' but rather happens because it is 'what you do.' As the Black Eyed Peas asked before me, "Where is the love?"

If we knew where this need to grow up came from, maybe it could help solve more of the problems Britain faces. Along with an extraordinarily high teen pregnancy rate, Britain is also widely perceived to be a nation of lager louts. We Britons love a good drink, or 5 or 6... or 10 or 12, and unashamedly bandy this behaviour about. Our sportsmen are constantly in the press for bad, usually alcohol-fuelled behaviour at home and abroad, and that is to say nothing of the sport's followers. Drunkenness is an unfortunate but highly likely side-effect of over-imbibing, yet it seems that we Brits are the very worst behaved after having a tipples. Unlike our friends over the Channel, it appears we are ignorant of the quality of alcohol: so long as it's freely flowing, we're not too fussy. Why is that? Do we drink so excessively because it's the only opportunity we get to set free from our prudish constraints? I'm not so sure. It seems like those who give Britain a bad reputation for drinking aren't particularly prudish in the first place.

Maybe, as a nation, we've forgotten the 'pleasure' bit of debauchery. We go through the motions and do all the 'wrong' things, but not only that, we actually *do* it wrong. We Brits have lost the sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll, instead, settling for 'roll-on-roll-off', a quick pint and a curry. If that isn't a tragedy, I don't know what is.



"WE DIDN'T WANT TO BE A HARDCORE BAND..."

sachinpatel sits down for a chat with the achingly hip vivian girls

In case you haven't noticed, there's currently an explosion of noisy, reverb-drenched music, paying equal parts homage to My Bloody Valentine as the Shangri-La's, emanating from New York City. One such exponent, currently reaping the effects of critical acclaim, are Vivian Girls, an all-girl trio based in Brooklyn, who have recently hopped across the pond for a jaunt of gigs in clubs and bars across Europe. The Proud Galleries in Camden was the ideal trendy setting for my encounter with the band.

Though Vivian Girls have only recently found an audience in Europe, it is immediately clear that they love being on the road. Talkative guitarist Cassie Ramone confirms that they're "all pretty big fans of travelling", adding that touring around Europe has been "an amazing experience... tour promoters in Europe are very hospitable." So much for the food and drink they're blagging on their travels; what of the crowds' reaction to their music? The band's bassist, Kickball Katy, is quick to temper their enthusiasm by noting that "in some cities, it's been amazing, others it's been so-so." Despite this temporary dampener, it is clear that Vivian Girls are a band very much of the moment, whose music should surely find a receptive audience.

What immediately strikes me about their music is the irresistible sense of melody underlying the sometimes chaotic swells of distortion and reverb, and the band is quick to concur:

Cassie confirms this sentiment, saying that "When we first started out, we wanted to be a band that had melodic songs, but they were really fast, and they were also really reverb-heavy." Comparisons with My Bloody Valentine and C86 bands aside, Vivian Girls are also keen to point out their hardcore roots. Cassie adds that her childhood listening habits featured "a lot of

"New York City is such a diverse, cultural place, that people who are interested in the arts just blossom out from one place."

The Wipers, and Dead Moon. But we were also really influenced by hardcore: we just wanted our songs to be really fast." When I point out that virtually every teenage band starts out wanting to be a hardcore band, and that these roots have never really materialised in their music, which displays considerably more innocence and optimism than the likes of Fugazi or Minor Threat,

she explains that "we didn't want to be a hardcore band, like Minor Threat or anything, but we just wanted to be really fast." Their eponymous debut album, released last year, is a riotous affair, with strangely loping, lilting harmonies bouncing between typically breakneck drumming and shimmering, wall-of-sound guitars.

Inevitably, their sonic palette makes for an appealing live proposition. When I query the band as to their thoughts on playing live, they become wildly enthusiastic. Katy is keen to point out that "it's really not about recreating the sound on your record. You can interact with the audience, and we're in that learning-process stage." The band's drummer, Ali Koehler, puts forward the idea that "it's about taking what people feel about the record, and translating that energy into the live experience," adding that "I don't think anyone wants to go to a show and just hear a CD - it has to be something else." When we discuss their downtime interests, it is unsurprising to learn that all three are avid giggoers, choosing to spend their January off going to "virtually a show every other day." With their taste for under-the-radar indie bands, like The Beats and Pissed Jeans, one can almost pinpoint Vivian Girls' geographical location on a map. Says Katy, "We're all from New Jersey, but me and Cassie live in Brooklyn." When one considers the wealth of musical talent emerging from Brooklyn neighbourhoods like Williamsburg, it is interesting to hear the actual opinions of the



artists as to why the borough has developed such a reputation. Cassie suggests that "New York City is such a diverse, cultural place, that people who are interested in the arts, and different ways of life, just kind of blossom out of one place."

Just like their neighbours TV On The Radio (whom Katy describes as "awesome live"), Vivian Girls came together in a communal loft environment. Cassie elaborates, "I was living in Brooklyn, and I was hanging out with this group of people, like, my friends. They were living in this warehouse loft space, and I would go there four times a week, and Frankie [the band's original drummer] lived there too." Moreover, as she explains, a set of fortuitous circumstances led to all three of the band's current members colliding together. "My old band had just gone on hiatus, and Frankie didn't have a band, and she asked me if I wanted to start a band. I was like, yeah, sure! We still needed a bass player, and Katie's band had gone on hiatus too... and then we just started to play together." The manner in which all three of the Girls' sentences trail off at the end is indicative of a misty-eyed joy at the fortune that has befallen them. When founding member Frankie decided to commit to the Crystal Stilts, again, serendipity dealt Vivian Girls an ideal hand: Cassie explains that "The band I'd been on hiatus with was a band with Ali, so when we needed a new drummer, Ali was the first obvious choice."

Far from being hipster layabouts, Vivian Girls are the spirit of progressive feminism personified (in a good way). All three graduated at exactly the same time, and, though they hold degrees in subjects as varied as German, Physics and Art, the allure of the road was too thrilling to forgo. Cassie admits that "It really was just a

lucky timing thing. We started the band when I was a junior at college. And then we were working really hard at it, for like, a year or so, and then when we graduated, it was just like, diving straight into music the whole time." In spite of their clear intellectual prowess, however, not even the prospect of steady jobs will derail Vivian Girls from their artistic ambitions. "We are

"We're just going to tour, tour and record, tour and record, a lot more. We're just going to keep going forever."

going to tour a lot more," says Katy, "we're then going to record our second album in March. We're aiming to release it in September. And then we're just going to tour, tour and record, tour and record, a lot more. We're just going to keep going forever!" Ali adds that "We also have our own record label now, so maybe in the future, if we end up touring less, we're going to put out our best records on it." When I inquire as to what their future musical directions might be, the responses are somewhat conflicting; nevertheless, they shed light on their deep vein of songwriting talent. Though they are firmly committed to the shimmering guitars and clattering drums of their forebears, Katy also notes that "a lot of people say that there's more energy live, and we

might like to capture that. It might be nice to be more sparse."

Their lyrics, meanwhile, will continue to be about "relationships, and when they fail," at which point the band break into peals of laughter. Clearly, their relentless energy doesn't detract from the undercurrent of teenage angst in their lyrical themes. They also remain fiercely committed to independent ideals: Cassie explains that "it's like one of our integral moral codes [to stay independent]," adding that "We started out playing punk shows in living rooms," suggesting that, with their Bikini Kill tattoos, Vivian Girls remain attached to their Riot Grrrl roots, and are fairly unlikely to transform themselves into the next Lady GaGa. When I finish our conversation by asking them their opinions of this new wave of female electro-pop acts, it becomes clear that pop music is something of an alien world for them. Though they argue that "Anything that gets girls involved with music is good," Ali concedes that "Lady GaGa's image is pretty over-sexualised," the implicit conclusion being that for Vivian Girls, artistic integrity remains paramount.

In the gig that follows our interview, Vivian Girls hold true to their promises, indulging in some jams on several songs, while consistently projecting a raw energy lacking in many of their peers. Throughout, what impresses me most about them is that sweet, wry smile in the corner of all their songs' mouths - no matter how unorthodox Cassie Ramone's guitar sound is, she refuses to let it obstruct the band's essential, primal joy at being young women, forging an independent life in music, thrilled at the prospect of the open road.

BEER, SYPHILIS AND MONKEYS

judehutchinson pays homage to a debauched hero

We love a bit of crudity in our literature. From eighth century monks, carefully penning down riddles about penises and masturbating women, to Ian McEwan describing Cecelia's "sweet wet cunt" in *Atonement*, via Chaucer, Lord Byron and D.H. Lawrence, we can't get enough.

Yet, there's one man that trumps them all. He beats Chaucer sticking a poker up someone's arse. He laughs in the face of Lady Chatterley's comparatively tame affair. He is, my friends, John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester, king of smut and satire. I will never forget the day when my school English teacher shattered my wide-eyed, innocent view of literature by telling me to go away and read some of this most explicit poetry.

My humble diet of Wordsworth and Blake hadn't prepared me for the seventeenth century libertine and his *The Imperfect Enjoyment*, a

poetic and rich account of erectile dysfunction and venereal disease. Or *The Disabled Debauchee*; 48 lines detailing Wilmot's fear of impotence. I wasn't expecting to find out that 'the best kiss was the deciding lot / Whether the boy fucked you, or I the boy'. Hardly the stuff of Jackanory, I'm sure you'll agree.

The Earl lived up to the high standards of debauchery set by his poetry. This man was writing from a wealth of experience. And like so many newly-free freshers he apparently went off the rails when he went to Oxford. Less typically, he was twelve years old. There are numerous tales of Wilmot getting banned from court for running round naked, before being brought back again when things got dull. He convinced his wife to marry him in the most romantic way he could think of; by kidnapping her from her father's carriage. He also owned a pet monkey, which is not

that debauched, but very cool.

After accidentally reading a poem about how Charles II was too obsessed with sex to rule while drunk, he was kicked out of court for good, presumably amidst mutterings of pot calling the kettle a sex pest. In true style, our resourceful hero put his transferable skills to use by adopting a pseudonym of Dr Bendo, donning a fake moustache (I would imagine), and setting up a fertility clinic, an enterprise that was apparently 'not without success' (his impotence evidently less of a problem than his poetic musings would suggest). He put his time to good literary use as well, writing a play, *Sodom*, which makes D. H. Lawrence read like the weekly W.I. newsletter. Yet, there's a moral to this hedonistic tale. Lord Rochester died at 33, his previous good looks rotted by syphilis and alcoholism. I've no idea what happened to the monkey.

LSE LITERARY FESTIVAL

tomsimpson likes the sound of a bookish weekend

It is sometimes very easy to forget that the key organisation in the founding of our university, the Fabian Society, was not a bunch of dull-as-dishwater economists, but a wacky bunch of literary titans, including the self-proclaimed successor to Shakespeare, George Bernard Shaw. The LSE Literary Weekend, which begins this Friday, aims to reinvigorate this aspect of the LSE's heritage through a diverse series of discussions and lectures. The weekend forms part of the arts programme connected to the opening of the NAB, and has managed to attract an amazing range of speakers. Among many others, **Will Self** will discuss writers' approaches to death and **Howard Jacobson** will talk about the nature of blasphemy in the contemporary literary world.

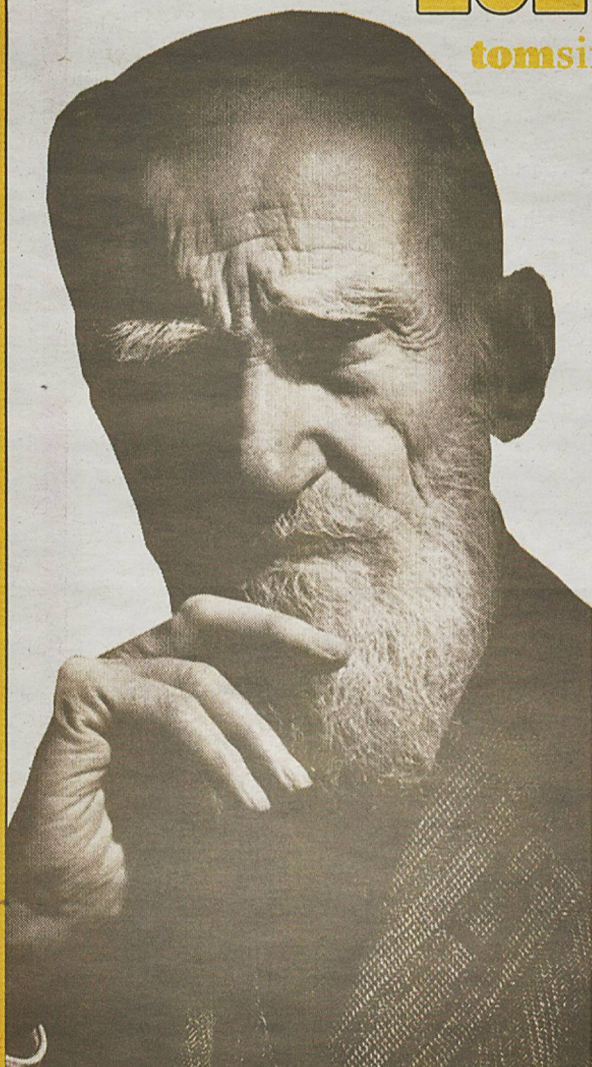
I spoke to Louise Gaskell, the festival coordinator, who said she was especially excited by the Friday evening's events, including the launch event - a debate on literature's role as social commentary. The speakers will be the heavyweight literary trio of **Mohsin Hamid**, author of the brilliant *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, the playwright **Sir David Hare** and *The Independent's* literature editor **Boyd Tonkin**. This event, called 'The Founders' Tradition', establishes the crossover between literature and the social sciences, which is a central theme of the weekend as a whole.

While many LSE students obviously love literature - as the popularity of the Litera-

ture Society and undergrad 'literature and society' courses shows - arts-related public events at the LSE have tended not to attract many students. But given the quality of the speakers and the fascinating topics that will be discussed, Louise was confident that this weekend will be different. All of the tickets are free and half of them are reserved for students, so there really is no excuse not to pick up tickets from the Students' Union reception and get involved.

There is something for every literary taste - three poetry events, discussions of the expansive subject of migrant literature and of the somewhat narrower one of Hackney. The genres of political satire and biography writing also feature. And if there's anyone who doesn't particularly like books but does enjoy reading literature articles in PartB (which I admit seems fairly unlikely), the weekend also has something for you - a conversation with a director of the Serpentine Gallery and an architectural discussion on 'designing spaces for thought'.

A return to the idea of linking literature and social sciences at the LSE seems long overdue. After all, who would deny that truly great novels, plays and poetry have the power to change society? The literary weekend is a fantastic opportunity to investigate this connection and is certain to be more thought-provoking than most public lectures. Old Mr. Shaw would most certainly approve.



CHOOSE ANYTHING. CHOOSE EVERYTHING. CHOOSE LIFE

alicepearson wants us to let it all go

Britain. That great nation of the inhibited. Of manners, interminable apologising and what was a great economy. But now that economy's ailing and failing (and neither us nor our graphs apparently saw it coming), can we get over our obsession with predictability and calculated control? Wouldn't that be wonderful...

Do you know why Britain had such a successful economy? Sun. The lack of it. Whilst the Spanish and the Italians gorge themselves on wine and olives and Renaissance art we work in front of a pile of paper that is the means to an end; the end of the day and having enough money to inebriate ourselves when we get there. We strive to fly away once a year and live the 'good life'. Well I'm sorry that I don't want to limit that good life to two weeks in Majorca absorbing my years worth of UV rays, as if that would generate a permanent tan rather than a month of potentially cancer-inducing beetroot burn. The Mediterraneans, however, uphold the legacy of Dionysus and the Satyrs, and appreciate that time is not just to be passed. Alas a few economic sacrifices are made, but what is economics? The rational science of utility maximisation? Well, what could be more irrational than to limit our utility of life?

Oh, but it's 'realistic' they say, it's 'the way life is'. No, it's the way life's been. Isn't it phenomenal, that in our post-modern, post-metanarrative, post-globalised world; we still accept the norms of up-tight, over-rational, under-emotional Britain? Whilst scorning the absurdity of what everyone else's culture has told them is 'the-way-the-world-is', we adopt and defend so unwittingly our own? We school, we maybe go to uni, we definitely go for that big job in that big office for that big salary in order to fulfil that big dream that we never quite get round to, because 'really-it's-just-a-dream'. I'm terribly sorry, I want to live my dream.

Take, for example, the 'gap-year'. The strictly 12 months to get all those 'evil' and 'irresponsible' (but, yes... maybe we can accept natural) urges, before you settle down on the road to what you should really want, a pension, a mortgage and a garage. Ok, go see the world outside Britain, outside our queues and taboos - but it's not real you know, because the UK's got it right. Go smoke pot in the Himalayas with Israelis, go pass out on some beach in Brazil and go work on a sheep farm in outback Australia with 50 other kids from middle-Eng-

land. (And isn't it funny what we teach our dear 18-year-olds about what the rest of the world is like?). Have great sex, have drugs, have a tattoo if you want, 'cos you'll never get the chance again. Isn't it absurd how we in our 'free-country' buy this? Well, to be a little cheesy and a tad melodramatic, what is freedom in this determined world?

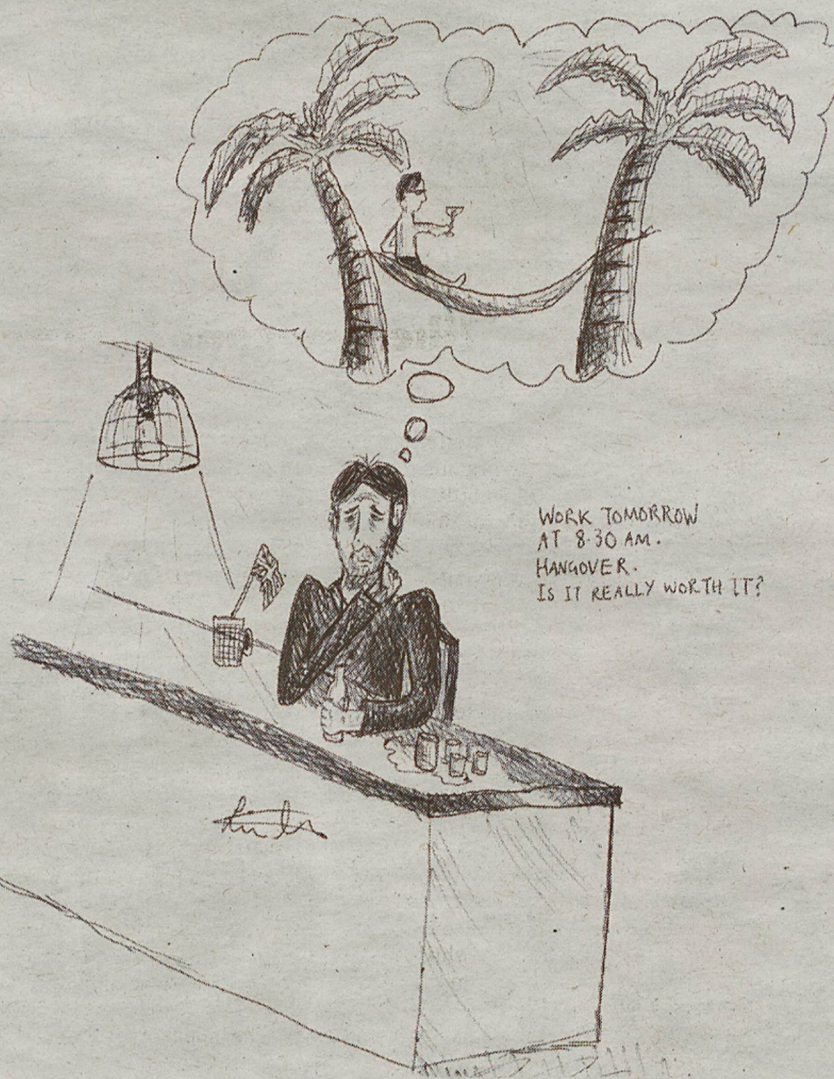
So what do Brits do with their hard-earned cash? Drink. Isn't it ironic that we pump ourselves full of a depressant to get happy? Why? Inhibitions. It permits us to say what we really want. So wouldn't it be wonderful if we could tell our friends that we 'really really love them' and the barman that he has a cute ass without be-

up in the Amazon basin or a Tibetan temple. All just extensions of our natural capacities, which I happen to think were (and are) infinite before our self-censorship.

But is this how we think of Britain? Do we like to look instead to our great rich heritage? Our Byrons and Wildes and Mills? Well isn't that funny that we should live such a life then, given our great heroes advocated something quite different. We excused Byron with 'eccentricity' for his incest and pet bear. We forced Wilde to Catholicism so we could accept whatever he did during the week as long as he went and expressed an appropriate amount of guilt on Sunday. Even Christianity had to escape to America before it picked up a strain of Hedonism. And Mill? Well I hardly think his hedonistic 'experiments in living' is what we live up to. I think they all would've endorsed a reversion to our four Latin roots and acceptance of something more akin to eros than the shameful 'lust'.

Stop worrying about what you can't do and start worrying about what you can. Don't reject life for a rule based on reasoning you don't even know. God gave us mountains, music and mind-enhancing substances; along with the books that are supposed to satisfy us. The most you can do to say thanks and pay some respect is appreciate them - carpe bloody diem. To steal a quote that Nelson Mandela stole himself, 'our greatest fear is not what we can't do, but what we can'. To coin a cliché, 'make love, not war'. And to borrow the wise words of Baz Luhrman 'enjoy the power and beauty of your youth'. Britain isn't in control, not even of that cloud-induced economy. I'm not in control, and I'm damn grateful for it. It terrifies me that there isn't a possibility tomorrow of my having an encounter with a wonderful green-eyed man or a transcendental experience on Houghton street, or of Howard donating firsts...And I accept, I don't know much either. What do I think the most important job is? Busking. And what do I think the most you can give someone? Joy.

So what am I saying? Sex, drugs and rock and roll? Yes, but Pimm's, Persian poetry, prayer and Pilates as well. Choose anything. Choose everything. But choose something. Don't just inherit it. That great Brit Ewan McGregor did give us one vignette of wisdom, choose life.



ing in an altered state of mind. If we could dance without first needing to inebriate ourselves from the horror of attuning our hearing and hips. And doesn't it say it all that we place dancing alongside vomiting in the taxi home and passing out in the bath tub. It's ridiculous that we only relax our bodies when we release the organs within them. And what really makes me laugh is drunk people patronising the stoned or the high, as if it wouldn't be vice-versa if they'd been brought

DRUGS

DEBAUCHERY:

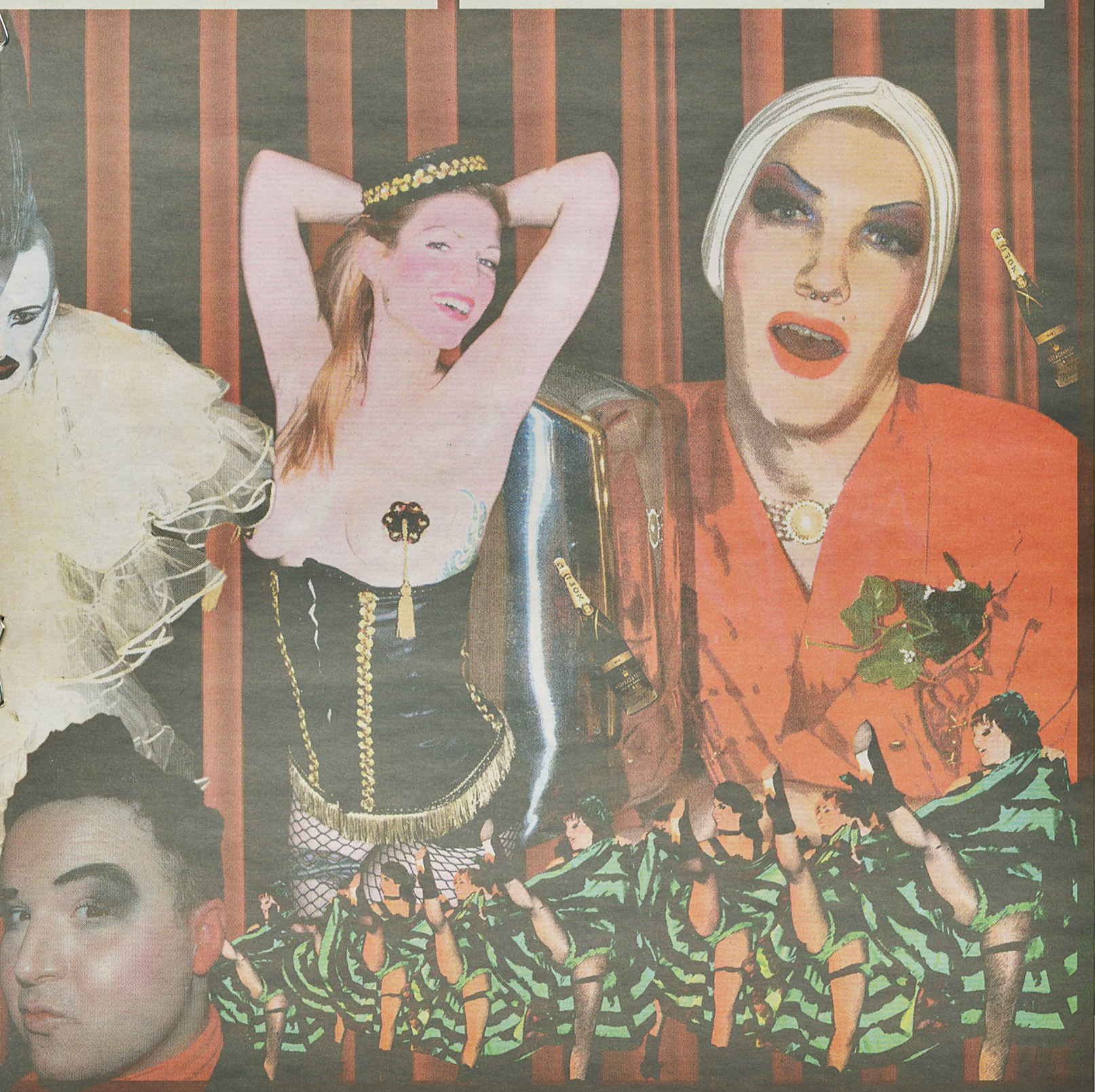
SEXUAL PLE

SCANDALOUS/ACTIV

ALCOHOL/OR/DRUGS/V



**INDULGENCE IN
PLEASURES OR
ACTIVITIES INVOLVING SEX,
WITHOUT INHIBITION**



A MARS A DAY...

nathan briant penetrates debauchery

All people have their faults. Even musical geniuses do; some would argue that with the most talented such shortcomings are worse. Some historians argue that **Beethoven's** deafness can be attributed to a bout of syphilis; **Schubert's** death, at the age of only thirty-one, was also because of this. Playboys in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' musical world, it would seem, were virtually ten-a-penny.

Zoom forward to the twentieth century, and although pop musicians tended not to die of an agonisingly painful disease contracted through a bit of rumpy-pumpy, things still happened to pop stars that weren't exactly 'normal'. **Elvis Presley's** well publicised hamburger habit and death on the toilet aren't exactly run-of-the-mill activities for the average American or Brit (at least I hope not) but since he was ludicrously famous, fans seem to tolerate these unfortunate episodes, or tried to quickly erase them from their fond memories of 'The King'.

But, as usual, the Brits do it better than the Americans; we go the whole hog. The average shy, reserved and Queen-loving (in a Commonwealth Coronation plate above the front door way, not anything else...) 1960s Briton seemingly thought anything with an inch of any skin excluding that of the face or arm of a woman was morally depraved. So when rumours of Mick Jagger's exploits involving a Mars bar and his then girlfriend, Marianne Faithfull, arose (although Faithfull is admittedly an American, he supposedly did the eating so he can take the 'credit') and the **Beatles'** (albeit infrequent) use of LSD came to light, it was like Harold Wilson had called the Queen Mother a prostitute in the Commons.

Such scandalous Jagger-esque exploits were continued by **Led Zeppelin** into the 1970s. For one event see 'the shark episode', which for similar reasons to Jagger's exploits will not be elaborated upon (but if you're curious you'll be able to find descriptions of the incidents through Google without a family filter).

The 1970s saw a seemingly more liberal Britain born. Punk exploded; swastikas, safety pins and black clothing would never have been banded about so abundantly amongst teenagers ten years before. Add into the equation **David Bowie** and **Iggy Pop's** infamous drug binges in Berlin in 1976 where Bowie made the legendary 'Low'. Debauchery was being taken to a new, even more obscure level.

Bowie was famous before the 1970s, but by then pop stars had to be eccentric to sell; artists tended to be cult stars on labels like Stiff Records, rather than selling millions of records on major labels in the latter part of the decade. One of the many legends on the Stiff roster at this time, **Ian Dury**, talked

about things that would even today seem close to the bone, particularly after the Ross/Brand/Sachs affair. Hitting someone with a 'rhythm stick' was then, and I think today, still uncommon (unless I'm seriously missing out on something); Dury on his track 'Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll', explained how these components comprised 'liberty'; the track 'Billericay Dickie' – an absolute masterpiece of British wordplay – talked of how he "got right up" between her "rum and her Ribena" and how later, in another sordid affair "I bought a lot of brandy/when I was courting Sandy/took eight to make her randy/and all I had was shandy".

Then Thatcher's Britain of aspiration and wealth took root. Attitudes on sex within the masses liberalised to a degree which would have been completely incongruent with those held in the 1950s and 1960s; cocaine was supposedly freely attainable amongst those who wanted it, and by the end of the decade Ecstasy tablets were com-

monplace in every nightclub. The Hacienda nightclub in Manchester, owned by the late, great Tony Wilson is the legendary example of drugs and music creating drug-fuelled decadence in the 1980s.

Take the legendary **Happy Mondays**, one of the most creative and original bands of the late 1980s and early 1990s. The band's lead singer, Shaun Ryder, took so many drugs during the era of Maggie-led hedonism that he now resembles "a tobacco-stained Teletubby" according to one journalist. If pop stars did it – like the Tories did in the 1980s – they did it properly. Thatcher closed the pits and took a reversed Robin Hood

"There are some bands that really ought to retire. One such band is U2. Instead of preening around in daft sunglasses, spewing out fair-trade over-politicised nonsense, Mr. Hewson should be watching Countdown and reading Paul Auster novels in a retirement home."

role; the Mondays took drugs on a monumental scale. Famously, they took so much heroin that the acts were quickly renamed within the band: taking a hit was referred to as 'having a KFC'.

Then came the 1990s, when **Oasis**, **Blur**, 'Cool Britannia' and Blair kicked arse. By this point 'debauchery' amongst the masters of pop took a less open approach. Whereas in the Mondays' days, drugs, enjoying the music and having-E-inspired casual sex were for all, by the time of the Gallaghers it seemed that this behaviour was only now acceptable for those in a particular gang. Noel Gallagher announced famously that to him drugs were like "having a cup of tea" but then quickly gave them up in the late

1990s, which he has said in practically every interview he has ever given since: "It's like, well, I were just about, like, going down Maine Road, like, and I were watchin' Coronation Street wit' me Mam and our Liam and Bonehead and I thought 'what's the point, eh?' As for the sex; references were still interjected into songs but the demand for this had been replaced by inclusion in other sources, for example, for Oasis fans, in the 1990s phenomenon that was (and still is) Loaded magazine.

And what about debauchery today? 'Sex' & 'drugs' & 'rock & roll' seem to be more popular than they've ever been: cocaine definitely gets chopped up by more of the common British stock than it ever has before for example, but the British media and music world seems to have taken a new, Daily Mail-influenced bent on musicians who lead rather hedonistic lifestyles, their message shouted as Mary Whitehouse would have done in the 1960s: debauchery is now no longer cool. **Amy Winehouse** and **Pete Doherty** ten years ago would have been seen as rockers, absolutely – in Liam Gallagher's gabble – "havin' it", but now their behaviour is seen as the debasement of all human life if much of the press on them in the last couple of years is taken into account. Although it's a wonder how decadence and personal weakness will end up manifesting itself in the next decade and who will be the main proponents of leading a life full of debaucheries, it's extremely likely that it will involve the ingredients that Ian Dury was so very fond of.



JOY DIVISON

liattuv reviews joy formidable live

The Joy Formidable - a three piece made up of vocalist/guitarist Ritzy, bassist/vocalist Rhydian and drummer Matt - have had a bit of a buzz about them; they've had glowing reviews from NME and Artocker (as well as The Guardian, The Times etc.); supported **White Lies** on their latest tour and played the BBC introducing stage at Reading/Leeds last summer. TJJ mix poppy melodies with guitar fuzz and layered noise, a familiar formula. Fitting, then, that they have been compared to **Sonic Youth**, **My Bloody Valentine** and **Smashing Pumpkins**. And last week (17 February) they released their debut album, 'A Balloon Called Moaning', launching it with an instore at pure groove.

They opened with a couple of acoustic tracks off the album, '9669' and 'Ostrich'. '9669' is an acoustic track on the album while 'Ostrich', with its distant dreamy vocals, sounds reminiscent of a 'Loveless'-era My Bloody Valentine. The Joy Formidable are one of those genius bands whose song style can work just as well on the stripped down acoustic level. It's kinda like in the 90s when bands shed their electric for acoustic on MTV unplugged, often playing sets that were more 'in-

tense' (or at least more memorable) than their usual electric fuzz and driving distortion.

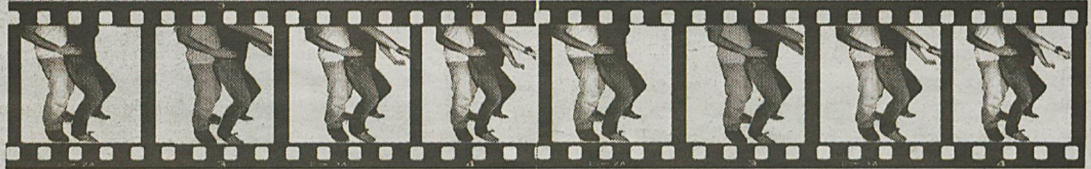
After a five-minute break they returned for the electric set. Opening with album opener 'The Greatest Light Is The Greatest Shade', which has a bit of an arena rock feel to it. The set was made up of tracks from their album, except for one song, the ethereal and heartbreaking 'Anemone'. They also played singles 'Cradle', with its **Pixies**-esque instrumental, and 'Austere'. Finishing with the track 'Whirring', my favourite track of the set, they managed to simultaneously create the rawness and power of the three-piece while creating so much layers of sound that it sounded like far more than three instruments.

The band dynamic is brilliant, with Ritzy and Rhydian actually battling with their guitars by the end of 'Whirring'. It's hard to separate their relationship from the music, although I think that is quite necessary. All those little frustrations of a relationship are being played out in front of you; there is that cathartic aspect of music that everyone can identify with. It is slightly awkward to watch, yet strangely that makes it more entrancing.

FILTH

alicepelton, expert

Alice demonstrates:



I love to grind. Yes, I said it. I love nothing better than being ground like a black pepper corn in a mill. Like a twig of parsley sandwiched between Jamie Oliver's pestle and mortar, I'm at my best when my shoulder is acquainted with a man's chin, and my feet are dancing on top of a floor that reverberates with a succulent juicy beat. Cloaked in drunken sweaty sneakiness, much of my first year was spent performing my usual routine; fairly confident dancing by man's side, a few 'stoop down lows', followed by possible raised eyebrows, nudging, strategic placing and eventual grinding.

My love of grinding took on a whole new level when my friends and I ventured into the 'Rainforest Café' one Friday evening about a year ago. Instead of being greeted by screaming spoilt middle-class children chomping down spaghetti bolognese with their parents, surrounded by fake elephants and monkeys, I found a veritable cavalcade of the best hip hop and R&B I've ever heard, and some of the most amazing male dancers I've ever had the pleasure to dance with.

Part way through the night, the MC demanded a dance on stage from one of the crowd. Four seconds later I found my hand yanked up by Clare, my ever faithful housemate, and within a minute I was up on stage (one of the only three white people in the vicinity) and told sternly to 'shake my booty'.

I don't want to say I triumphed spectacularly, but my efforts didn't go unnoticed. One of the crowd, a little Asian guy, decided to jump up on stage and try and partake in the activities. I didn't really know how to react, so feigning my best 'hood rat' impression I put my two hands out in front and pushed him back, whilst mouthing 'na'uh!'

This was clearly a crowd pleaser, I managed to gain some respect. That was until, sighting my 'milk bottle' appearance, the MC suddenly put on the Spice Girls, and the whole crowd started laughing, as my sadly middle-class and private-schooled self was exposed. (I say exposed, but it was ever-present, and most probably the only reason I had been called up on stage in the first place.)

Some songs are inevitably better than others for grinding too. They have to have a solid and fast beat, and begin with the first few seconds of a sample which makes each and every one of the crowd go 'oh ho yes!' Some of my personal favourites include:

No Diggity - Black Street
California Love - 2Pac
It's getting hot in here - Nelly
Smack that - Akon
Low - Flo Rida
Get Low - Lil John
Yeah - Usher
Let's Get Married - Jagged Edge feat. Run DMC
Get It on Tonight - Montell Jordan
Only You - 112 ft. Notorious BIG and Mase
You Can Do It - Ice Cube

My pet hate is when you're dancing with someone to something smooth and sexy, only for the shit DJ to whack on an ill-timed Coldplay or Kooks track afterwards. You both sort of stop and stand there as your groin areas cry out to each other in disappointment. The same also applies for stupid cheesy music, which even in surprisingly good clubs, they manage to blare out around closing time. Queen's 'Don't Stop Me Now' is a killer to any pelvic contact or fluid mo-

tions, 'Bazza' and his shirted mates start bashing into you, hands in the air, pints akimbo, 'Cos (their) having a good time, having a good time!'

A word of warning about the shamelessness of grinding; one doesn't want to appear as if one is a 'slag', therefore discretion is vital when it comes to exaggerating the touching and grabbing. No one wants to see people wholly copulating; especially if you're down Crush on a Friday night and the place is empty. It needs to be busy, it needs to be sweaty, and you need to be able to dance with confidence. You will also find that the friends that you are out with will inevitably come over and take photos of you and your grinding partner, and laugh and pull faces at you when he/she isn't looking. Let them - it means they haven't had the glorious pleasure of finding a grinding partner all to themselves yet.

There will definitely be many of you rolling your eyes whilst reading this article, muttering that I need to listen to 'real' music. Ok, I agree that most of the time this musical genre doesn't 'do anything' for me; I wouldn't listen to Flo Rida on the bus to the LSE, nor while I was relaxing in my room, and I'm not denying that hip-hop does get tired and repetitive, and their lyrics can sound like sexist materialistic shopping lists about 'bling' and 'hoes'.

But if you are rolling your eyes then you're missing my point; and that is, that without a decent dirty dance with a gorgeous man every now and then, my life would be a lot less fun. So join me, there's plenty of room in this pepper-mill, my friends, just plenty. In the name of debauchery, get inebriated and put your back against someone's front.

YOU SAY PARTY, HE SAYS "DIE!"

dilaragurpinar on debauchery and murder in *Se7en*

Debauchery. What embodies the word in a more fitting way than the seven deadly sins: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride. *Se7en* (1995), starring Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman, Gwyneth Paltrow and Kevin Spacey, brings this embodiment to a different and far more sinister level. In the thriller, directed by David Fincher, detectives William Somerset (Freeman) and David Mills (Pitt) are hired to investigate the cases of a serial killer whose murders are inspired by the seven deadly sins.

One by one the killer (Spacey), referred to as John Doe, punishes his victims for indulging in one of the deadly sins by murdering them in a manner inspired by the sin they are guilty of taking pleasure in. He believes the crimes are

a justified response to the debauched behaviour in question, and thus, not really crimes at all.

Somerset and Mills discover the body of a morbidly obese man who has been forced to eat spaghetti until his stomach bursts. The two discover the word "gluttony" written in the victim's

fridge. As the film picks up pace, the murders become more and more perverse; the most graphic of which involves the punishment for lust, in which John Doe forces a man to kill and rape the prostitute he is with. But the pivotal moment - and the most jarring and sinister of all - comes at the end of the film.

tored them into the plan from the very beginning. He had planned to be apprehended in order for Mills himself to bring about the completion of his monstrous game.

Doe explains his envy of Mills over his beautiful wife and ideal life, and how earlier he had been over at his house and had attempted to "play husband" with her. He produces a box, the contents of which are never shown, but remain unduly horrifying. So horrifying, of course, that Doe expects Mills will kill him in retribution (a retribution which will cover the guilt from his envy). But if Mills chooses to kill Doe, he will ultimately complete the circle and fulfill Doe's plan, committing the sin of wrath himself.

Se7en conveys debauchery in a truly dark and perverse manner. Ironically, the film portrays the com-mitters of debauchery as both victims and perpetrators. Doe's aim is to reveal that sin, that excess, indulgence and debauchery, exist in all human beings. And by placing Mills - and, by default, the audience - in the hot seat, he accomplishes just that.



Mills and Somerset are driving into the countryside with Doe after finally apprehending him. As they drive, Doe reveals the twists and turns of his deadly plan. But while Mills and Somerset believe they have spared the last two victims - envy and wrath - they soon discover that Doe had fac-

CURIOSITY KILLED THIS CAT

marionkoob on why benjamin button fails to reach maturity

The case of Mr Benjamin Button is a curious one indeed: with such a series of Golden Globe, Bafta, and Oscar nominations at hand, one enters the screening room with expectations of a grand philosophical fresco reflecting the meaning of human life. This is not quite the case.

Based on a short story by the famed American writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, the concept calls for, exactly as its title indicates, curiosity and an open mind. Mr Benjamin Button (Brad Pitt), instead of aging like common mortals, was born old and rejuvenates as the years pass by. This leads not only to general confusion amongst his entourage, but also difficulties in maintaining long-lasting relationships. From being rejected by his birth parents, to his adoption into a retirement home (probably one of the most amusing elements of the plot), and to slowly making his way backwards into adulthood, Benjamin's life is indeed extraordinary.

But beyond just the fact that he is 'growing' young, the story is unconvincing. In the habitual Hollywood fashion, all of the characters Benjamin encounters are good-natured saintly types, delivering line-after-line of cheap emotional wisdom. Every action reveals a 'depth' which the audience, and Benjamin, would (gasp!) never have considered before. And even

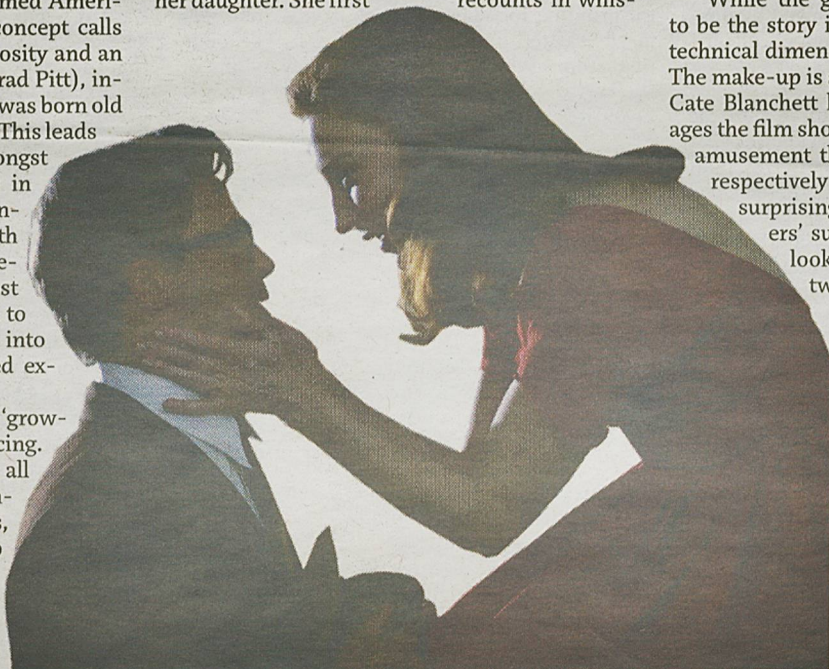
the abandoning father, initially one of the few potent personas, comes to reveal his predictably heartfelt regrets.

The most maddening cliché, however, occurs at the very beginning of the film: the story kicks off with a dying old woman (Cate Blanchett) lying on a hospital bed under the watchful eye of her daughter. She first recounts in whis-

pers a somewhat dull story about a clock which was built to work in reverse. Then, she asks her companion to read to her from a battered diary. At this point Benjamin Button's story (finally) starts; but this convenient plot structure, relying on flashbacks and the emotive potential of nostalgia, is tired and conventional.

While the greatest flaw of the film seems to be the story itself, the acting is solid and the technical dimensions of the film are impressive. The make-up is stunning, and both Brad Pitt and Cate Blanchett look convincing at the different ages the film shows them to be. It is with growing amusement that we observe the main actors respectively rejuvenate and age. But the most surprising achievement was the filmmakers' success in managing to make Pitt look like he was actually in his early twenties.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button is curious no more: these two hours and forty-six minutes of Hollywood self-indulgence, although solidly acted and sustained by good visual effects, struggle to hold the attention of an already disbelieving audience. And despite the lunacy of the plot, it seems somewhat paradoxical that what the narrative of Benjamin Button truly lacks is maturity.



KICK ME, KATE

loisjeary is laughing from the other side of her face

If you have been fooled by the numerous light-hearted spin-offs into thinking that *The Taming of the Shrew* is a purely comic affair, then the Royal Shakespeare Company's explicit confrontation with the exploitation and abuse in the play will put an end to all of your illusions.

The play opens in a seedy red-light district, outside an insalubrious establishment, where pole-dancers entertain a raucous stag party. One of the men, Christopher Sly, gets a bit too close to one of the dancers – he bites her arse to be precise – and is knocked into next week by the bouncer and the domineering hostess, played by Michelle Gomez, best known for her television work in *Green Wing* and later to take the role of the 'shrew', Katherina. Drunk and passed out in the street, Sly is taken in by a lady, who, in a foreshadowing of the main plot, decides to tame him, and convince him he is a lord. When a group of players arrive on the scene, she instructs them to perform for him, and Sly and the audience are transported to the opulent world of Renaissance Italy, which forms the setting for the play within the play.

Padua is brought to life through a plethora of high-octane comic clichés. Drawn from the tradition of commedia dell'arte, Shakespeare presents the plot in traditional comic form – the master-servant relationship, the lecherous old man, disguise and mistaken identity, they're all there. The action is quick, clever and unashamedly overacted, especially on the part of Patrick Moy's Lucentio, one of the many suitors vying for young Bianca, played by Amara Karan. Tranio, Lucentio's servant, who disguises himself as his master in order to win Bianca's hand from her father, also manages a fabulous faux-toff-cockney accent.

The two older suitors, Gremio and Hortensio, are vomit-inducing as they rub their crotches at the thought of nubile Bianca. You can't help but feel sorry for the poor girl, that her choice of men should be so constrained to dim-wits and perverts. But, at her father's decree, Bianca will not be allowed to marry any one of the men until her sister, Katherina, finds a husband; and as she is apt to growl or gesticulate at anyone who comes near her, this is not considered to be an immediate prospect.

While the seeds of misogyny have already been sown, through the older men's distaste of Katherina's behaviour to their leering desire to possess Bianca for their own, the play takes its really vicious turn with the entrance of Petruchio, played by Stephen Boxer and clearly intended as an incarnation of Christopher Sly.

Petruchio is looking for a rich wife, and upon hearing about Katherina's generous dowry, takes it upon himself to secure and subdue her as his wife. He is a vicious man, violently throwing his servant around the stage, and turning up to his wedding with what appear to be real stag horns stuck to his head, the blood of the animal they were ripped from covering his clothes.

This production is unapologetic in its brutal portrayal of Petruchio's 'taming' of Katherina, which is in no way ironic or feigned, but the result of the complete destruction of her char-

acter through prolonged physical and mental abuse.

The initial encounter between the two is suitably bawdy, with Gomez using her superb comic and physical skills to ensure Katherina gives as good as she gets. However, after the wedding she is carted off to Petruchio's stark home, the bleakness contrasting effectively with the candy-shop colours and rich fabrics of Padua. With her bedchamber like a prison, Petruchio traps and tortures his new wife. Starved of food, she becomes weak and emaciated, and ultimately submits to every contradictory, commanding and cruel thing that her husband says.

Just as the play opens with a rabble of loutish stags, it ends with the men, this time respectably suited, sat around the wedding feast. Their attire and demeanour may have changed, but the content of their words and actions is as sexist as ever. Even Lucentio, the successful suitor who provided light entertainment in the rest of the play, shows his true colours with a bitter jibe at his new wife Bianca.

At this, Kate is brought forward to deliver her soliloquy on the duties of women to submit completely to their husbands. The appeal to all of womankind is completely sincere and careful, as she has learnt not to put a foot or word out of place in her husband's presence. As Petruchio lays his wife down on the front of the stage to have his way with her unwilling and unfeeling body, the audience is again explicitly confronted with the abusive nature of their relationship.

The final scenes see the players change out of their foppish hats and tights and into modern day dress. This cleverly brings the piece full circle, and provides some resolution to the Sly plot line, which is otherwise lacking from the original folio. It also makes the play even more chilling, as the modern day setting reminds us of the continuing exploitation and domination that some women experience on a daily basis. The reason why this version is so uncomfortable to watch is that we realise it is showing us truths in our own times.

In the end, Petruchio/Sly gets his comeuppance – he is left half-naked on the street as Katherina and the other actors drive out of town. It is a brief, and late, nod to female power in a play that otherwise shows them as little more than the suffering victims of male domination.

RSC's *The Taming of the Shrew* runs at the Novello Theatre until 7 March.

Tickets for 16-25 year



ARE YOU FROM MANCHESTER?

alexhays braves the city of leicester in the name of real british football

The English are an odd bunch. Since the eighth century we have been kicking various objects around and calling it sport. By the eleventh century competitions between villages were taking place, and by 1175 an annual competition had begun in London. In 1848, some bright fellows from the University of Cambridge, clearly fascinated by academia and the deep questions of life, gathered with a bunch of their old Etonian pals to spend an afternoon penning a set of rules, which have since evolved to bring us the game of football.

The direction taken since then has been baffling. People were not only participating in this pointless (and, at the time, violent) game - it actually became a spectator sport. Teams sprung up from villages and towns, from social clubs and workplaces. Stands were constructed for spectators and leagues were established. These were the humble beginnings of what we have, in the space of 130 years, allowed to become a monstrous illustration of capitalist greed, fuelled by the globalisation of the sport and the soulless branding of football clubs. Now we can see English football matches broadcast in countries across the globe. People from the United States to Africa to South Asia claim to support Manchester United, gleefully adorned in 'replica' shirts that are blatantly fake to anyone who knows anything about anything at all. To get a ticket for a Premier League game at Old Trafford is nigh on impossible unless you have a season ticket or know somebody high up. Meanwhile, nearby teams like Oldham, Stockport, Rochdale, Bury - and even Premier League sides Bolton, Blackburn and Wigan - struggle to get people through the gates. Yet still, so many people take great pride in 'their club'. The club that many of them have never seen live, who play in a town they have never been to, and to whom they have given no true support whatsoever other than to proclaim themselves part of the supposedly elite clan who make up the club's fan base. Their support is little more than a status symbol, a chance to gloat when they check the result on a Saturday evening.

Given this, one must ask why I am getting up at 8am on a Saturday morning to embark upon a three-hour drive, after which I will watch a football match and drive straight home again. And the answer is this: Beyond the sterile land of flag-waving 'family fun', and Manchester United's

Torquay-based prawn-sandwich brigade, lies a land long forgotten by the tabloid newspapers and the masses of armchair supporters who faithfully cheer on their 'beloved' top-four team week-in week-out from the comfort of their own sofa. This forgotten land is known as the Football League. To the uninformed it is a black hole. A mysterious void from which teams are plucked at random once a year and elevated into the glorious realm of top-flight football, yet to those in the know it presents something much more.

The players earn a living, not a fortune; the fans go to the games rather than just read about it; the tickets are affordable, not luxuries. The Football League is what the game used to be all about. People go to watch their local club and enjoy seeing local youngsters break through into the team. They travel the length of the country to watch their mediocre side in ancient, dilapidated stadiums which serve as reminders of each club's own history. I may be generalising and romanticising, but in no other country is football anywhere near as popular outside of the top division, and it is easy to see why England is the exception.

I support a team who has only ever spent one year in the top division, yet has played at Wembley three times and never lost; a team who has won one League Cup and reached two FA Cup semi-finals; a team who won the Anglo-Italian Cup twice, dispatching of Italian giants AS Roma, Napoli and Juventus to stun the Italian nation and claim two successive titles; a team who has boasted the registration of stars such as Glenn Hoddle, Chris Kamara, Paul Ince and Theo Walcott at one stage or another. I have also had the joy of watching players such as James Milner, Michael Carrick and Shay Given pull on the shirt, even if only as short-term loan players.

Today, far fewer big names and far fewer achievements are associated with Swindon Town FC, of football's third tier. Yet still I find myself preparing for a match in which a struggling team of Premier League, Championship and foreign cast-offs will pull on the red and white shirts and face table topping Leicester City, a side unbeaten since November with their well-known players, their relatively impressive recent history, and their shiny new 32,500-seater stadium (which is adorned by pictures of local hero - and former England star - Gary Lineker and countless

averts for a certain snack producer).

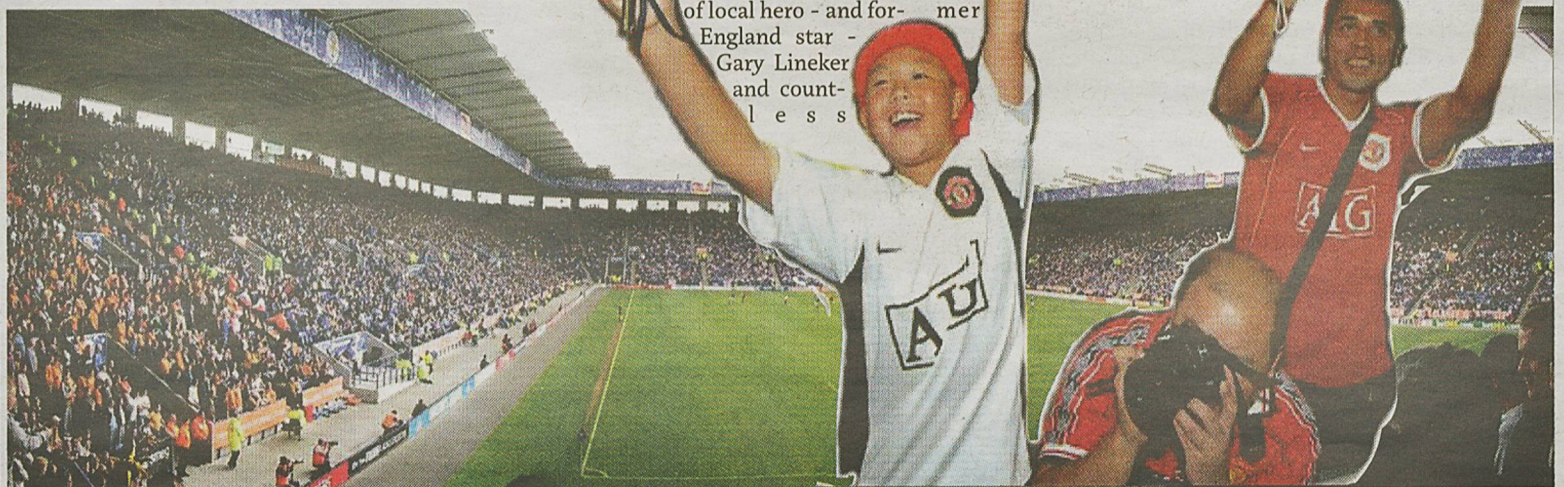
Directions? Check. Money? Check. CDs? Check. I drive to the County Ground in Swindon to pick up my match ticket, and collect two random guys from a football forum that I have offered lifts to. One I have met occasionally before, the other was a guy who's lift had let him down at the last minute. In any other context this might be considered naïve, risky or even dangerous - for example, most people would never pick up a hitch-hiker - but its different when there is a football match involved. We're all on the same side.

Leicester isn't all that far away from Swindon, there just happens to be no decent road between the two. Having navigated my way out of the semi-famous roundabout maze that is North Swindon, I find myself driving past countless speed cameras at 30 miles per hour as I pass through countless ancient and oddly-named Cotswold villages, passing over the barren, snow topped hills of Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, and then hurrying around the outskirts of Coventry with great haste. Whoever decided to build ring roads around such cities deserves a huge amount of respect.

Arriving in Leicester is quite a depressing sight as we are met by rows of shabby looking houses and shops. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt and presume that this wasn't the city's showpiece area. There's plenty of time for a wander down to the pub for some lunch before we join the massed ranks of Town fans in the stadium's away section.

We remarkably go one-nil up in the first half - over 1,000 Swindonians have made the journey and are jumping around the away end in semi-disbelief. We spend the next hour or so kindly reminding the Leicester fans of the last time we took the lead against them - a game at Wembley which we went on to win 4-3 to earn the right to our one and only year in the Premiership. Unfortunately they grab a late equaliser, but the mood is far from dampened - to come away from such a tough game with a 1-1 draw is a fantastic result. We return to the car, and listening to the arrogant complaints of the Leicester fans as they call the local radio's post-match phone-in makes the journey even more worthwhile.

The Football League is without question where a team like Swindon Town belong, and I for one am quite content to be there.



INDULGE THE FAT KID IN YOU

sonyapillay found a map to candy mountain...

In the wise words of Willy Wonka (the dashing Gene Wilder, please), "Candy is dandy, but liquor is quicker." Too true, and we all know what magic and genius happens when we put the two together, like rum and raisin ice cream or brandy butter, tiramisu, amaretto cookies, or butterscotch-flavoured vodka.

But it's not very often that you get cupcakes, brownies and cookies so powerful that the sugar kicks you in the head in the same way as a shot of tequila. This is what happens at Bea's of Bloomsbury, an independent artisan bakery filled with sugary goodness that could keep you running all day. Last week a friend texted me hours after her birthday breakfast there, surprised and slightly worried that she could still feel the chocolate 'oozing from her pores'. My flatmates and I are lucky enough to live down the road from Bea's, and everyday we walk past its delightful window display of iced cupcakes, delicate marzipan flowers, fluffy white meringues the size of a fist, and three-tiered cakes in spring colours. The most eye-catching of these is a layered wedding gown, a towering build-a-cake masterpiece that attests to the café's dedication to edible art and, clearly, a willingness to please even the kookiest of customers.

Bea's fills a culinary gap between the stale flapjacks of the local delis and the overpriced, over-moist cupcakes of the Caffé Neros and Starbucks in the Holborn and Bloomsbury area. Besides that, it offers excellent organic and vegan alternatives, unlike most central London bakeries. Last November we were able to surprise a vegan friend who had ab-

stained from cake for an abnormally long time (simply because she couldn't really find tasty vegan treats) with a specially designed vegan chocolate cake, layered with raspberries and passionfruit. It was shockingly good; who knew a cake without eggs, butter or milk could still pack a solid punch?

The average sugar junkie will be particularly amazed by Bea's "killer brownies", a personal favourite and ideal party food - thick squares of dark chocolate stuffed with pecans, pralines and peanut butter, with a surprising aftertaste of coconut. The verdict: death by chocolate.

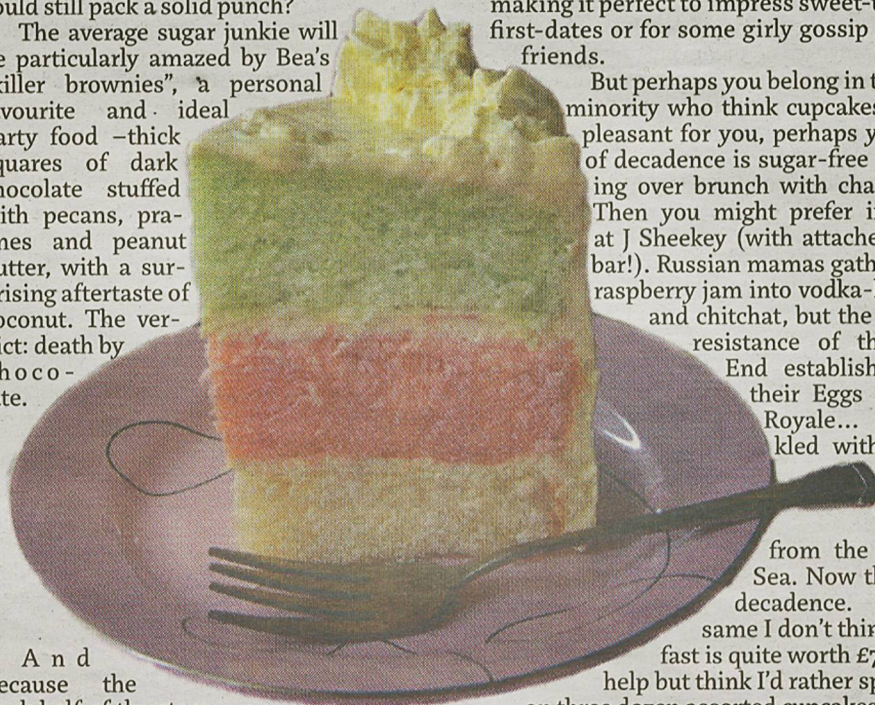
And because the back half of the store features an open-plan bakery space (where Bea herself can often be found experimenting with buttercream... mmm... buttercream),

one can even get drunk on the giddy experience of Valrhona chocolate wafting through the air.

The secret to Bea's is sugar-laden ingredients, lots of icing, an Italian coffee press and very comfortable, slouchy furnishings, making it perfect to impress sweet-toothed first-dates or for some girly gossip with old friends.

But perhaps you belong in the small minority who think cupcakes are too pleasant for you, perhaps your idea of decadence is sugar-free - lingering over brunch with champagne. Then you might prefer indulging at J Sheekey (with attached oyster bar!). Russian mamas gather to stir raspberry jam into vodka-laced tea and chitchat, but the piece de resistance of this West End establishment is their Eggs Benedict Royale... sprinkled with 30g of Sevruga caviar, fresh from the Caspian Sea. Now that's real decadence. All the same I don't think breakfast is quite worth £75. I can't help but think I'd rather spend that on three dozen assorted cupcakes.

Bea's of Bloomsbury, 44 Theobalds Road.
J Sheekey, 28-32 St. Martin's Court.



partB recipe

Nigella's Gooey Chocolate Stack

easiness - 4/10
tastiness - 10/10
cheapness - 5/10

stuff that goes in it:
for the meringue discs -

6 large egg whites
300g golden caster sugar
3 tablespoons cocoa powder
1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
3 baking sheets

for the creme patissiere:

6 large egg yolks
100g golden caster sugar
2 tablespoons cocoa powder
2 tablespoons plain flour
300ml full-fat milk
300ml double cream
100g the best dark chocolate, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
20g pistachios, chopped



1. Preheat the oven to 140°C/gas mark 1.
2. Line the baking sheets with parchment and draw a 20cm circle on each one.
3. Whisk the egg whites until stiff, then add the sugar a spoonful at a time, beating in well after each addition. Sprinkle over the cocoa and vinegar and then fold in gently but firmly.
4. Divide the meringue between the 3 circles, spreading evenly with a knife
5. Cook for 1 hour, then turn off the oven, leaving the meringues in until cool.
6. Now for the crème patissière: beat the egg yolks and sugar together, then add the cocoa and flour, whisking well. Warm the milk and cream in a saucepan, then, whisking, pour this onto the eggs and sugar before pouring everything back into the saucepan on the heat and, stirring constantly, bring it to the boil. When the mixture has thickened, take it off the heat and stir in the melted chocolate and vanilla.
7. Leave to cool, covered with a sheet of greaseproof paper, but avoid putting it into the fridge as it will become too solid.
8. To assemble the cake, place one of the meringue discs on a flat plate, spread with a third of the chocolate cream, then carry on layering. Scatter over the chopped pistachios.



ART FROM THE SEOUL

unknown person is suffocated by recycled plastic art

Who was the wise man who suggested "look on your doorstep"? Despite living across from the Korean Cultural Centre, it has taken me four months to finally cover the 50 metres which separate my home from the centre. Expecting an exhibition of traditional Korean Art, Choi Jeong Hwa's *Shine A Light* could not have been further removed. Already from the museum's exterior, the imposing dummies of Asian policemen provoked a slight, but unmistakable feeling of apprehension. Almost twice my size, their cold gaze immutably fixed upon the horizon, I hesitated before grasping the door-handle and slipping inside.

There, a delicious mixture of pop art and new 'eco-friendly' art threw itself at me. At the entrance, a gigantic fabric-made flower, seemed to heave with sighs as its petals were inflated and deflated with air in a perpetual cycle. Perhaps thus, Choi attempts to stress nature's vigor and literally 'vibrant' manner?

As the visit proceeds, Choi's pieces - mosaics of plastics, neon lights and traditional objects - strike a deep contrast between tradition

and innovation, between ancient and novel. Choi closes the gulf in one of his pieces, placing gaudy, violently-colored space-war masks onto traditional Korean deity sculptures. These are but a mirror of a country of both enduring, rich cultural history, and central importance to the development of modern art (Seoul is considered by many as a nucleus for contemporary art). But these are rather components than opponents, inextricably interwoven.

However, Choi's art treads beyond national concerns. In fact he joins one of today's most popular trends: eco-friendliness. Reusing and recycling seemingly worthless pieces of plastic, enlivened by stark neon pink, green and blue lights, the pieces are simultaneously unsettling and beautiful in a kitsch manner. Each room contains an art piece, or rather, each art piece contains a room. For the rooms are more than a backdrop: the heaps of colourful, brilliant, recycled plastics fill and suffocate their small enclosures. The irony is slightly chilling: over-accumulation and over-consumption versus recyclables. More than a simple lesson on sustainability, Choi's work at-

tacks our preconceived notions of art. In the museum's own words: he "leads us to a new understanding of the narrow but complex line between art and everyday objects".

Ultimately, Choi comes to highlight, the fundamental question of contemporary art: "Where does art begin?". If you're looking for answers, don't come to this exhibition: Choi offers only more questions.



SEX & GENDER

LETTING IT ALL HANG OUT

reaganpersaud gets all hot under the crotch

There has come a period where the common heterosexual man has decided to change his look. Suits and sophistication, and signs of overt prestige have died away with our beautiful, if not slightly satirical, Victorian era. What replaces it is a new form of covert prestige; a 'thug' look. Men now seem to think that the secret to a woman's heart lies greatly in baggy jeans, regional accents, rough/crude/butch mannerisms, and an I-don't-care attitude. The concept behind this is the attraction of a rebel. And, admittedly, this 'twenty-first century man' has achieved his goals. But has this gone too far? Assuming the average man's *mens rea* was to appeal to females, has his *actus reus* resulted in some unwanted attention

from the homosexual community?

What heterosexual man has forgotten, in his genius new technique of 'women snatching', is that gay men like the idea of a rebel ten times more than any woman. They are engulfed in burning desire at the sight of a tough, rough, strong man. So when the new-era male decides to do his 'thing' he actually causes other men to do their things...at night before they sleep...with him on their minds.

One can easily demonstrate this concept by focusing on the idea of 'saggers'. Sagging: that is, wearing your jeans below your rear end in order to project the I'm-not-conforming look. Little do they know this actually teases the homosexual mind to the point of ecstasy. What straight men have forgotten is that the ass is one of the key organs in homosexual sex. They have overlooked the very fact that putting such a useful body part on display will inevitably result in homosexuals biting their lips, thinking dirty thoughts, planning seductive acts.

It is important to emphasize that this is not necessarily because the 'gays' are all sex-crazy. In fact, what would a straight man think or do if a girl came to lectures in her bra everyday? Or perhaps her underwear? Is this not the same sort of revelation? One may even argue that these straight men purposely put out to pull. They intend to tease the gays and entice sexual furore. In which case, are these men really dressing to be heterosexual men? Or are they taking on the straight woman's role of enticing a man? If the latter be the case, can we really call them 'heterosexual'? Who's not to say they haven't all realised the effect they are having on their own sex and choose to dress this way with a motive?

Heterosexual men have always been around. They help to keep our world fruitful. But given their sudden appeal to the gay population, and their reluctance to alter their personal style, it is questionable whether our species will survive to see another millennium. The end result seems to be more in favour of 'bending' this century.