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Singer KT Features St Andrews Observatory in Music Video



MARIA EBRAHIM
News Editor

KT Tunstall films relaunch music video at St Andrews Observatory

For the twentieth anniversary of singer-songwriter Kate Victoria 'KT' Tunstall's debut album Eye to the Telescope, the artist filmed a music video featuring the University of St Andrews Observatory. The Fife-born artist, raised in St Andrews and famed for her 2004 hit 'Suddenly I See' (used in the opening credits of The Devil Wears Prada in 2006), returned in June to film inside the Gregory Dome and give an intimate concert for a select group of fans.

St Andrews Observatory Director Alexander Scholz said the collaboration grew from Tunstall's deep ties to the town and Observatory: "KT Tunstall has a personal connection with St Andrews, and especially with the Observatory, and these links were the foundation for our collaboration over the past months. She grew up just down the road from the Observatory."

Tunstall's father, David Tunstall, was a physicist at the School of Physics & Astronomy, and "on occasion, [...] would take his children to the observatory to look through [the] Telescope," said Scholz, adding, "she specifically recalls seeing comet Halley in 1986. These visits left a deep impact on Tunstall, inspired a lifelong love for the night sky, and also provided perspective (and the title) for her first album Eye to the Telescope, which made her famous."

Detailing the timeline, Scholz said, "KT visited us on 9 June this year, as part of spending a day in St Andrews. She played the unpublished title song 'Eye to the Telescope' in the Gregory Dome and noticed how great the acoustics are. Some of the footage made it into the official music video for the song that came out on 2 September."

On 31 October, Tunstall and her team returned to play a small concert for a select group of fans. "This concert was livestreamed and was watched by a few thousand people at times," Scholz said. "Footage from the concert will be released at a later time."

Scholz reflected on opening the dome to artists and the public: "For me, KT's story is a really good demonstration of the power of a telescope. A telescope is not just a technical device we use for research. It can be a source of inspiration and wonder, it widens our horizons, and makes us aware of the extremely large world of possibilities out there."

"Most of these experiences will not lead to a career in astrophysics, but they will have a positive impact on the lives of people in many other ways," he added.

On the logistics of Tunstall's visit, Scholz told The Saint: "The first visit only took about two hours. We didn't prepare anything, and KT came with only three people. The second visit took one (rainy) day. During that day, a team of about ten people transformed the Dome into a small concert hall, and then back into an

Continued on Page 4.

Fishing in the East Neuk

BY ISABELLE HOLLOWAY

"You don't see as many fishermen. All the youngins go to university," Jimmy said while fixing creels on Anstruther Pier. My search for the fishermen of the East Neuk echoed this elusiveness. Over the course of a few days, starting at St Monans and ending in Anstruther, I spoke to nine members of the fishing community to learn about life at sea.

Read on Page 17.

The Truest Form of Love is Served as Soup

BY SYLVIA COVACI

In Romania, my grandmother serves her chicken soup (affectionately called "kitchen soup," a sweet pronunciation mistake) scalding hot, with a kiss on the forehead and cooed murmurs to eat up. Her hands, delicately manicured, seem not to feel the heat. After the long, dry, dreary plane ride to Bucharest, Mamaie's kitchen soup is divine, golden ambrosia. We drink it around the crowded table, bellies slowly warming. This soup is a homecoming.

Read on Page 21.

The St Andrews Challenge

BY ELODIE COWAN

Ever wondered what was occurring on the morning of Welly Ball? While the rest of St Andrews applies the last of their fake tan and debates dinner suit versus tux, somewhere just outside Leuchars, 300 students participate in the St Andrews Challenge.

Hosted each year at the Scottish Clay Shooting Centre by the St Andrews Clay Pigeon Shooting Club, the Challenge is the UK's largest university clay pigeon shooting event.

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EDITORIAL

What to Do About November Blues...

It's safe to say we've found ourselves in the throes of November, far, far away from where we started in sunny September, yet not nearly close enough to holiday break. When it's getting both darker and colder, it's more obvious than ever that we're not getting any younger. The earlier sunsets make you feel like you've spent less time working on deadlines, that you slept in too late, and that overall, you're losing time. And, if no one else is going to tell you, consider this your pocketwatch wearing white rabbit of a wakeup call: We are. This isn't to depress you but rather to charge you with agency: Isn't the fact that our time in this town limited is what makes it that much more special?

Four years sounds like a long time when you're bright-eyed, bushy-tailed, freshly eighteen, and standing on the threshold of a grand new adventure. But then you blink and you're twenty-two, recalling just how many times you stayed in on a Friday night in November because you had told yourself, there's always next year. In our case, there is no next year — at least not in St Andrews. Because come next November, when we're living in a strange new place, burdened with the responsibilities of an adult fresh into the 'real world,' we'll wish that we still had deadlines to worry about instead of job applications, that we had gone out on that Friday night instead of staying in, that, in the words of Andy Bernard from The Office, we realized we were in the good old days before we left them.

Of course, your time in this town doesn't necessarily always feel worthwhile. When you get bogged down by near-constant deadlines, it can feel like all of your time is spent in the Main Library instead of enjoying the fleeting sunshine. But, at the same time, the year is really just getting started. Scottish Christmas? Activated. Welly Ball? Wellied. Reeling Ball? Accepted. Christmas Ball? Calendered. Despite the rapidly darkening skies and slowly dropping temperatures, there is still so much to look forward to this semester.

Maybe it's not such a bad thing to acknowledge that we actually don't have all the time in the world. We get only as much as what we make of it. Perhaps more than any other time so far this year. When else in your life are you going to be a short walk to the sea? Or catch the dulcet notes of bagpipes playing somewhere on one of the three streets? Or spend an hour in a sauna for £5? Or dance in a crowded church with strangers? Or visit an ancient Druid temple a twenty-minute bus ride outside of town? Or, most importantly, live in the same zip code as all of your friends who, for the other five months of the year, live scattered across the globe? You get the idea. No other time but now.

Yes, the dark days of winter are here, but maybe, just maybe, we don't need to break out our SAD lamps. At risk of sounding incredibly cliché, light can still be found in these dark days; more literally, in the lights strung up on the trees lining South Street and the spectacular winter sunsets (arguably the best of the year), and more metaphorically, in time spent with friends and festive outings (the Edinburgh Christmas market does open on Saturday, after all). There is so much to do, and, yes, so little time indeed. So don't lose hope yet — pull out those dusty bucket lists, give them their rightful place of honour on the fridge, and get to work.

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Corrections
Writer Georges Toulouse's name was mispelled
Writer Tao Yazakis name was mispelled

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J&G Innes Bookshop Conversion Plans Begin

NATHALIE HANZLIK-MEECH
Section Editor

Prime Caledonia Co. Ltd, a small-scale real estate company registered in St Andrews, has recently proposed converting the J&G Innes Bookstore located on the corner of Church and South Street into retail space and residential accommodation.

This historic property, which served St Andrews for 144 years, has been closed since December 31, 2023. According to Allan Crow of Fife Free Press, the Director of Prime Caledonia Co. Ltd, Benedict Laogan, intends to "split the shop into two retail units, restore the upper floors to create five flats, and add one house." The building proposal has yet to be approved.

The J&G Innes Bookstore was founded in 1879 by the brothers George and John Innes, the bookstore closed indefinitely when the owner, Jude Innes, the brothers' great-great-granddaughter, retired in December 2023. The brothers founded the local newspaper *The St Andrews Citizen* in 1872, and copies were sold out of the building until 1998, thus giving it the local name of the 'Citizen Shop.'

In 1927, the outer facade of the building was redesigned in an ornate, liberty style wooden arrangement under the direction of June Innes' grandfather. This distinct design led to the C-List registration of the building premises, due to its structure being deemed of national, historical or architectural interest. The inside of the premises provides approximately 2,444 sq ft of accommodation, and includes an ornate wooden staircase on which an illustration of South Street's West Post gate is engraved.

A design statement included in Prime Caledonia Co. Ltd's proposal stated: "The fundamental principles underlying this planning application prioritise the preservation and conservation of the existing historical fabric, particularly the street-facing elevations along Church Street and South Street."



It added that the design approach emphasises the retention of "the ornate decorative staircase, traditional wood-effect ceiling beams, original window shutters with their distinctive panelling, and the heritage bookcases located on the first floor."

While respecting the distinct historical qualities of the building, the proposal submitted by Prime Caledonia Co. Ltd also plans to alter a small cottage to the rear of the building, known as the Weavers Cottage, by converting it into a two-story house.

While registered in St Andrews, the company Prime Caledonia Co. Ltd does not yet have a significant presence within the town, and its choice to develop the J&G Bookstore has not been explicitly outlined in the proposal.

In an interview with *The Saint*, Luke Norman, a third-year Philosophy student, described his memories of visiting the J&G bookstore. As a child, Luke often visited St Andrews and fondly remembers visiting the 'Citizen Shop' and perusing the displays of the store with his family. Then, as a first-year student in 2023, Norman frequented the store for stationery or art supplies. He remembers it as "a nice store that was great for popping in during the holidays or for necessities."

The news of potential redevelopment did not surprise Norman: "Apart from it being a historical site, it is prime real estate."

He believes that a development plan for a half-retail, half-apartment space might work. According to Norman, St Andrews "would benefit from having more shops for the local industry and tourism [...] Because we have a shortage of [...] space in St Andrews [...] I think we would benefit from having more accommodation." He added that keeping the classic feel of the store is important and that often the plan to develop historic buildings "is a tricky one."

Peter Jupp, an emeritus Professor of Mathematics and Statistics at the University and town resident since 1978, similarly views the redevelopment of the Bookstore positively: "It is very good that something is going to happen there — an empty property in the town centre is such a waste." He added that "it is splendid that the upper floors will revert to being accommodation," but cautioned that the retail units on the ground floor should be "something sensible, rather than short-lived ventures like so many others."

A rejection or approval of the redevelopment proposal should be decided by Fife Council in the coming months. As of the time of writing this article, Fife Council had not responded to a request to comment on when this result might be publicised.

Photo by Alden Arnold

Old Course To Undergo Golfing Expansion

TUANA KARDAS
News Writer

The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews (R&A) and St Andrews Links Trust have announced a programme for carefully planned enhancements and restoration to the St Andrews Old Course, set to begin this month, ahead of the 155th Open in 2027.

The project, developed in partnership with leading golf course architects Mackenzie & Ebert, aims to refine the strategic challenge for elite players while restoring traditional features that have evolved. The work will also enhance the experience for everyday golfers playing the world's most infamous links.

"When we had the Open here in 2022, the Course played very well, but a number of par fours and both par fives were reachables," said Grant Moir, the R&A's Chief Governance Officer and Chief Referee for the Open. "We wanted to reintroduce some of the strategic challenges of the Course, while restoring features that have changed over the years."

In total, six holes will be lengthened — the 5th, 6th, 7th, 10th, 11th, and 16th — adding 132 yards to bring the total championship length to 7,445 yards. The 12th championship tees will be built on four holes, with existing tees enlarged on two others.

The majority of the work focuses on bunker adjustments and fairway refinements. Two bunkers on the 2nd hole will be moved further down the fairway, while new bunkers will appear at elite driving distance on the 6th and 10th holes. The approach bunkers on the 9th will be reshaped, and two additional bunkers will be introduced on the 16th as part of a restoration of its historic playing route.

The most notable change will come at the 16th hole, long known for its risk-and-reward design. A section of short grass to the left of the Principal's Nose bunker — once part of the original playing route — will be restored after having been maintained as rough (longer grass) in recent decades. Reopening that area as fairway, along with adding two new bunkers, will bring back the wider range of options the hole traditionally offered and make the decision off the tee more challenging for elite players.

"It might sound counterintuitive, but widening the fairway with new bunkers actually enhances the challenge," Moir explained. "It restores the hole's traditional strategic balance."

The famous Road Hole bunker on the 17th will also be restored, with the ground around it being lowered to counteract sand splash buildup, though its shape and character will remain unchanged.

Sandy Reid, Director of Greenkeeping at St Andrews Links Trust, emphasised that while the changes address championship play, they are designed to respect the Course's legacy. "This course has changed many times over the years, and these are modest adjustments compared to the past," he said. "It's mainly tweaks for elite-level golfers. We want to retain the charm of the Old Course — that's what everyone comes here for."

The enhancements contribute to a centuries-long evolution of the Old Course, which has undergone periods of grand change, from the addition of 60 bunkers in the early 1900s to length increases prior to the 2000 and 2005 Opens.

"This just continues that generational flow of refinement," said Moir. "We're being sensitive to history, but we're also ensuring that the Old Course remains the ultimate test for the modern game."

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

observatory dome, in an extremely efficient and professional way." "The telescope and its operation were completely unaffected. We actually used the telescope for teaching purposes several times during the same week," he said. "Apart from the Observatory Director and our Observatory Technician, no other University staff were involved. KT's team did all of the work. Nobody paid anything for these events; the guests were selected through a competition among KT's hardcore fans."

"This project was an excellent way to make our Dome and telescopes accessible to a wider audience who would otherwise not think about astronomy. It was also a great experiment [on] how our domes can be used for artistic purposes," he added.

Scholz noted that the collaboration follows recent arts-science projects at the School of Physics & Astronomy, including work by local artist-in-residence Tim Fitzpatrick, who transformed the historic Twin Dome with installations and exhibits.

Speaking to the University of St Andrews, KT Tunstall said: "It was such a thrill to be back in the telescope dome where my head got completely flipped open as a kid — I am so grateful my dad gave us that experience.

> "This project was an excellent way to make our Dome and telescopes accessible to a wider audience who would otherwise not think about astronomy."

The radius of your life when you are young is as far as you can go on your bike, and then suddenly you understand there is a whole universe we are hurtling through. It completely altered my world and sparked a lifelong love of space and the stars."

"The metaphor of focusing on things from a distance was so perfect for my songwriting; the light we see through a telescope is often light from the deep past," she continued. "Growing up in St Andrews, where the night sky was always so spectacular, it has always gifted me with the sense of awe that life is so much bigger than our individual selves, and how connected we all are under that same beautiful light show."

The Gregory Dome houses the James Gregory Telescope, a 37-inch Schmidt-Cassegrain — the largest telescope in Scotland — which, since its inauguration in 1962 has supported generations of researchers and students studying topics from exoplanet transits and variable young stars to supernovae, lunar eclipses, and space debris.

The video also nods to Tunstall's wider St Andrews roots with a sequence featuring a vintage Luvian's ice cream van and the shop itself. Owner Tony Fusaro, who is featured in the video, recalled employing her when she attended Madras College: "She is very accommodating, and she is a grafter, a very hard worker."

He remembered the spontaneous performance in June after Tunstall phoned him up to ask to shoot scenes in the ice cream parlour for the video: "The girls [working] all stayed [after their shifts], then Kate kindly said, 'Do you think the girls would enjoy it if I sang a couple of songs for them?' and I said I was sure they'd be delighted."

The employees enjoyed "a private concert [and] she sang three songs and strummed her guitar in the shop," recalled Fusaro. "We were absolutely over-awed."

Fusaro still keeps in touch with TunstallTunsell, having attended the singer's 50th birthday party earlier this year.

"She has always been good to me, good to us, with CNBC when she's had the camera crews in here [...] she has always, always promoted us," said Fusaro.

He also remembers the then-seventeen-year-old occasionally asking for weekends off to travel to London where she would busk, Fusaro recalled her telling him.

"I [...] only have good things to say about her," he said. "She was a good worker, and always always goes out of her way to promote us [...] God bless her."

Business School Welcomes Erin Brockovich for Global Certificate Programme Launch

ANNABELLE MACKEY
NEWS WRITER

The University of St Andrews Business School, in coordination with the Institute of Directors (IoD), welcomed global business leaders — including advocate Erin Brockovich — to the Fairmont Hotel from 18 to 24 October for its inaugural Global Certificate in Company Direction programme.

The founding of the Global Certificate in Company Direction comes amid the Business School's efforts to promote executive education for business professionals. In February 2025, the Business School formally launched its Executive Education courses, paving the way for the Global Certificate programme to take place just months later.

According to a Business School press release: "Building on the University's more than six centuries of academic excellence and its distinctive sense of place, the Business School aims to become a premier destination for leadership education. Executive Education will bring together global leaders from the private, public and third sectors for high-impact, interdisciplinary professional development."

The Business School's partnership with the IoD further illustrates the School's efforts to promote initiatives for business leaders. The IoD is a royally chartered collaborative of company directors that has made significant strides across the UK in government lobbying and the establishment of free enterprise. "Our partnership with the [IoD] has been founded on shared values," Dr Marcel Lukas, Vice-Dean of Executive Education, told *The Saint*. "The IoD is a thriving member of the community for directors in the UK and beyond, offering professional development, valuable connections and meaningful influence at a time when good directors have never been more important. Working together, we designed the Global Certificate to combine the IoD's practical governance expertise with the University's academic rigour and international outlook. It's a collaboration that shows how the Business School connects research, practice, and purpose to shape better leadership."



Throughout the week-long programme, participants engaged in masterclasses facilitated by leading academics and business executives whilst being immersed in boardroom-style simulations. "The sessions blended theory, reflection and real-world application, with contributions from experts such as Professor Phillips O'Brien on geopolitics, Dr Erin Young on AI and resilience, Dame Sue Street on public leadership, and John Browett and Hamish Taylor on innovation and board dynamics," said Lukas. He added that "the design encouraged participants to think critically about accountability, sustainability, and long-term value — the same principles that underpin all of our teaching, where we help people build the insight and judgement to lead effectively in an interconnected world."

"We drew on experts from different regions and sectors, enabling participants to compare best practice and explore how principles such as accountability, transparency, and integrity translate in a plethora of settings," Jonathan Geldert, Director General of IoD, told *The Saint*. "The inaugural cohort also brought together individuals from various industries and backgrounds, creating a dynamic environment for peer-to-peer learning."

On 21 October at the Kingsbarn Distillery, the programme participants heard from keynote speaker and environmental activist Erin Brockovich, who gained prominence for her paralegal work on the 1996 groundwater contamination lawsuit against Pacific Gas and Electric, as well as her Academy Award-winning, eponymous biopic starring Julia Roberts. During her speech, Brockovich stressed the importance of demonstrating determined leadership through challenges. "Erin Brockovich brought real energy and inspiration to the inaugural cohort," said Lukas. Her advocacy work demonstrates the courage and persistence required to stand up for what's right, values that lie at the heart of good leadership. Her message about integrity, resilience, and holding power to account resonated strongly with participants and reflected the programme's ethos. Those same qualities are what we aim to cultivate in the people who join our transformative learning community: to lead with purpose, to challenge assumptions and to make a positive difference in a complex world." "By sharing her experiences, Erin reminded participants that global governance begins with accountability — a message perfectly aligned with the Global Certificate's goal of empowering directors to lead responsibly," Geldert said.

A virtual component of the course will be held from 2 to 4 December, 2025.

PHOTO BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ST ANDREWS

University Book-Hunting Project Turns 30

ROWAN HOOVER
News Writer

The University of St Andrews is commemorating 30 years of the Universal Short Title Catalogue (USTC), its global book-hunting project.

Founded in 1995 by Professor Andrew Pettegree, the USTC was launched as a modest effort to catalogue sixteenth-century French religious books and has since grown into the most comprehensive record of works printed before 1700.

The project is now co-led by Dr Arthur der Weduwen, who joined the USTC in 2013. The USTC aims to showcase all early modern print, from recognised works of scholarship to short items often overlooked.

"Small books matter," Dr der Weduwen said. "[By] seeking to document every piece of early modern print, the USTC has foregrounded the documentation of the shorter, more ephemeral printed matter, across all genres (religion, news, politics, business, student dissertations) that were published in enormous quantities but were not deemed to be worthy of survival."

This shift in focus has had positive outcomes according to Dr der Weduwen. Around a third of the books in the USTC records survive in only a single known copy, while those books that circulated before the foundation of the project, deemed "rare," were widely circulated and should have been correctly labelled as valuable.

The catalogue has also shown how books travelled far more widely than once assumed. Before the USTC, der Weduwen said "bibliographical projects were national projects that studied the printed output of a country or region only in the collections of that country or region. Yet early modern books were destined to be sold across boundaries." The USTC has surfaced books printed in one country but missed at the national level because the only surviving copies are held abroad.



One particularly revealing example of findings from the USTC is the reconstruction of "lost" publications from the Dutch Republic. Dr Pettegree and Dr der Weduwen have reconstructed these "using a large corpus of newspaper advertisements and printed book sales catalogues from the period, in which many editions of Protestant bestsellers were listed that no longer survive."

"Consider the catechism of the Calvinist Gellius de Bouma," noted Dr der Weduwen, "a Dutch minister for whom we document 52 editions on the USTC — of these, 24 are lost. Dutch editions of the Lutheran prayer books by Johann Arndt are just as striking, with 44 known editions of which fourteen are lost. These finds matter because they allow us to re-assess fundamentally the popularity of certain works in the past, and the importance that popular religious works played in sustaining the vitality of the print trade."

Such reconstruction relies not just on experienced scholars but on a large and ever-evolving team. The USTC has always been "a large group project," der Weduwen emphasises. "As long as I have been involved with the project, the weekly group meetings that we run have never dipped below an attendance of around ten, and usually over [and] around 20-25 members today."

Community ethos is central to the project's success. The USTC has funded or supported around 30 PhD students and helped launch the careers of around twenty historians now working across Britain, Europe, and North America. Through internships and volunteering, St Andrews students can gain hands-on experience in historical research as well.

"The project as a whole is a great believer in fostering local talent and not restricting scholarship to members of faculty, but to encourage everyone with an interest in history and a passion for collaborative work to pursue research," said Dr der Weduwen.

As the catalogue expands rapidly, the team plans to add three million new records in the next four years, drawing on a survey of libraries that are not or only partially represented in the USTC already. The project's focus will remain firmly on books printed before 1700, a self-imposed limit that acknowledges both the explosion of print in the eighteenth century and the USTC's commitment to depth over scope. The team is investing in improving existing descriptions and adding new records within their imposed time frame.

"The longer we are around and the more comprehensive the USTC becomes, the more attention we generate," explained Dr der Weduwen.

Photo by Mary Markis

St Andrews Physicists Receive IOP Honours

CECILY TODD
News Writer

Three faculty members of the University's School of Physics and Astronomy, alongside two distinguished alumni, have been recognised with national honours in the Institute of Physics (IOP) 2025 Awards.

Professor Ifor Samuel of the School of Physics and Astronomy received the Thomas Young Prize for his "internationally leading contributions to the field of scanning probe microscopy that have helped to elucidate the physical properties of nanostructures," the IOP website states.

Samuel's pioneering research into organic light-emitting diodes, organic lasers, and their technological and medical applications "led to the breakthrough of light-emitting dendrimers with world-record efficiency for solution-processed OLEDs," the IOP website stated. His team's landmark achievement — demonstrating the world's first electrically driven polymer laser, published in the journal *Nature* — resolved a decades-long challenge in the field which "researchers have been working to overcome [...] for 30 years," a University press release read.

Martin McLaren, CDQM Technical Manager for the School of Physics and Astronomy, was honoured with the IOP Technician Award "for spearheading the design and creation of multi-million-pound research infrastructure at the University of St Andrews, Scotland," the IOP website read.

Speaking to *The Saint*, McLaren explained that the award "is intended to raise the visibility and professional status of technicians by recognising and rewarding our vital work in research and education."

He added, "Winning the award demonstrates that in the School of Physics and Astronomy, the work of technicians doesn't go unnoticed. It also shows that although technicians are typically seen as working behind the scenes, supporting or facilitating others to do research or teaching [...] can still be [...] very rewarding and impactful."

Professor Peter Littlewood, a visiting professor at St Andrews and Chair of Physics at the University of Chicago, received the Richard Glazebrook Medal for his exceptional leadership in the field. The award recognises his direction of major international research institutions and his founding of the Faraday Institution, the UK's national centre for battery science.

Reflecting on the breadth of achievement, Professor Graham Turnbull, Deputy Head of School for Physics and Astronomy, highlighted that two St Andrews alumni were also recognised by the Institute: Professor Sir Michael Berry (PhD St Andrews 1965, HonDSc 1998) received the Isaac Newton prize — the premier award of the IOP — for his groundbreaking work in mathematical physics, including the discovery of the "Berry phase" in quantum systems, and Professor Mark Dennis (MSci St Andrews 1998) was awarded the Rayleigh medal and prize for his work on structured light and topological optics.

Turnbull remarked on the collective impact of these recognitions: "These three awards are a terrific recognition of the outstanding contributions that our staff make in internationally leading research and the development of world-class research facilities and institutions. These will raise the profile of physics in St Andrews both on a national and international stage, and help us to showcase some of the remarkable scientific advances and people in St Andrews."

> "[These] will raise the profile of physics in St Andrews."

"We are particularly delighted that these awards recognise contributions across the School, including senior professors and technical research staff. Ifor, Peter, and Martin have each made remarkable contributions to physics and the facilities that allow our community to undertake excellent research. The delivery of world-leading research is a huge team effort, involving academic staff, early career researchers and PhD students, and professional service staff in the School," said Turnbull. "While these awards recognise three truly outstanding individuals in our School, I am proud to be part of a large team of highly skilled and committed people working collegiately to advance research and innovation at the highest level."

InFocus

"I Knew I Wanted To Be A Writer From The Time I Was Six"

In Conversation with Shortlisted Novelist Dr Sara Lodge

REESE COLBERT
News Writer

"I knew I wanted to be a writer from the time I was six," said Dr Sara Lodge.

Dr Lodge, a member of the University of St Andrews faculty since 2002, was recently shortlisted for the 2025 Wolfson History Prize for her latest book, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*. After discovering her passion for writing at an early age, Dr Lodge dove headfirst into the worlds of academia, speechwriting, and journalism, carving her own path in the creative writing industry in the process. From wedding speeches to screwball comedies, Dr Lodge's pathway to critical acclaim has been anything but predictable.

Reflecting on her earliest memories with writing, Dr Lodge said that it was the "thing [she] loved more than anything else."

"I was an only child and so I sort of grew up very much with books as friends [...] it is extraordinary how we can have friends across the centuries through books, so we need never be alone if we're readers," Dr Lodge said in conversation with *The Saint*.

In fact, it was this sense of companionship that inspired Dr Lodge to begin writing her own stories. "I really loved the way that writing could make people laugh. It kind of tickled them without ever touching them physically," Dr Lodge said. "I wrote a story which I loved at the time because it made my teacher laugh. It was a story about these witches who were kind of comedy witches, and they got everything wrong, and they got into a dreadful mess. And, you know, it was kind of screwball comedy, which is still one of my favourite genres. And I thought, this is what I want. This is the thing that I want to do."

From there, Dr Lodge broadened her writing focus, venturing into the worlds of journalism and speechwriting, the latter of which, she claims, began entirely by accident.

"I was actually at somebody's wedding in America and a very good friend of mine, who's normally extraordinarily cheerful, was looking very gloomy," Dr Lodge said. After enquiring what was wrong, she discovered that not only had her friend not yet prepared his speech, but that he was the best man.

"We had about three hours to go, and I said, 'Well, let's write your speech,'" Dr Lodge recalled. "It was actually the best fun either of us had ever had. The speech was a blast."

Dr Lodge quickly realised that her newfound skill could come in handy outside of the wedding industry: "I thought, maybe that's something I could actually do for money, because there are lots of people who are not very comfortable giving speeches."

It was during her postgraduate degree at the University of Oxford that Dr Lodge received a Quaker Fellowship to the United Nations, where she wrote speeches for former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, reflecting that she "started quite high up in a way."

Even now, Dr Lodge continues to write speeches. "I care very passionately about green issues and the environment and women's rights and democracies," she said. "So in a way, it's been really nice for me that, although I'm not a professor in any of those subjects, I haven't had to leave them behind. I can still engage with those topics on a daily basis."



In fact, Dr Lodge has even managed to incorporate her speechwriting expertise into her career at the University. Speaking about her module, Speeches and Speechwriting: History, Theory and Practice, Dr Lodge said, "I like to think that I kind of brought speech writing back as a subject to St Andrews, where, of course, it was very important in the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century, but it had kind of fallen off the curriculum in the twentieth century."

It is not just her knowledge of speechwriting that Dr Lodge shares with the University, however. A senior lecturer in the School of English, she currently teaches an Art of Victorian Poetry module, exploring visual art and its relationship with literature in the nineteenth century. On top of her loaded schedule, Dr Lodge shared that she is "thinking of doing a new course [...] which will be more on detectives."

This follows the release of her 2024 book, *The Mysterious Case of the Victorian Female Detective*. The book is a culmination of twelve years of writing and research, inspired by two novels housed in the British Library: *The Female Detective* and *Revelations of a Lady Detective*, both written in 1864 and considered to be some of the first representations of female detectives in literature.

When asked about the experience of researching for the book and the kinds of discoveries she made, Dr Lodge said that "the whole thing was quite a ride."

Throughout her research, Dr Lodge discovered that "the police were actually employing women from the 1840s. The official narrative of police history is that women [didn't] really join the force, certainly as police officers, until about 1918, and as police matrons until the 1890s. So this is a good 50 years where women are working for the police, where the police just don't really think about that history, and they don't pay women properly. They didn't salary them, they didn't pension them."

Dr Lodge commented on the need to bring this history to light: "I think given that the police are institutionally still rather misogynistic in this country, it's really important that that chapter of police history should be written back in, because these women were pretty brave, actually, and very hardworking."

"There were all these active women with guns and whips and fisticuffs," Dr Lodge continued. "And, you know, sensation drama's just full of strong women roles, and yet we tend to still imagine women fainting in corsets in the [Victorian] era. We don't really think about that working-class tradition at all."

Upon learning that she had been shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize, Dr Lodge recalled that her "jaw hit the floor." Awarded by the Wolfson Foundation for over 50 years, the Prize is the United Kingdom's most prestigious history award, recognising and celebrating books which "combine the highest quality of research with readability," their website reads.

In regard to her spot on the shortlist, Dr Lodge remarked, "I don't really think of myself as a fully paid-up historian. I didn't study history at University; I exclusively studied English. So if I have become a historian, and maybe I have, it's sort of by accident. I think a lot of my career has kind of been semi-accidental, but I'm kind of okay with that."

Though Dr Lodge considers herself to be an outlier in the group of six nominees, she professed that for her, even more valuable than winning is the opportunity to meet her fellow nominees.

"I've been listening [...] to Eleanor Rosamund Barraclough on the radio for years and thought, 'Oh, she sounds great. I'd love to meet her,' but now [I get to]," Dr Lodge said. "As nice as it would be to win a big monetary prize, actually, these relationships are worth more."

When asked what her hope was for new readers picking up the book, she answered, " I hope that people enjoy this book, that they won't find it dry, and that they'll get new ideas that will help them to think about the period differently." "There is this sort of lineage which goes, Edgar Allen Poe, and then Wilkie Collins, and [Charles] Dickens, and then Arthur Conan Doyle. And I love all of those authors," she said.

"But there are all these women, too, both writing and performing and being female detectives, and it's time we knew."

Photo Provided By Dr Sarah Lodge

Don't Know, Don't Care: The 'Fashionably Uninformed'

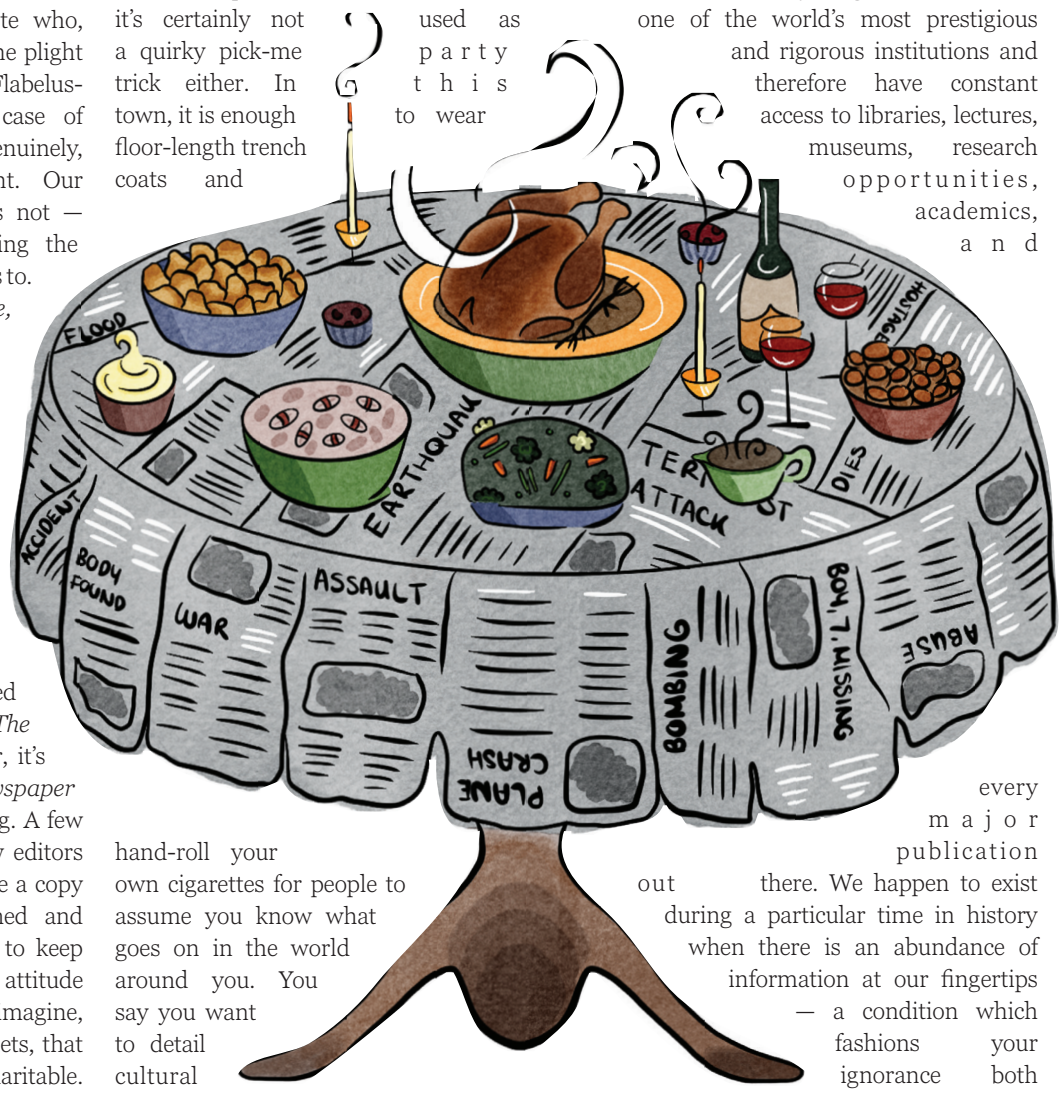
HANNAH SHIBLAQ
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

I once overheard someone say, "I just don't really care about what goes on in the world." It was delivered with a shrug and charged with all the drawling absentmindedness of a modern-day Marie Antoinette who, from her high tower, drowns out the plight of the masses far, far below her Flabelus-adorned feet. Although in the case of Marie Antoinette, she *was* genuinely, wholly, and completely ignorant. Our three-street aristocrat, however, is not — she's completely OK with ignoring the information she has near total access to. *A famine in Gaza? Let them eat cake, and drink Spoiled Life matcha.*

I've gotten to know you all very well every other Thursday morning, during which I hand out the latest issue of *The Saint*. You regard the bundle in my hand — one which seeks to inform, offer up a few puzzles, and act as one of the few checks on the institution looming over us all — as if it wraps a dead fish. This is not to say that, maybe, you just can't be bothered with solicitation at 9am, or that *The Saint* is without its flaws — rather, it's the disdainful rejection of a *free newspaper* that I find particularly disconcerting. A few weeks ago, when one of my fellow editors asked a passer-by if they would like a copy of *The Saint*, this person declined and instead said that they prefer "not to keep up with all of that." If this is your attitude towards student journalism, I can't imagine, when it comes to larger media outlets, that your thoughts are at all more charitable.

I fear that many of you hear the word "journalist" and instead think "whiner." You consider headlines and news breaks tasteless attempts to rain on all of your out-of-touch parades, displaying enough reality to muddle the illusion concocted through your very *un*realistic looking glasses. But it's not only *how* you see that's the problem — it's also how others see *you*. Between the wax dripping down the thrifted candlesticks and the Louise Carmen notebook of slam poetry, you appear to possess all of the aesthetic charm expected in a French *salon*. But I'm not fooled by your hyper-stylised Pinterest boards — I know there's a significant chance that you didn't even bother to mail in your ballots during last year's election, and may not even have a clue who holds the seat majority in Parliament.

I will say, to your credit, that your ignorance is not something you flaunt. It never makes an appearance on the front steps of Aikman's, and it's certainly not used as a quirky pick-me party trick either. In this town, it is enough to wear floor-length trench coats and hand-roll your own cigarettes for people to assume you know what goes on in the world around you. You say you want to detail cultural critiques like Joan Didion and write the next best Gothic novel like Mary Shelley, in which case you must know that Joan Didion wouldn't have gone to Haight-Ashbury if not for the countercultural hippie movement, and Mary Shelley wouldn't have been so drawn to the gothic if not for the 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora. They are worthy idols — and two individuals who sought inspiration from the world around them. But you don't need the world — perhaps the emotional turmoil of your on-again-off-again situationship is inspiration enough. At least take my advice on this front: Before volunteering to contribute to whatever student-run satirical magazine pops up in town next, make sure you are at least *aware* of what exactly is *being* satirised first.



Perhaps, in the throes of the oversaturation of information in today's world, we forget the profound privilege that it is to know anything at all. We attend one of the world's most prestigious and rigorous institutions and therefore have constant access to libraries, lectures, museums, research opportunities, academics, and every major publication out there. We happen to exist during a particular time in history when there is an abundance of information at our fingertips — a condition which fashions your ignorance both difficult to conceive of and impossible to excuse.

On the other hand, to be able *not* to know is also a privilege in and of itself. I'll admit that in a town as beautiful as this — one where time seems to stop and the medieval streets seem untouched by the many centuries-worth of international strife — it's difficult to conceptualise even the possibility of any exterior ugliness. From your South Street flat, the photographs you see of families escaping California wildfires and birds'-eye views of Sudanese mass graves exist in a far-off corner of the world, which only matters in the 0.05 seconds it spends occupying your screen before you scroll past.

And I'm sure that, should you witness it first-hand, it probably *would* have an effect on you. But is it really that you would need to witness this trauma yourself to actually care about whether or not it's happening to other members of the human race? In other words, are you so wrapped up in your own life that you can't bother to give a s**t about what goes on beyond your own cushy corner of the universe? Maybe ask yourself that next time you *just don't want to get involved*. I bet those faraway people wish they didn't have to either.

But these problems don't need to creep up on you directly for you to feel their impact. Consider this an unwelcome newsflash: The world's problems will involve you whether it matches your Instagram feed or not. Climate change will cease being a background concern when it's too hot to wear your vintage Ralph Lauren sweater in November, and the rise in tariffs will manifest in the prices at your local cafe skyrocketing to double what they used to be. Once your time in this town comes to an end, you'll find that you'll no longer be able to wave off life's turmoil with a giggle and a curtsey. The world's tragedies will suddenly hone in on you from every direction, and you won't be able to click your heels together and ignore them any longer. *Toto, I have a feeling we aren't in St Andrews anymore*.

So, while you still can, be sure to write this article off as the vindictive word vomit of a student journalist who feels cheated out of kudos. Although let the record show, I've never written anything for recognition. Most journalists don't. When we welcome public scrutiny, self-endangerment, and meagre wages, willingly seeking out the career is the result of a kind of reluctant obligation. It's nowhere near as glamorous as existing off of some mysterious source of income (i.e., Daddy's credit card), but, believe it or not, *someone* has to care. I also didn't write this to ruffle anyone's vintage maxi skirts, either. The people whom I wrote this about probably have no idea that I'm even talking about them. But to all of you fashionably uninformed who have made it this far, maybe this is an article finally worthy of your attention — it is about *you*, after all.

ILLUSTRATION BY EVE FISHMAN

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Devil's Advocate

Should Smut Be Considered Pornography?



ALEX MCQUIBBAN

44% YES

SAFFRON ROWELL

NO 56%



I am by no means an expert when it comes to smut nor pornography—shocker! But someone has to write the D.A., and as someone who grew up on the Tumblr era internet, and had more than a few AO3-frequenting friends—if you know, you know—I believe that I am qualified to defend what should be an absolutely obvious statement: smut is (a form of) pornography.

So, how does one go about determining whether or not smut is pornography? Lucky for me, this is a philosophical question, so I can finally put my many degrees to good use. Unfortunately, it's rather difficult to list out the exact necessary and sufficient conditions a piece of media needs to comply with to qualify as pornography. US Supreme Court Justice once famously shared his foolproof diagnostic test to determine whether something counted as (hard-core) pornography: "I know it when I see it." That being said, a quick Google search gives the following definition: "printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate sexual excitement"—though I should warn any curious readers who want to replicate my results to search "definition of pornography" and not just "porn". So that settles it, right? Given that smut is literature which is specifically intended to include explicit description of sexual themes and activity for the reader's 'pleasure,' rather than for educational purposes, say, then smut is pornography.

But maybe this judgement is a little hasty, I hear you say, as you quickly zip up your trousers and close your laptop screen. After all, your favourite smutty fan-fic isn't porn — not real porn. Your favourite smutty fan-fic is a work of art; it's so much more than just sex; it's got proper dialogue; and, most importantly, it's all just a bunch of words and no one gets hurt or dehumanised — at least not for real.

> "But this defense of smut only really amounts to saying that it's porn you like and it *might* be more ethical."

But this defense of smut only really amounts to saying that it's porn you like and that it *might* be more ethical, denyingthe fact that written pornography can easily and does often play on the same dangerous tropes that the rest of the pornographic industry does. Now, don't get me wrong, the very presence of sexual themes or even description of sexual activity does not make smut porn. But the same is true of visual media: your favourite film that just happens to have a sex scene at the end would likely not fall under the same category as your favourite video that just happens to have a casual pizza delivery at the beginning. We've heard it all before, whether you claim to read or watch it "only for the plot", you cannot deny that smut *and* videographic porn are media whose primary aim is to convey sexual content for sexual content's sake.

There is a deeper insight behind all of this, however. — that is that we often get distracted by the platonic ideals of concepts which we make up in our heads, ones that create all sorts of illusory distinctions which are completely dependent on the societies we happen to live in. Magazines were once all the rage, and now the same can be said of videos; but if we all went blind, we'd likely be doing it all in audio format. The more important distinction than whether or not certain media matches our pre-conceived notions of what pornography, is whether or not that media — especially in trying to play to our more base instincts — harms anyone in the process.



In any case, if you're ever worried that it might, then try having real (consensual) sex for a change. Now that is something that won't go out of style anytime soon. You've all read the title. Like every good porno, we're throwing foreplay out the window. Let's skip to the good bit.

First off, smut has a wider plot. It has character development, a narrative arc seperate from the non-sexual content of the novel. In fact, it serves the non-sexual content; it contributes to the narrative arc. How would we know that the Dark Prince has overcome his daddy issues, and learned that mafioso violence does not qualify as a love language, if we don't see him, tenderly but with inhuman strength, take Y/N from behind? In this way, smut reflects more accurately sex's position in life: As part of it, but not its entirety. Though the point is conceded that perhaps f**king in the Royal Suite of a gothic, candle-lit, castle is not *directly* transferable to real life. For most of us, at least.

Porn does not have a wider plot — or any sort of plot really, unless we take 'climax' to encompass both of its meanings. Rather, if the introduction takes longer than one minute and thirty seconds, most of its viewers are skipping the video (or so I've heard). Where smut features intricately crafted characters bearing their intense and convoluted trauma to the reader's discretion, porn exclusively features the misadventures of Brad, hunky copy-machine-fixer *cum* delivery boy *cum* farmhand *cum* pool boy *cum* landscaper, and Cherry, ditsy yet charming waitress *cum* step-sister *cum* boss *cum* college student in *desperate* need of extra credit.

This versatility exists for one simple reason — we do not care about Brad, or Cherry, or their extensive resumes, rivalling only the *Chuckle Brothers* and Kirk from *Gilmore Girls*. How do they end up in these situations? Don't care. Why do they switch jobs so frequently? Don't care. Is it because they show a flagrant disregard for workplace sexual misconduct policy? Most likely. Still don't care.

> "Smut reflects more accurately sex's position in life: as a part of it, but not its entirety."

In contrast, there's also a reason why the majority of smut and literature featuring smut has fan-fiction, or is fan-fiction, or is fan-fiction of fan-fiction — fan-fan-fiction-fiction if you will — or is published literature, which was originally fan-fiction, that has now, ironically, generated its own fan-fiction, in a cannibalistic self-perpetuating cycle — fan-fan-(fan)-fiction-fiction-fiction. It's because people *care* about the characters in smut. Sure, it helps that The Dark Prince has a six-pack, needs tailor-made XXL condoms, and has the stamina of an elephant on ketamine, but that's not all there is to him. It's also not enough to make people care. And if the sheer quantity of fan-fan-(fan)-fiction-fiction-fiction is anything to go by, they sure do.

Where smut features as one small, indulgent, latex-wrapped cog in a wider literary machine, the sole purpose of porn is sexual gratification. No matter how many of Brad's escapades you may have watched, you're not recommending the series to anyone, and you're definitely not filming an at-home interpretation of his back story and inner life. At least, I sincerely hope not.

Porn is not crafted, whereas smut is. It is isolated, whereas smut is not. There is no character development, which is seminal to the allure of smut. And so we have it — smut is not pornography. We're skipping aftercare today as well, aside from one disclaimer. To any and all prospective employers, I did not choose to write this.

ILLUSTRATION BY CLEMMIE SWIFFEN

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The French Dispatch: Lessons from the Louvre Heist

GEORGES TOULOUSE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

The Louvre jewellery heist was some sensational stuff. You might have thought that France was heartbroken, grieving the loss of some of the most precious artefacts of its great history. Perhaps that should have been the case.

The fact is, people in France have never really cared all that much about the jewels. It's not really like the Crown Jewels of the United Kingdom, or of other European countries. In 1887, France organised a huge sale of all the jewels — they were pawned off for pennies, spread across the world in different private collections, or melted down into oblivion, and most were never seen again. Some of the more important ones were kept — displayed in grand cases near large windows, with a sprawling view onto the road below and no security in sight — but no one really cared much about them.

Then there was the heist, and mass hysteria online as everyone realised that stealing the jewels of kings, queens, and empresses was as easy as driving up a furniture lift to the Louvre during working hours and walking in. The loss of the jewels is a great one; they were some of my favourite things held at the Louvre. It's a crying shame for history that they have been, in all likelihood, melted down and the stones recut. To me, this represents the loss of objects which contributed to making France itself; a tie to the monarchs we consistently overthrew, to what we were.

Yet I do think that there are lessons to be learned from this loss; lessons for France, but also for the rest of the world.

All we hear today is bad news — heists, killings, Trump doing yet another thing. The little tune which plays in the background is such: that it's all falling apart. When was the last time that a British person felt like they belonged to a nation? Perhaps the death of the Queen, but even then, that may have lasted two weeks at most. When was the last time Americans felt like a nation? Or Germans? Or truly any country with free press and social media?

Nowadays, only bad news sells, which, wave by wave, event after event, promotes the idea that "it's not like it used to be," and that existing divisions have succeeded in destroying the whole. There is a lot of money being made in convincing everybody that nothing binds us together anymore.

But it's also our fault. We don't care about what binds us together anymore. We may not go see our crown jewels, but we also don't really go visit different parts of our countries. We rarely grieve or celebrate together as we used to, we just focus on the immediate sources of contention — Trump and Farage know well how potent this is — and simply accept that *it* has changed, that we aren't really bound together by much anymore other than a passport or the odd sports championship.

The greatest irony in all of this is that we just aren't trying. Instead of crying over stolen jewels, which the overwhelming majority of people never heard of or cared about, it might be worth caring about the things that *are* still around. We still have our histories, our dead, our buildings and cities, our languages and hopes, our collective tears and joys — let's dwell on those. Let's realise that, in the end, what divides us right now is temporary. Elections, current events, the British carceral system having an awfully hard time not releasing people by accident, are all things which have come but will go. There will be more news tomorrow, more bad things happening, more divisions possible. The difficult part is simply understanding that there is a future, that there is a past, and that all water eventually flows under the bridge. What counts is keeping that bridge around.



ILLUSTRATION BY ABIGAIL SVAASAND

Shouldn't We be Taking Heists Seriously?

POPPIENA HORSINGTON
VIEWPOINT WRITER

What could be more scandalous than one of the world's most famous art museums being burgled in broad daylight? That is textbook drama and intrigue, the stuff of Hollywood! Yet in 2025, anything is possible. Upon discovering the news that the Louvre was robbed, I was surprised by how the online community quickly interpreted this situation as lighthearted and comical. I should not have been, given that it is the internet. Nevertheless, it made me ponder if we have *ever* taken heists seriously, or if no one takes them seriously *anymore*. Have we just accepted them as a silly little happenstance, an exposure of faulty security? Today, I shall dive into the world of heists, wondering how we got in this position, and whether we can pull ourselves out of it.

When speaking about heists in the modern age, there is only one place to start: movies and TV. For this, I shall have to bare my soul to you and admit my deep and fierce love for *Ocean's Eleven* (2001). What lightning in a bottle they captured with this gem! George Clooney masterminds brilliance, planning out the impossible heist of a Las Vegas casino with the help of Brad Pitt and an exclusive team of criminals. The music is catchy, the dialogue is witty, and the energy is electric. Love for this movie is widespread, given its success and succeeding sequels and adaptations that have since followed. Even Rihanna wanted to live the Ocean's dream! The intrigue of this movie lies in its logistics. The group is faced with an impossible challenge, but through their combined wit and talents, those sly dogs manage to pull it off. This movie exploits the ultimate fascination with burglary that lives deep inside each and every one of us. When we consider the Louvre heist, a similar fascination arises. How did they pull off this stunt so effortlessly? At 9:30 in the AM, no less? I truly have no clue. People have no choice but to be curious about the details of the case; it's what the movies taught us!

Moreover, where there is a mystery, there must be a detective. The all-knowing light in the darkness, who is able to solve the unsolvable through their unique observation and interpretation skills, someone to match the intellect of the thief. We find ourselves in a truly unique moment with this Louvre business, as we have the chance to witness a true, genuine French detective. Could it be Inspector Jacques Clouseau or that one French policewoman from Madagascar Three, Capitaine Chantel DuBois? Poirot is Belgian, so he shall only appear if they ask nicely, but anything is on the table. The love of the detective alongside the fascination for the heist means that this entire situation is setting itself up to be a real nailbiter. After all, life does imitate art or whatever they say.

No, but it's not funny, is it? It's actually quite serious. Regardless of how you feel about the jewels, their colonial history and acquisition, one thing is certain: they will probably never be seen by the general public again. And this is sad! What was once available to be visited and admired is now shut away in what I can only assume is an evil lair hidden away in a basement, like the Batcave but French. The gems are probably not going to be returned to their land of origin and cultural custodians by the robbers, and this is also most likely not a Robin Hood situation wherein the wealth from those gems is distributed among the deserving public. Now no one gets to visit these historic art pieces anymore, nor do they benefit from the potential income of selling them to an immensely wealthy buyer (unless *you* were the thief, it did happen during reading week after all). So what now? Sure, you can say that it was only a bit of bling snatched, that the rest of the Louvre is still there waiting for you, but that's not the point nor the attitude! Are we meant to be grateful that these sly thieves only took a handful of knick-knacks and not the whole floor? To be fair to you, I do not know the load capacity of the thieves or their nifty little elevator, so maybe. But I do not accept this.

> "Regardless of how you feel about the jewels [...] they will probably never be seen [...] again."

Ultimately, I think we struggle to take this caper seriously because of its circumstances; after all, it is playing out like a movie right in front of us. The mysterious thieves who move in broad daylight and the opportunity for French detective activity are too fascinating to be taken seriously. Yet this heist did have real consequences! Art and history lose a little piece of themselves when people overlook their value for profit.

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of The Saint.

Who Do You Think We Were?

Knowing your town's history is essential

TRUMAN CUNNINGHAM
VIEWPOINT WRITER

How much do most students know about the history of our town? I think most of us are at least dimly aware of the Reformation drama. The gruesome images of Patrick Hamilton at the stake or Cardinal Beaton hanging from the castle walls are hard to forget. Perhaps some of us know the story of Kate Kennedy, or the University's brief involvement with the French and American Revolutions. Here are a couple more esoteric stories from the lower tiers of the St Andrews iceberg that St Andreans ought to know about.

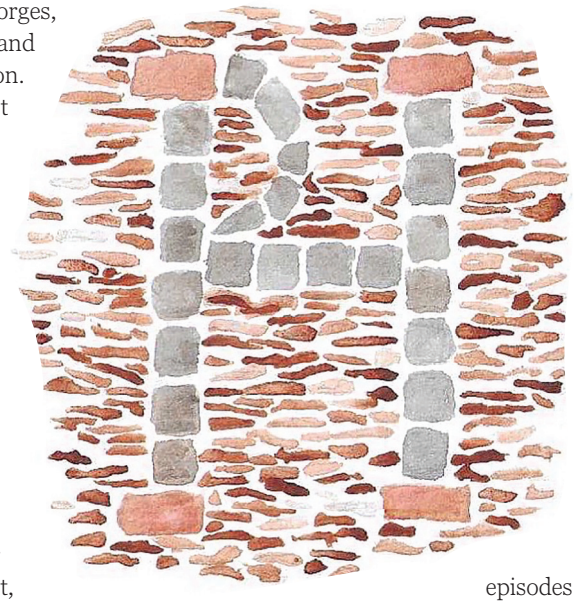
The University was founded by *Anti*pope Benedict XIII, known before his appointment as Pedro de Luna. Not included on the official Vatican lists of popes, Benedict's founding of St Andrews was his greatest legacy. His surname Luna is commemorated in the crescent at the top of the University's coat-of-arms (*luna* being Latin for moon). Bizarrely, the skull of the University's founder is on display in a museum in Zaragoza. Maybe we should ask for it back?

Another, even more important piece of bone to the town's history is the second knuckle of the Apostle Andrew, supposedly brought to Fife by St Rule in the 7th century. According to legend, St Rule snuck the finger bone past Muslim customs officials in Egypt by hiding it in a barrel of salted pork. The bone was lost in the Reformation, although some say it was taken to Edinburgh during the chaos or hidden by a pious resident. Today, a fragment of the Apostle's shoulder is in St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, a gift from the Archbishop of Amalfi in 1879.

St Andrews always seems to be at the periphery of world events, in a way that has ensured that the past settles like dust on the town. For example, the University's list of degree recipients includes characters as diverse as Ben Franklin and Margaret Atwood. It also includes Jean-Paul Marat, one-time leader of the French Revolution. Marat was assassinated in his bathtub by one Charlotte Corday in 1793. In a terrific piece of historical irony, one of Corday's descendants now attends St Andrews.

Another (honorary) degree recipient was Lawrence of Arabia, who thought the invitation was a joke. "A letter came to me from St Andrews (a charming and miniature place in Scotland) offering me an honorary degree," he wrote. "Ha Ha, said I, some undergrad is pulling my leg!"

Other figures who've spent time here include novelist Jorge Luis Borges, philosopher Adam Smith, and playwright Samuel Johnson. The latter's words about St Andrews in the 1770s are not kind — "a university declining, a college alienated, and a church profaned and hastening to the ground." The University was in a state of terminal decline in the 18th century, forced to sell St Leonard's College in 1747. One Victorian source claims students made golf balls for a living well into the 19th century.



As Professor Fyfe and other historians here have pointed out, the University's reversal of fortune came about at the same time as involvement in the empire overseas. One of St Andrews' most infamous imperialists was Lord Elgin, of Elgin Marbles fame, who studied here in the 1780s. Like many Classics students, Elgin was left unemployed after graduation and was forced to take up a career in theft. These are just a few of the stranger episodes in the University's six centuries of history. For those still interested, I recommend the Wikipedia deep dives on James Crichton, the Union Debating Society, or the 2006 St Andrews Agreements. There's really so much more to this "charming and miniature place" than three streets and a cathedral.

ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN MCANDREW

Speak Your Truth: Fighting Faschism with a Dictionary

DESDEMONA SMYTH
VIEWPOINT WRITER

It begins, as it always does, with language. Before the uniforms, before the marches, before the disappearances, there is a subtle reshaping of words. Totalitarianism, in every form it has taken, begins by narrowing the range of what can be said — therefore, what can be thought. Complexity becomes suspicious, vocabulary becomes a casualty of ideology, complexity is replaced by slogan, and precision yields to repetition. In the long quiet that follows, words lose their meaning, and people lose their bearings.

George Orwell understood this. "If thought corrupts language," he wrote, "language can also corrupt thought." The relationship is circular, intimate, and dangerous. When language is impoverished, thought follows. When people no longer know the words to distinguish truth from convenience, they become governable in the worst sense of the word.

We like to imagine fascism as a spectacle—loud, flag-waving, unmistakable. In practice, it often enters quietly, through the lexicon. It recasts dissent as "disloyalty" and brutality as "protection." It teaches us to see euphemism as civility. When fascism arrives, it does not look like a newsreel. It doesn't always shout; it often whispers through the euphemisms that rebrand cruelty as "policy," violence as "order," censorship as "security." The authoritarian project begins not with the silencing of speech, but with its cheapening. It depends on citizens who no longer expect words to mean what they mean. To resist, we need vocabulary. Not as a luxury, but as armour.

This is why vocabulary is not simply an academic concern, but a civic one. To build a vocabulary is to build a resistance. The act of choosing the right word is an act of intellectual discipline, and, in an age of deliberate distortion, a moral stance. A person who can articulate distinctions — between "policy" and "punishment," between "patriotism" and "obedience" — is harder to deceive.

The erosion of language rarely announces itself. But I've begun to notice this erosion in small ways: People say "you know what I mean" as a stand-in for actually saying it. Debates online collapse into hashtags. The entire project of articulation — of finding the right word, not the nearest one — feels almost quaint. But language is not ornamental. It is the scaffolding of consciousness. It begins in small ways: the normalisation of imprecision, the elevation of slogans over syntax. It continues when we decide that semantics are petty, that clarity is elitist, that words are flexible instruments of mood rather than meaning. But words are not mood, words are structure. The loss of linguistic precision, then, is not a stylistic failure but a democratic one. When we surrender our vocabulary, we surrender our autonomy; language shapes the contours of our understanding and ultimately our capacity for truth.

This is not a call for pedantry, but for care. To know the difference between "anger" and "grief," between "protest" and "riot," between "strong" and "cruel," is not to perform intelligence — it is to preserve consciousness. A well-developed vocabulary is a tool of survival in a culture increasingly organised around the suppression of nuance. Building vocabulary is not about prestige. It's about agency. The broader your vocabulary, the harder it is for anyone to rewrite your reality.

There is a reason that authoritarian movements distrust poets, journalists, and scholars of language. To burn books is to destroy the evidence of alternative vocabularies—alternative ways of thinking, feeling, existing. Because every word outside the sanctioned lexicon is a threat. To name something precisely is to strip it of its mystique and expose its mechanism. Propaganda depends on the opposite: on words that feel good in the mouth yet say nothing. It depends on citizens who have grown comfortable with approximation. The antidote is not louder speech, but truer speech; the discipline of choosing words that reflect reality, even when they discomfort us. It is the slow work of reading, listening, and building the vocabulary to articulate what we see. Every new word learned, every definition understood, is a small expansion of the possible.

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Penny for Your Free Time?

Our impulse to professionalise our hobbies is ruining them

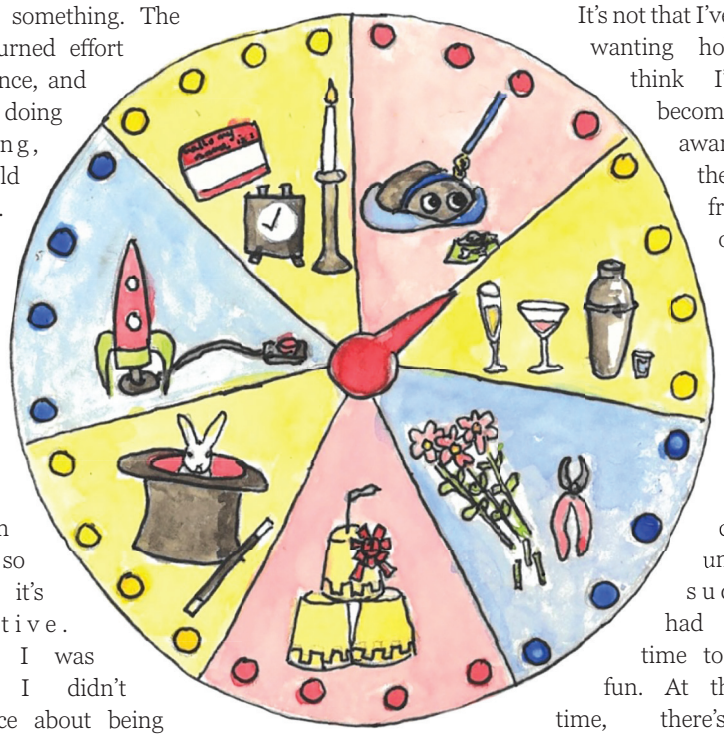
STELLA PAK-GUÉNNETTE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

The typical hobby has a pretty predictable life cycle: initial interest, a few too many purchases, and practice that's mixed with a faint promise that you'll actually stick with it. Before you know it, it's collecting dust next to the ukulele your uncle bought you three years ago.

Somewhere along the way, we decided hobbies had to define us. Hobbies are meant to take up space — in our time, our thoughts, even our personality. But in practice, they mostly take up a shelf and, honestly, I think that's more than fine. It's okay if something only happens once in a while, if it exists in brief bursts of enthusiasm, if you're objectively bad at it. Not everything has to turn into a passion project.

Apparently, being mediocre is no longer a private affair. Hobbies have started to feel suspiciously more like side hustles. And sometimes I feel like a walking offence to that idea. I tend to stall somewhere between interest and mild frustration. I'll download tabs, buy the supplies and maybe watch a tutorial or two, and then stop right before the part where I'm supposed to get worse before getting better. I'm not starting a manifesto for mediocrity, but it does feel weirdly hard to just be bad at things lately. Every new hobby turns into some kind of audition with proof of discipline, taste, or some hidden talent.

I don't think this is just me. Everyone seems a little allergic to the idea of *not* mastering something. The internet turned effort into evidence, and if you're doing something, there should be a result. And if there's no result, what's the point? We don't shy away from leisure, so long as it's productive.



When I was younger, I didn't think twice about being mediocre at things, and hobbies didn't require an audience. I did gymnastics despite being barely able to touch my toes, drew things no one could identify, and sang with enough confidence to potentially make up for the pitch. It was chaotic, but it was fun — and, crucially, it didn't matter that I wasn't good at any of these things.

It's not that I've stopped wanting hobbies. I think I've just become too aware of how they look from the outside. Perhaps it's because we came to uni and suddenly had less time to just be fun. At the same time, there's this nagging, quiet pressure for everything to have a sort of direction or aesthetic value, even if no one's watching.

What matters is the *doing* aspect; badly, quietly, without the faintest hint of strategy. I'm not pretending that's profound. I just think it might be nice to do things we're terrible at again: to try something new without turning it into a big project, just to see what happens when you do something for no reason except that you feel like it.

There's obviously no grand solution here, and I'm by no means suggesting you rush out to collect five miscellaneous hobbies. But lately I've been trying to do things I can't be good at, at least not anytime soon. And, contrary to the idea that you can't enjoy something unless you're good at it, there's something oddly nice about doing things badly, with no pressure, no metrics, and no specific end goal. For me, this has been going to the driving range with my one little 7-iron, where I somehow manage to defy physics and send the ball *behind* me.

So this is an official "I miss you" text about hobbies that could mind their own business. The ones that lived in half-used notebooks or drawers, quietly terrible and none of anyone's concern. With the reminder that not everything needs to become content, maybe we can start reclaiming casual creativity.

ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN MCANDREW

Gym Redemption Arc

Right wing politics have hijacked fitness — we should save it

ADRIAN HANLON
VIEWPOINT WRITER

As someone who has been lifting for over seven years, has competed in bodybuilding, and would recommend no activity more than physical exercise, headlines and comments like these disturb me. Not only because those who wish to perpetuate a culture war have twisted to partisan ends what should be an apolitical activity, but also because, whether gym bros are right-wing or not, I have always found the gym to be an incredibly welcoming community. Nevertheless, I am aware that my experience is far from many people's perception. And, given that a study from Brunel University found a correlation between muscularity and having less egalitarian socioeconomic beliefs, this perception of the gym as being dominated by right-wing males has *some* statistical backing.

I have a few things to say about this. Firstly, the gym should be an apolitical space where all are welcome. Working out is mentally, physically, and socially beneficial, and headlines like those above serve only to exacerbate the anxieties that beginners already feel when starting their fitness journeys.

Secondly, not all gym bros are right-wing and not everyone who leans right is far-right. I say this partly to alleviate fears that the gym is some 24/7 Republican National Convention. It's not. The Brunel results came from one study with a sample size of 171, and no article reporting on it even cited the strength of the correlation. Furthermore, while the left views the right as the party of hate, the right views the left as the party of shame. Conservatives are not all 'assholes' and 'jerks,' and headlines like those above serve only to sow division and make those right-of-centre double down on their beliefs. A large part of why young men have swung right in recent years is a general feeling from the left of hostility and apathy towards their struggles.

According to *WIRED*, this has created an opportunity for right-wing content and the fitness content packaged with it to weaponise 'the real-world crisis that many young men are facing.' In recent years, the far-right has worked to align motivation for and the benefits of lifting weights with what they tout as "conservative values." Influencers like Andrew Tate have encouraged young men to use the gym to take control of their lives and become strong and disciplined. Yet, importantly for Tate, they must then use that strength and discipline to dominate women and defeat their fellow man in a ruthless climb to the top, during which they work sixteen-hour days to accumulate vast sums of wealth and material possessions.

Although it seems absurd that a desire to improve one's physique and gain discipline could lead one to such a sexist, materialistic, and frankly lonely worldview, the mechanism by which it happens is simple.

First, influencers observe that many young men are struggling, with suicide being the biggest killer of men under 45, according to the BBC, and this makes them easily exploitable. They then espouse the gym as a way to deal with these struggles. Since physical exercise is well-known to boost mental health, the young men inevitably feel better. They begin to trust the influencer and associate positive emotions with watching them. Thus, when the influencer combines working out with views about "traditional masculinity," young men are more likely to believe that, too. Eventually, the lines are blurred and the benefits of going to the gym become conflated with the "benefits" of re-embracing masculinity.

Clearly, this is a cruel and exploitative practice. And yet, it is also avoidable; for what this process really signals is a sense of desperation and a crying out for positive male role models. These role models need not be political — in fact, they *shouldn't* be — but representatives of a decent and welcoming community; they should be representatives and how strength and discipline can be used for good, to enrich one's own life and others.' They should show that the gym has nothing to do with being right-wing, and that being prejudiced and materialistic has nothing to do with masculinity.

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Boy Bye, Bye, Bye

Boyfriends used to be a status symbol, now they seem to make us worse

MILLY SMITH
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Last week, British *Vogue* declared having a boyfriend to be "quite culturally loser-ish." This is quite a departure from the playground days of protesting that you did indeed have a boyfriend, he just "went to another school." In my teens, having a boyfriend was the ultimate status symbol. Those lucky enough to have one would parade him around like a trophy, taking him to parties and relentlessly posting soppy month-aversary stories.

As I grew up a bit, however, I did start to question if having a boyfriend did indeed catapult you to the top of the social ladder. It seemed, instead, to catalyse social isolation. Suddenly, you haven't seen a beloved friend in months, as her schedule fills up with date nights and bae-cations. When you finally pin her down for a coffee date, she texts an hour before with "you don't mind if I bring my boyfriend, do you?" Boyfriends aren't quite so cool anymore when they become a substitute for friends or, even worse, a substitute for a personality.

After witnessing friends slip away into this blinding mist of boyfriend-obsession, a lot of women seem to fear themselves meeting the same fate when they enter into a relationship. This is perhaps why we're in the age of the 'soft-launch.' An Instagram story of a slightly hairy hand on a dinner table is Gen Z's equivalent of updating your relationship status on Facebook. Then, we get a series of pictures of the back of his head, but from so far away that it's indiscernible whether it's a man or a tree. At the one-year point, we might actually get to see a picture of his face.

Women seem so afraid to become one of those boyfriend-girls that they veer so far in the opposite direction, you can go months without learning of your friend's new coupling. She's so afraid of talking about him too much that she'll never bring him up at all. It's a hard balance to tread. When you've been single for a while and known to shout "I hate all men!" across the dinner table after a bottle or two of wine and a few too many bad Hinge dates, it can seem embarrassing to be suddenly strolling down Market Street holding hands with your new beau.

For a lot of women, singledom is synonymous with independence. It feels feminist to be single, to provide for yourself, to never let a man buy you a drink, and to rant and rave about how terrible all men are. It can feel like a renouncement of one's principles when you have to admit that you do actually like some men, and it is indeed comforting to have someone on hand to open stiff jars and fill up your water bottle at nighttime. It is the small things, after all.

We've established that it is embarrassing to have a boyfriend if, within a few weeks, you become incapable of doing anything other than hanging out with him or talking about him. Before long, you're missing every girls' night so he doesn't get lonely, you've neglected your own interests so you can adopt his, and you're incapable of doing anything on your own. This lack of independence and individuality is a bit embarrassing.

It's also embarrassing if, to put it simply, your boyfriend doesn't like you very much. When you're blushing while talking about your mediocre boyfriend who routinely forgets your birthday and flirts with other women, on top of being much uglier than you, everybody is embarrassed. Ditching your friends to hang out with a man who probably doesn't even know your middle name — not very cool.

> "It can feel like a renouncement [...] to admit that you actually do like some men."

So, is having a boyfriend loser-ish? It definitely can be, but it doesn't have to be. If you're in a happy relationship, managing to delicately balance spending time with the person you love and maintaining of all the other important relationships in your life, then I would definitely not call you a loser. However if, after getting a boyfriend, you took your carefully developed sense of self and threw her out of the nearest window so that you might become a blank canvas on which the likes, dislikes, and schedule of your boyfriend could imprint themselves, I would invite you to scramble out of that window and try your best to retrieve her — if she's still there.



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Bagpipes and Wedding Bells

Tying the knot in St Andrews

TAO YAZAKI
FEATURES WRITER

Summers in St Andrews consist of the sounds of bagpipes and wedding bells. The atmosphere is bright, easy, with laughter and chatter of wedding guests in black tie echoing down North Street. St Andrews is a popular spot for past students, locals, and repeat tourists to come together to celebrate getting married.

Richard Barton was married in St Andrews in 2002. He first came to the town as a teenager. "We stayed at one of the university halls, and we came for two or three years on the trot," he said. "It soon became my favourite place." When he and Carolyn Barton started visiting on holidays, "it became her favourite place, [too]. So we just said, let's get married in St Andrews. And that was it, really."

The couple wanted a small wedding. "About twenty or so family members came up," Barton recalled. The ceremony was held in August at the civil registry office on South Street, followed by a reception at the Rufflets Hotel. "I think it was raining part of the day. It rained, and then it cleared up, but we had a really nice day," Barton said. "Everyone enjoyed it. It all went to plan."

Neither studied at St Andrews but discovered a deep love for the place. Barton emphasised "you've got to have a really strong connection to the town" to get married here. "I'd learned to play golf at the time, so that was a big part of it," he said. "Coming to the home of golf and playing the courses. But just the town itself — the medieval buildings, the beaches, the streets. Everything really [...] We just loved it."

"I've been to St Andrews more than 50 times since that first trip in 1980," Barton said. "I've got so many memories of the place now. I remember getting married. I've got memories of bringing the girls up on holidays as they were growing up. I've got my golfing memories [...] I've had a couple of trips up with friends."

The couple's connection to St Andrews continued when their daughter attended the University. "It was really nice when Laura ended up at uni after our family history," he said. "It's hard not to like St Andrews, isn't it? It's the place, really."

Charlotte Davies has captured many weddings like the Bartons'. A former St Andrews student, Davies now works as a wedding photographer. At university, she joined a creative student group called Lightbox. "I was really keen, ready to go, did a couple of union events, and then COVID obviously wiped us out," she explained. "A lot of the jobs that resurfaced post-COVID came to me. I just kept learning, kept loving it, and here we are."

Davies photographs dozens of weddings each year, having done around 35 weddings since April this year. "It's maybe been a 70-30 split this year," she said. "70% students or alumni, and 30% locals."

> "The proximity that defines St Andrews is what sets it apart."

For both Barton and Davies, the scale of a wedding is meaningful. Barton said he and Carolyn both wanted a "low-key" wedding. "We didn't want a massive event with 150 people coming and a six-course meal and champagne every hour of the day. We just planned a fairly quiet, small wedding."

Davies has seen both — "people who have the money are going bigger," while others are leaning towards "a small, serious, legal bit and then later down the line, a party."

"There's something to be said for those smaller, low-key ceremonies," Davies said. If you "go all out and invite a hundred, 150 people" that you don't really know "to huge venues [...], it ends up being a [...] a performance all day," she explained. "It just depends on people's personalities. Couples have to do what feels right for them."

As a photographer, Davies has observed unexpected and heartwarming moments. She recalls one wedding where the groom's best man, his brother, purposely set an alarm on his phone to ring midway through the ceremony. What seemed accidental, silly, or even rude was deliberately planned to divert attention from the nervous groom. "I only found out afterwards," Davies said, "but it did get a laugh out of the crowd and genuinely did settle the groom's nerves, so that was really sweet."

Davies' website tends to attract graduates coming back to marry in the town where they met. "I get a lot of students coming back with all their pals from uni," she said. "It's like the first time everyone's been together in five, ten, twenty years. That's really cool to experience."

For Davies, the proximity that defines St Andrews is what sets it apart. "After these four brief years, you'll likely never have your friends living on the same street as you, or two minutes down the road. You won't all end up at the pub quiz on Sunday nights, you won't be able to just roll up to the library and [see] at least three people you know [...] in their usual spot ready for a chat or a joint study session."

> "Alumni always want the cloisters by the vestry door."

"I shoot a lot of alumni weddings here, and it means you get to recreate that proximity," Davies said. "Often people choose to stay for an extra three days and recreate their favourite memories. They'll go back to East Sands, they'll ceilidh at Forgan's, grab a[n icecream from] Jannettas, they'll walk the Pier."

Like Barton, Davies finds couples get married in St Andrews because of their meaningful connection to places in the town. "For alumni, they go back to where they stayed in town, if they had a flat in town, which is cute," she explained. "A lot of the time, it's a roommate thing. They'll both live there or [have] met when they flat shared, which is quite sweet."

"The weddings I've shot in Edinburgh and Glasgow just don't have that same re-connection or reunion, even if in essence they are getting together with a lot of old friends," she explained. "It's the proximity and the memories you make in these specific locations that you have the ability to relive, however many years later."



ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE O'SULLIVAN

"History Will Remember You"

Sid Khan speaks on responsibility and justice

VIC PRIESTNER
FEATURES WRITER

In late August 2025, 500 ships set sail from Western Europe in what would become the largest civilian-led convoy of its kind in modern history. The Global Sumud Flotilla, with people from over 44 countries and of 47 nationalities, sailed 2,000 miles over six weeks and ended their aid mission just 40 miles shy of the Gazan coastline. Sid Khan was one of four Scottish nationals detained by Israeli forces in international waters from the Flotilla, and has been touring Scottish universities in an effort to inspire and educate students.

"I was working for a bank most of my life," Khan explained. "I was a global head of financial crime — basically, I was responsible for keeping the board of directors out of jail. That was my job." Khan stuck with it for many years before he realised the implications: "The banking sector sits at the epicentre of everything that's wrong with a capitalist society. The only thing that matters is the bottom line. I was getting paid a lot of money to keep that machine going. But eventually, I just couldn't justify it anymore."

It took a decade, he said, to shake off the "golden handcuffs." When he ultimately resigned last year, he and his wife left Glasgow to focus on their charity full-time. It works to provide free eye care in northern Pakistan. Even in the mountains, the news from Gaza was inescapable. "The reality is you can't watch what's happening and not act," said Khan. "I walked away from the corporate world last year. Since then, I've just been doing what feels right — using whatever privilege I have to do something that matters. The Flotilla was part of that."

> "You realise how fragile everything is — the law, human rights, international order."

He said the voyage was "beautiful and horrific." Khan described a genuine sense of humanity — people from every background and faith, all united by one purpose — to get aid to Gaza, to break the siege. "And then, within hours, we were being boarded, guns pointed at our heads, treated like criminals. For what? For carrying medicine and food," he recalled.

"You realise how fragile everything is — the law, human rights, international order. You realise who those systems protect, and who they don't," he added. Khan spoke with the precision of someone used to institutions and with the exhaustion of someone who has outgrown them. "The banks, the media, the governments — they all enable this machine that dehumanises people," he said. "And unless you stand outside of it, you can't even see it."

"The BBC is entirely complicit in the genocide," he said. "They know the narrative they're pushing is not reality, but they push it anyway. They are shaping public opinion. They are lying — straight up lying."

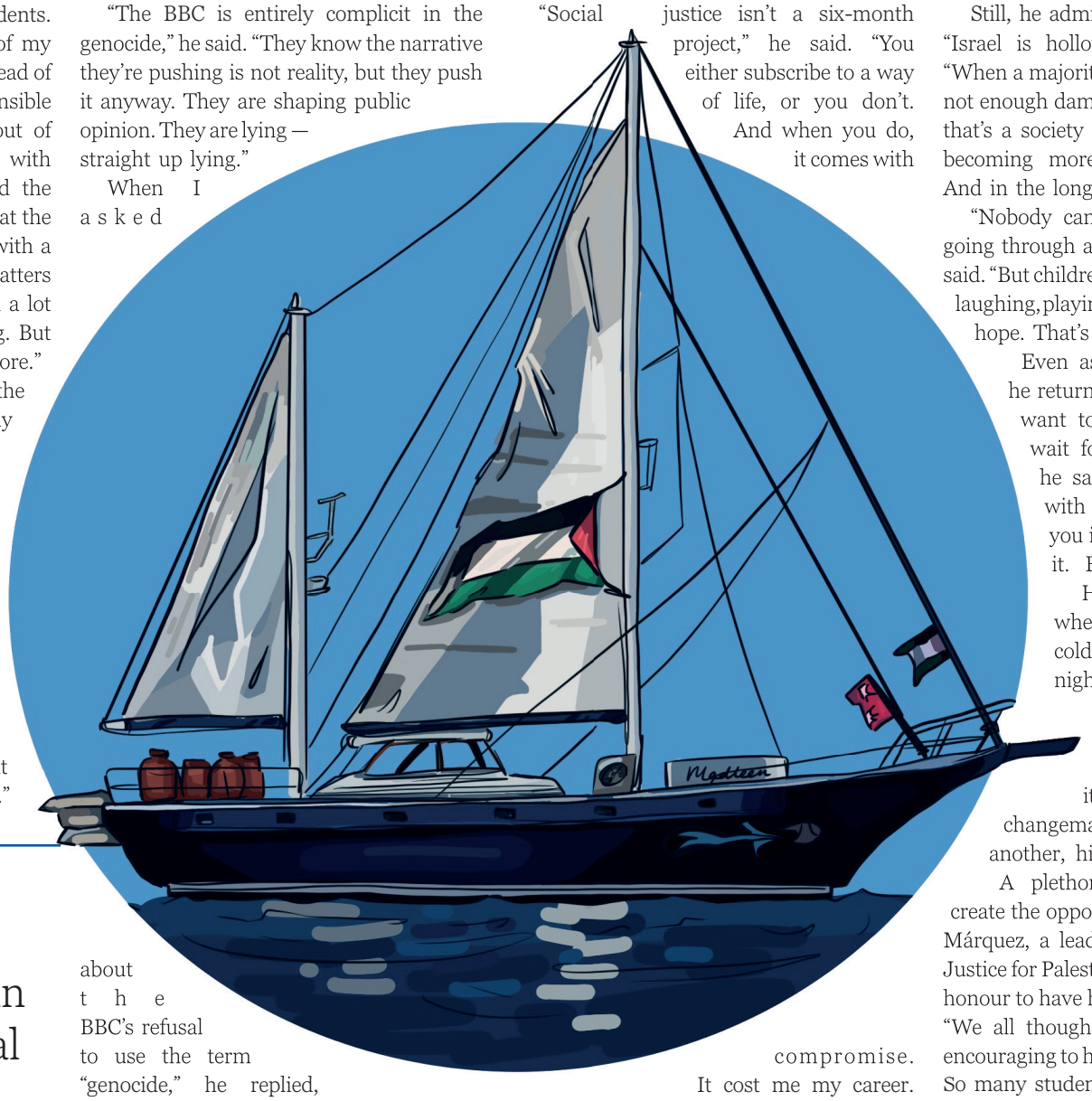
When I asked about the BBC's refusal to use the term "genocide," he replied, "Anyone who refuses to tell the truth has blood on their hands. It's as simple as that. It is a genocide. It's not complicated. Apartheid, illegal occupation, oppression — they all apply. Genocide absolutely represents what's happening in Palestine today."

Khan's political convictions are grounded in experience, but his transformation began long before Gaza. "It was just after midnight," he recalled of a call he received while still working in banking. After Khan liked a social media post by Save The Children, his company called "[saying] they were 'checking in,'" he recalled. "What they were really saying was, 'We're watching you.' That's when I knew I couldn't live that life anymore."

> "Social justice isn't a six-month project."

"Social justice isn't a six-month project," he said. "You either subscribe to a way of life, or you don't. And when you do, it comes with compromise. It cost me my career. That's the price of commitment."

If his career was the cost, students are now the audience. "Students have always been at the forefront of civil liberties," he said. "You've not yet been bogged down by the realities of everyday life — the mortgage, the bills, the nine-to-five. You have the freedom to call a spade a spade."



Khan sees power in that freedom: "When our boats were bombed in the Mediterranean, Italy — despite being a right-wing, Zionist-friendly government — had to send two naval frigates to protect us. Why? Because there were riots in their streets. That's the power of people. That's when I realised everything can be done. Time travel maybe not," he grinned, "but everything else — absolutely."

For Khan, people power is not symbolic — it is tactical, and a technology of war that lies in our hands. "When enough of us stand up, they can't ignore us," he said. "That's what governments fear more than anything — ordinary people refusing to stay silent."

Still, he admitted the fight takes its toll. "Israel is hollowing itself out," he said, "When a majority of the population believes not enough damage has been done to Gaza, that's a society corroding from within. It's becoming more extreme, more isolated. And in the long term, it's not sustainable."

"Nobody can go through what they're going through and not be impacted," Khan said. "But children are resilient. You see them laughing, playing games in the rubble. That's hope. That's humanity refusing to die."

Even as he spoke of devastation, he returned to responsibility. "If you want to change something, don't wait for someone else to do it," he said. "The responsibility sits with you. And if someone tells you it can't be done — don't buy it. Everything can be done."

He glanced toward the door, where students spilt into the cold and drenching St Andrews night. "You're the ones who will inherit this world," he said. "The question is, will you inherit it as bystanders or as changemakers? Because one way or another, history will remember you."

A plethora of societies rallied to create the opportunity to host Khan. Laura Márquez, a lead organiser of Students for Justice for Palestine, explained that it was an honour to have him speak at the University: "We all thought that it was really, really encouraging to have him here in St Andrews. So many students feel discouraged, and to hear such impactful, purposeful words from first-hand experience of Israeli soldiers and the Flotilla [...] this was one of my favourite events we've done over the past two years."

The Freedom Flotilla's next departure is set for April 2026.

ILLUSTRATION BY LYLA RITZLER

Science, Art, and Seaweed

A conversation with Anne Daffertshofer of St Andrews Botanic Garden

ANNA REZNICK
FEATURES WRITER



An art historian walks into a botanic garden... no, it's not the start of a joke. Against a backdrop of golden leaves and a setting sun, Anne Daffertshofer, the Arts and Cultural Programmes Curator for the St Andrews Botanic Garden, took me on a walk. Daffertshofer joined the team in April 2025 after finishing her PhD at the University. Her thesis, titled 'Anthropocene Mobilities in Contemporary Art: Exploring a Movement-Oriented Lens in Times of Ecological Crisis,' served as a perfect background for her work at the St Andrews Botanic Garden.

"Art was the only thing that ever really held my attention," Daffertshofer said. "I'm so interested in society and what shapes us. I think that's, for me, what life is about — to learn new things and think with people. Artworks are an extension of that."

Although art acted as a mainstay in Daffertshofer's life, her childhood was also marked by an interest in environmentalism. "I remember learning about Greenpeace, and overfishing, the oceans, and stuff," Daffertshofer said. "The first secondary school I went to was this Catholic girls' school, and we had to give a presentation. There was a nun [who] was so upset with me because I kept trying to get my friends to sign a petition."

Daffertshofer's interest in art and the environment was fused with the discovery of two artworks — Daisy Ginsberg's *Pollinator Pathmaker* and Precious Okoyomon's *To See the Earth Before the End of the World*. They played a significant role in her thesis, piquing her interest in the intersection between the environment and art, which now manifests perfectly in her job at the Botanic Garden.

"It's so funny, I think, the path that life takes you," Daffertshofer said. "With this job, so much came together in terms of the way I was raised, and what I was interested in, but in ways that I didn't really anticipate before."

Now, as a curator, Daffertshofer sees herself "as a mediator, like a bridge between the institution and 'the art world,'" Daffertshofer explained. "I guess that's what really drew me to this specific botanic garden, and the idea of building an arts and culture programme here. This garden is really interested in challenging the expectations that people have about botanic gardens."

Daffertshofer's desire to question traditional concepts of the botanic garden came at the perfect time as the Garden undergoes a massive change. "Five years ago started a moment of big transition for the garden," Daffertshofer explained. "One of the things that's been done since then is to start the process of decommissioning our glass houses."

The decision to deconstruct the glasshouses was made with the environment in mind, by reducing the garden's carbon emissions by 98%. For Daffertshofer, the dismantling provided the opportunity to try something new. She said, "We have a lot of space that's all of a sudden available to create something different that plays into this role of what [...] a botanic garden [is]."

The former glasshouses have now become part of the Generator Garden, a region representative of brownfields — vacant areas previously developed and now capable of biodiversity. The visual juxtaposition that brownfields allow for is Daffertshofer's favourite space. "You'll see that there [are] these dead wood hedges that provide habitat to different types of organisms," she said. "And you see different types of dead wood arranged in different ways throughout the space, but you will also see these piles of rubble. You see all these different textures and colours, but again, not necessarily what you would expect."

The art of testing boundaries falls into Daffertshofer's wheelhouse. "As an art historian, I'm always interested in the visual aspect," she said. "We get used to seeing things again and again, and so challenging the aesthetics of what people expect in a garden is really, really important."

For their mission of innovation, the Garden has collaborated with Studio Biocene, a design collective that combines architecture and biochemical engineering. Led by Brenda Parker and Marcos Cruz, the collaboration created the Bioscope, a wooden pavilion that fuses natural beauty and technological innovation.

"It's a space where you can show screenings, for instance, which is something I want to do in January as well," Daffertshofer said. "But it's also just a really fun-looking structure, and it shows these different ways of using the garden as a site for experiments, not just for science, but also [the] humanities and art."

The Bioscope was just one of the Garden's many collaborative projects. Currently, one of the former glasshouses acts as an artist studio. "We've been working with an artist called Désirée Coral," Daffertshofer said. "She's been harvesting sea salt, and she's currently preparing for an exhibition in Aberdeen. It's been so fascinating. She's really interested in the colonial histories of salt."

While harvesting materials for artworks, the Garden also harvested grains for Scotland the Bread, a project that aims to improve grain growth in the name of sustainability and nourishment: "This summer, we had grown different types of wheat, and then we did a harvesting day, and it was dried in the glasshouse. Then it was milled and made into flour, and we hosted a supper club in that glasshouse, and we had focaccia made from the flour."

In an effort to expand their work in ethnobotany, the Garden also worked with storyteller Eileen Budd. "Ethnobotany is a way of understanding and making sense of plants in more traditional ways," Daffertshofer told me. "What are the stories you know about plants? What are non-scientific names for plants, for example? What are the uses for plants?"

Daffertshofer said the collaboration has proved revolutionary: "It was amazing. Like, the first time, [Budd] visited me at the garden, it was her first time and she showed *me* around."

In the upcoming months, Daffertshofer has arranged for more collaborative efforts through film screenings. Documentarists Rachel McBrinn and Alison Scott created a project based on the decommissioning of the glasshouses, which has been exhibited by the Travelling Gallery. "I'm really keen to bring artists to St Andrews so that audiences, including students, can go and have the opportunity to speak to an artist, ask them about the process, and how you go about making an artwork [...] and get funding," Daffertshofer said.

Another film, *Indexed Beings*, will be shown later in the year, with creator Helen Knowles visiting with her collaboration for the film's UK tour.

Further upcoming events include a programme in the new year centred around seaweed. The Garden's herbarium hosts part of the Margaret Gatty collection, a historic Victorian seaweed set, which Daffertshofer hopes to utilise as part of her more narrative efforts. "How can we tell those stories, I suppose, in a non-traditional way?" Daffertshofer asked herself.

The local history of the Garden has also garnered Daffertshofer's attention as she aims to create a project surrounding the Garden's past. "We're really interested to hear what the community thinks," Daffertshofer said. "We're just really keen to hear, what does the garden mean to people? Are there any memories that you can recall, photos, anything that you want to share?"

Daffertshofer hopes to involve students in the programme, potentially through a Vertically Integrated Project. "The way I envision it at the moment [...] is [as] a public history project," Daffertshofer said. "We'll be getting all these memories, and it'd be such a fun thing to figure out how we can tell the story of the garden from the point of view of the environmental humanities, but also in a non-linear way. How can we use all that material and honour it?"

In the dwindling evening light, Daffertshofer paused outside the Bioscope. The purple waves of wood show the heart of the St Andrews Botanic Garden — a house of scientific and artistic innovation, bridging the gap between yesterday and tomorrow. Daffertshofer asked me, "What is the future that we want to move into?"

PHOTO BY ADA NEWTON

Fishing in the East Neuk

The fishermen of Fife

ISABELLE HOLLOWAY
HEAD OF ILLUSTRATIONS

"You don't see as many fishermen. All the youngins go to university," Jimmy said while fixing creels on Anstruther Pier. My search for the fishermen of the East Neuk echoed this elusiveness. Over the course of a few days, starting at St Monans and ending in Anstruther, I spoke to nine members of the fishing community to learn about life at sea.

Steve, G & J Wilson Ltd. fishmonger, St Monans. 29 October, 9:30am.

The smell of fish wafted from warehouses. Deliverymen unloaded crates from trucks. Inside, the fishmonger spoke with a customer. Slippery creatures stared from beds of ice.

"Boats have outgrown harbours," Steve said. "Twenty years ago, much of this was local." Now, though, most seafood is imported from Peterhead and Aberdeen, he said.

"The squid, haddock, and shellfish are local [though], he added, gesturing to a pink, beady-eyed squid.

Steve directed us to Pittenweem for the fishermen.

"Don't be afraid of the colourful language," he grinned.

Harbour workers. Pittenweem. 29 October, 10:00am.



Two harbour workers moved among machinery and seagulls, their orange suits popping against the gray.

"They're all grumpy bastards," one said wryly. "Look for the guys in beanies."

Martin, lobster fisherman. Pittenweem. 29 October, 10:30am.

Rain blustered as Martin moved across his boat. The engine rumbled, smoke rising from the exhaust. He was born in Pittenweem and fishes lobster, following in his father's — also named Martin — footsteps.

"Are you guys writing against us?" he asked, smiling. There's "not as much incentive" to fish, he explained. "The government is against fishermen." The construction of wind farms has been taking up fishing grounds. Boat and fuel costs keep rising while pay doesn't.

Martin's advice to newcomers: "Don't bother."

"Every day varies," he said, waiting for the weather to clear. "Work can mean twelve-hour days, five days a week — two, if the weather's bad — but "[I'm] always working."

Still, Martin savours coffees and sunrises from his boat. Nodding toward the pier, he recalled jumping off of it and swimming as a kid.

Kieran, prawn fisherman. Pittenweem. 29 October, 11:30am.

Sunlight shone over newly moored boats. On one, stood Kieran – a former mechanical engineer, now a prawn fisherman. His days begin at 5am and end around 7pm. He usually works 4-5 days a week. Like Martin, Kieran followed his father into fishing.

"It's hard work," Kieran said, complicated by "new regulations." Fishing is smelly, dangerous, and he described being "constantly on the go."

He recalled one instance when a wire snapped and hit his head. His advice echoed Martin's: "Don't do it."

Kieran ducked into the boat's bowels, emerging with a freshly-caught prawn. But "it's worth it," he said, initially for the money and now for "peace." Onboard, Kieran watches the tellie and often sees whales and dolphins.

"All the boats are close," he said, laughing with his boat's owner as I left.

Jimmy, part-time fisherman. Anstruther. 29 October, 12:30pm.

By Chalmers Lighthouse, Jimmy fixed creels. Now retired, he was formerly an electrician like his father. Both of his grandfathers were fishermen. He fishes part-time for lobsters, crabs, and occasionally mackerel.

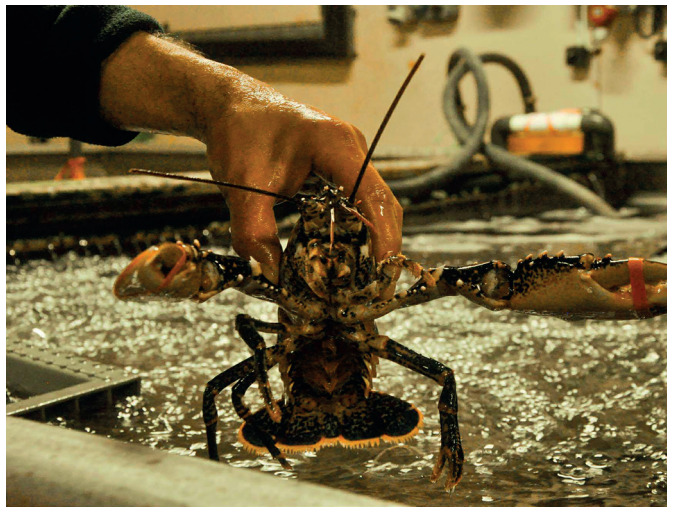
Jimmy got a small boat at fifteen, and a bigger one later.

Fishing's "not for everyone," he said. When handling creels, "you have to watch what you're doing." He added that the ocean's "dangerous," with "storms and freezing cold." He always wears a life jacket, but didn't when he was younger.

"[I] hardly see much fish now," he said. "The government wants to get rid of the boats" and wind farms repel fish. In the past, East Neuk fishermen travelled to Aberdeen from Sunday to Thursday. With fewer fish, trips got longer.

"It's just a way of life," Jimmy reflected, gazing across the golden-lit water. "As long as I'm able, I'll fish."

Chris Gilbert, prawn fisherman. Pittenweem. 3 November, 6:30pm.



Under a full moon, three fishermen handled green netting by a bow light. The deck was crowded with cords and wires. Chris Gilbert, a former mechanic, explained they were fixing the nets.

"There's no schedule," he said. "[It] depends on the weather." A day can mean "shooting the net," "picking prawns," "sleep," then "picking prawns" again.

The lifestyle is "hellish," he said. "[There are] too many boats" and "not enough manpower."

Fishermen can be up for days, working unpaid on repairs and dockwork.

"Young people are too scared and lazy to try," Chris said, half-joking. But he insisted that the camaraderie is "brilliant."

Anonymised harbour master. Pittenweem. 3 November, 7:00pm.

The harbour master cleaned the markethouse. Once a fisherman, he's managed safety, docking, and nets for the past year — "a mix of a parking attendant, janitor, and counselor," as he described it. "Sometimes there's push-back" when managing duties, he said, but "most of the time" everyone gets along.

He led us to the freezer room with crates and humming tanks. Barehanded, he pulled out a wiggling lobster. He's only been pinched once or twice — "crabs pinch more than lobsters," he clarified. Lobsters stay in tanks for two to three days before being exported, often to southern France or Spain.

He said we were welcome back anytime. "Friday nights are best to meet fishermen at the pub," he said.

He directed us to the other harbour master, Jim. "Jim will talk your ear off," he teased.

Jim, harbour master. Pittenweem. 5 November, 11:30am.

Jim has been harbour master for eleven years. A former engineer and fisherman, he knows how to "fix things" and "tie a rope," he said. "I made the boats, sailed on the boats, and looked after the boats."

Jim fished in the Norwegian sector, Lerwick, Aberdeen, Peterhead, and Fraserburgh. He recalled how fishermen departed for eight days, or ten if there was bad weather and twelve at worst, before seeing civil life.

Fishing made "a lot of money."

"You'll get the bigger [fish] the further you go," he said. "It's like life — to get big, you have to work harder."

Pocket baits lure and trap lobsters and crabs. "Big boats are pulling and shooting 1200 creels a day," he explained. Lobsters are measured from their eye socket and chucked back into water if deemed undersized. Ice chutes feed boats to keep catches fresh. He said that recently, one fisherman took three tonnes of ice. The small yellow boats are for razor fishing, taking divers into the bay.

"My whole life has been geared to the sea," Jim said. "If I'm 75 and working, I must be doing something right."

Poor signals at sea made Jim an avid reader, particularly of detective stories. Off duty, Jim photographs or streams: "I've got a VPN, so I can't be stopped."

Jim believes in having two coffees every morning, a banana a day, and three or four whiskeys at night. He said he also enjoys wine and beer, but cautioned, "Don't mix them up, and don't take them at the wrong time."

Colin, Fishermen's Mission. Pittenweem. 5 November, 12:00pm.

Colin works for the Fishermen's Mission — an organisation supporting active and retired fishermen. He fished from a young age, including in Norway.

"Fishing has changed a lot," he said. "The world is after the fishing."

Before our departure, Colin turned over his shoulder and called, "Take care! Good luck with your courses, and enjoy the world!"

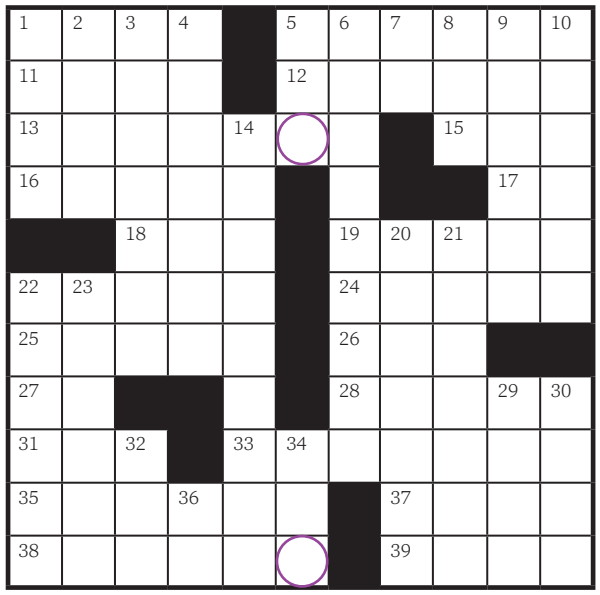
PHOTOS BY EMMA ROY CHOWDRY AND ALDEN ARNOLD

PUZZLES

EDITOR: LUANA VAN ORANJE

PUZZLES@THESAINT.SCOT @THESAINTSTA THESAINT.SCOT/PUZZLES 13 NOVEMBER 2025

'NIECE OF CAKE?'



REBUS CROSSWORD BY JULIA EMERY

Rebus Crosswords include squares that contain something other than a single letter of the alphabet...

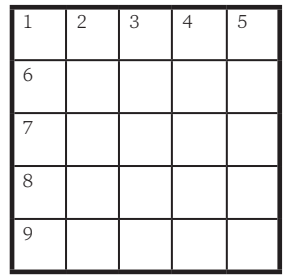
ACROSS

1. Disciplines not in the Faculty of Arts, acronym
5. Type of bathing suit (3-5)
11. Jyn ____ (*Rogue One* heroine)
12. Opinion, one you can offer (3-5)
13. Small cakes, from France (5-5)
15. Computer bailout key
16. Latin lover's words (2-3)
17. Largest west coast state in the USA, abbr.
18. Teased, in olden Scots
19. Spare metal
22. Extra information, in linguistics
24. Ella ____, of the Lionesses
25. Painter's stand
26. Science subj. not studied at St Andrews
27. Licence needed to watch BBC
28. Exams for future MDs, à la American
31. Cardiac arrest lifesaver, in short
33. Gone up an octave (4-5)
35. Male choir voice
37. "Just you wait, ____ 'iggins..."
38. The balcony moment of *Romeo & Juliet's* second act (5-3)
39. Zaire's Mobutu ____ Seko

DOWN

1. Two mos. ago
2. Genealogy chart
3. Big properties
4. Myself, in Marseillais
5. Elementary multiplication
6. Computer setups
7. For ex.
8. Ethyl— suffix
9. MRI alternative
10. Get away
14. Moist freebie, in Business Class
20. Large spiral shells
21. Minoxidil treatment in the USA
22. Adjusts a paragraph indent
23. Home essential in summer, for American students
29. Impermanent airspace limitations, abbr.
30. Eye lump
32. Dr. of rap
34. Elementary addition
36. 'Out' opposite

MINI CROSSWORD BY MADELEINE ABIGNALE



ACROSS

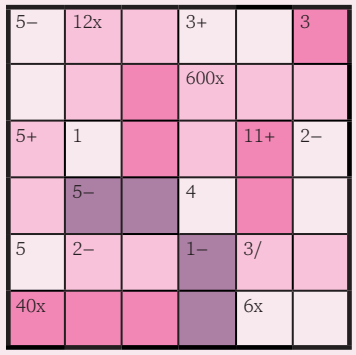
1. With *1d*, smaller than 90 degrees
6. Polite refusal (2-3)
7. Swedish activist Thunberg
8. '____ pray' (3-2)
9. Gnawed leaf adjective, for a botanist

DOWN

1. See *1a*
2. Tool used when making an apple sweet treat on 14 March, perhaps
3. 'It's of no ____ me' (3-2)
4. Roman emperor from AD79-81
5. Get rid of pencil marks

KENKEN BY MADELEINE ABIGNALE

Each row/column includes the digits 1-6 once. The digits in each box produce the number in its top corner, by using addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division (see symbol per box).



NEW PUZZLES!

SUDOKU (EASIER) BY ISAAC OLDHAM

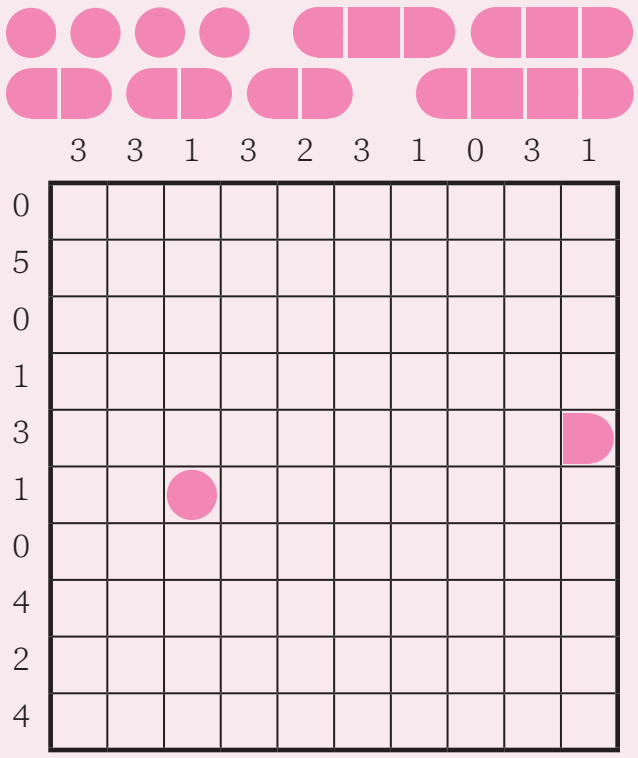
6	1	2	8	3	7	4	9	5
8	3	7	5	9	4	1	6	2
	9						8	
	2						1	
	8						5	
9	6						3	4
	4						2	
	5						7	6
1	7		6		5		4	9

SUDOKU BY ISAAC OLDHAM

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

BATTLESHIPS BY LUANA VAN ORANJE

Fit all the ships in the grid. They cannot touch horizontally, diagonally or vertically.



HITORI BY ISAAC OLDHAM

5	3	3	1	3
2	4	1	2	3
1	3	4	2	5
2	1	2	3	2
3	5	2	5	1

Shade some of the cells of the grid so that no number appears unshaded more than once per row/column. Shaded cells cannot be horizontally/vertically adjacent, and all non-shaded cells should be form a single group connected horizontally/vertically.

CAESAR CIPHERS BY LUANA VAN ORANJE

Replace each letter with a different letter in the alphabet. All letters in the phrase will shift up/down the alphabet by the same, fixed number of places.

Alexander Graham Bell, Alexander Fleming, and James Watt are all...

BWIKQO OYKPPEOD EJRAJPKNO

Forth Bridge and Falkirk Wheel are both...

ZJVAAPZO MLHAZ VM LUNPULLYPUN

CONNECTIONS BY MADELEINE ABIGNALE

Find groups of four items that have something in common

ZO	QUADRATIC	FR	RANGE
RU	MEAN	MY	MODE
EXPONENTIAL	TI	MEDIAN	UR
RADIAL	EC	AS	LINEAR

Reflecting Lade Braes

LOUISA WILLAN
PHOTOGRAPHERS









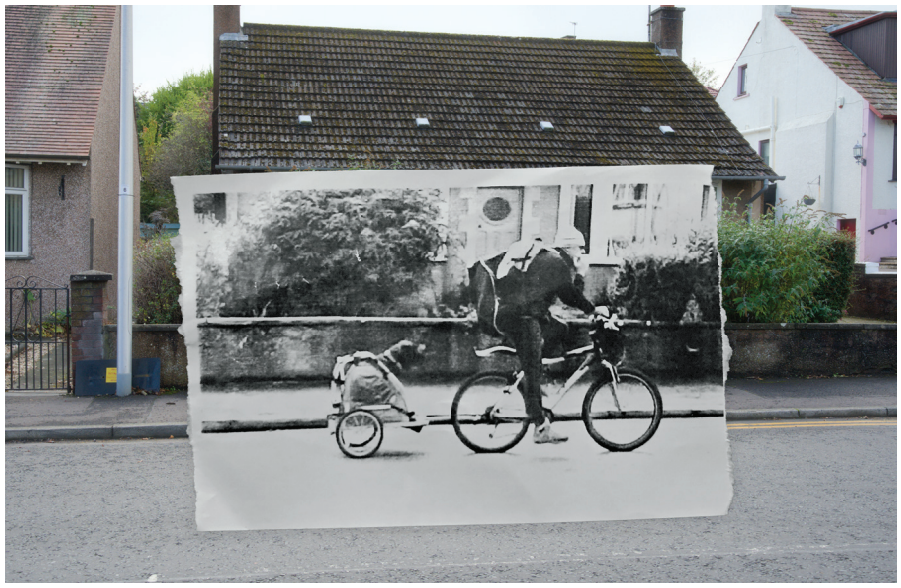


St Andrews Superimposed

CHRISTOPHER KELLY-BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHER





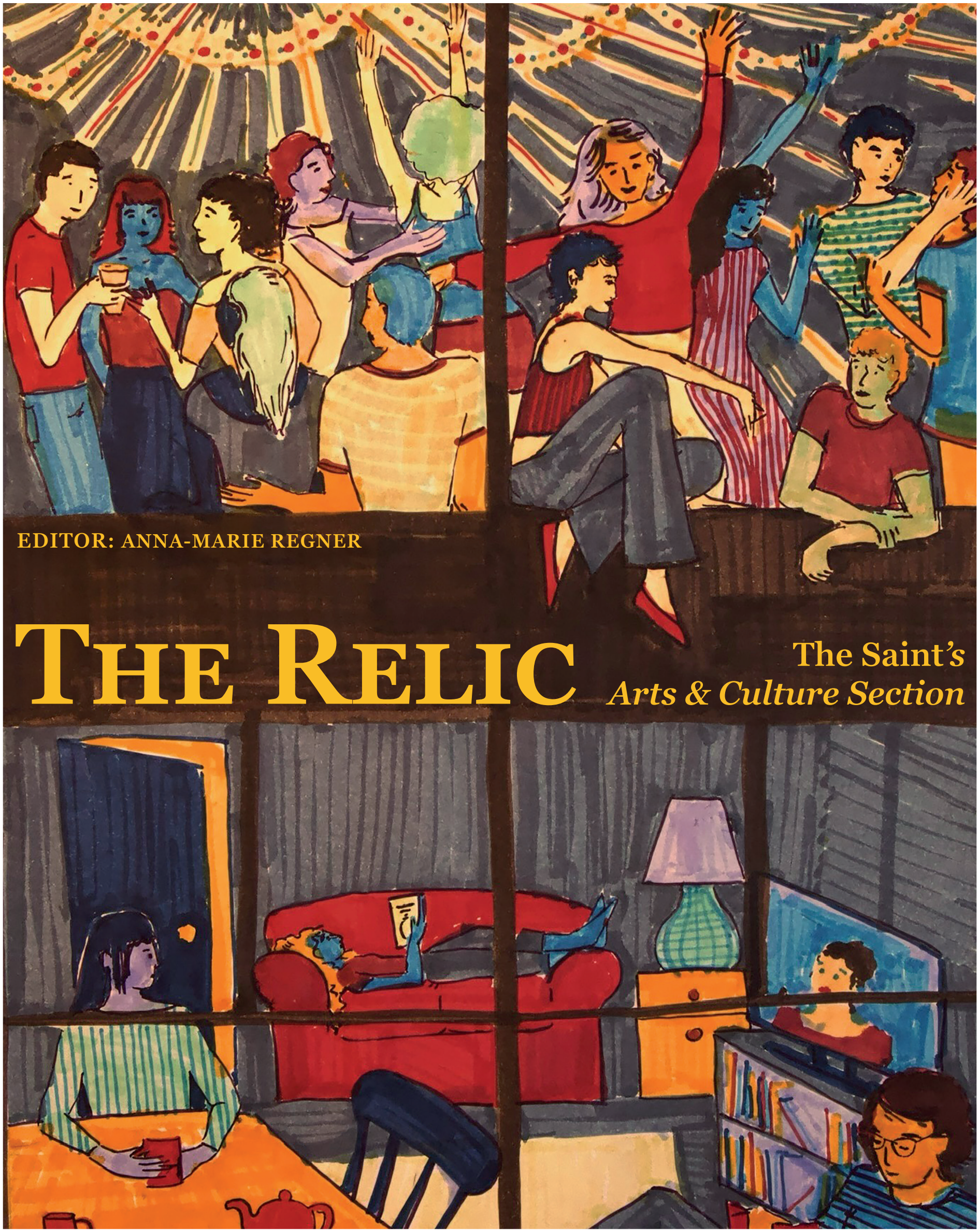












EDITOR: ANNA-MARIE REGNER

The Relic

The Saint's
Arts & Culture Section

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The Truest Form of Love is Served as Soup

SYLVIA COVACI
RELIC WRITER

In Romania, my grandmother serves her chicken soup (affectionately called "kitchen soup," a sweet pronunciation mistake) scalding hot, with a kiss on the forehead and cooed murmurs to eat up. Her hands, delicately manicured, seem not to feel the heat. After the long, dry, dreary plane ride to Bucharest, Mamaie's kitchen soup is divine, golden ambrosia. We drink it around the crowded table, bellies slowly warming. This soup is a homecoming. I am enveloped not merely in flavours but in a familiar language, in the arms of familiar, long-missed loved ones, and in the apartment of a familiar city. In many ways, Mamaie's kitchen soup sums up the divine qualities of the dish; its broth is a balm for both body and soul.

As you will have guessed by now, I love soup. I think all university students could do with eating a bit more soup; not only is making it economical, but also an essential culinary skill. Soup is a wonderful product of ingredients that, in isolation, appear useless. Soup is things thrown together — leftover chicken bones, whatever vegetables lie lonely in the refrigerator, spices from the back of cabinets and almost empty bags of rice. Ingredients typically pushed to the side come together in a dish that warms you right down to the marrow. It feels old, essential, and endlessly gratifying — served with a loaf of hearty bread and a bit of butter, what more could one desire? Maybe something as small, yet infinitely kind, as a friend to share it with.

I believe soup should be cooked in company. One must have someone close by to ask, "Does it need more salt?" and they'll take your offered spoon, try your communal concoction — a kind of witch's potion, as it were — smile and stir and say it tastes wonderful. And then, as one's grandmother does, you'll ladle it out into hand-cupped bowls. I think the satisfaction one receives from not merely making but sharing soup is unparalleled. It says, as bowls pass between hands, "I care about you," or "feel better," or "stay warm." Soup can feed a family, friends, flatmates; it can be stored frozen, to be reheated when one desires the specific sweetness of October squash.

Due to its diversity of components, soup is a food of many forms. There seems to be a category of soups for every season, but my favourites must be those of the colder months. Butternut squash, lentil, and of course the classic chicken noodle; as a Romanian (we abhor the cold, and hold both scarves and soup in reverence), all must be served steaming, so hot the bowl will pinch your fingertips and the broth will nip your tongue. Now, I believe Mamaie's chicken soup to be the most effective medicine —science, it seems, agrees. The components of this classic dish brim with health benefits; chicken, for one, is rich in protein and other essential nutrients, which dissolve into the broth when cooking. Moreover, the NIH reports that chicken soup inhibits the migration of neutrophils, a kind of white blood cell that fights infection. This lessens inflammation, which in turn reduces respiratory cold symptoms. And that nipping heat mends sinuses, thinning and clearing stubborn mucus.

In sum, eat your soup! It will ward off winter illness, warm your soul with the gift of cooking for others, and fill your flat's kitchen with friends and the aroma of mingling spices. I'll now gift you possibly the most invaluable holiday present: the family recipe for Mamaie's kitchen soup. May it serve you well. Poftă bună!

Mamaie's "Kitchen Soup"

Ingredients:
One whole chicken (extra wings and organs optional)
A couple carrots
An onion
Celery (leaves attached)
Celery root (peeled, in chunks)
One whole tomato
A few stems of parsley
Whole peppercorns
Salt

Instructions:

Start with one whole (or in pieces but with bones) good chicken. A country chicken is nice (note: make sure you take out the little bag of organs that often comes in supermarket chickens!). Mamaie boils the heart and other organs along with the soup. Add a pack of wings for more flavour/bone.

Put the chicken in a big pot and cover with water. Bring to a boil and skim off all the brown scummy stuff and foam that rises to the top (important!).

Reduce to simmer - should not be boiling. Put in root vegetables: thick carrots, an onion (with skin, cut in half, for colour), celery with leaves, peeled celery root chunks, a tomato with skin on (Mamaie's secret ingredient, don't let it break when you lift it out later), stems of parsley, whole peppercorns, and just a few pinches of salt.

Let this simmer partially covered. Should not be boiling! Simmer for a few hours, until the chicken meat is falling off bones (note: if you want, you can take out the breasts earlier, once done, save for another purpose and keep cooking the soup).

Lift out and discard the tomato, herbs, celery stalks, and onion. Save the carrots and celery root to put back in the soup later.

Lift out the chicken and parts into a bowl. Once cool, pick the meat off the bones into soup-size pieces and save (can save the breasts and chunks of thigh meat for other dishes, and use all the little "leftover" pieces for putting back in the soup).

Strain the broth into a bowl (not the sink!) through a mesh sieve lined with cheesecloth. Also, strain into the broth any liquid left from the bowl of chicken parts. Don't skim off much of the fat - this gives flavour.

Assemble the soup: combine the broth and chicken pieces to make a good soup (you can freeze a container of broth for another day if there's extra). Add back the carrots and pieces of celery root, and heat. Salt to taste (it may need quite a bit).

Separately, boil salted water and make the "taitei." The closest equivalent here is those little birds' nests of coiled dry thin pasta.

Put some of the pasta in each bowl and ladle soup over. Sprinkle with fresh chopped parsley, and finish off with a few grinds of fresh pepper.

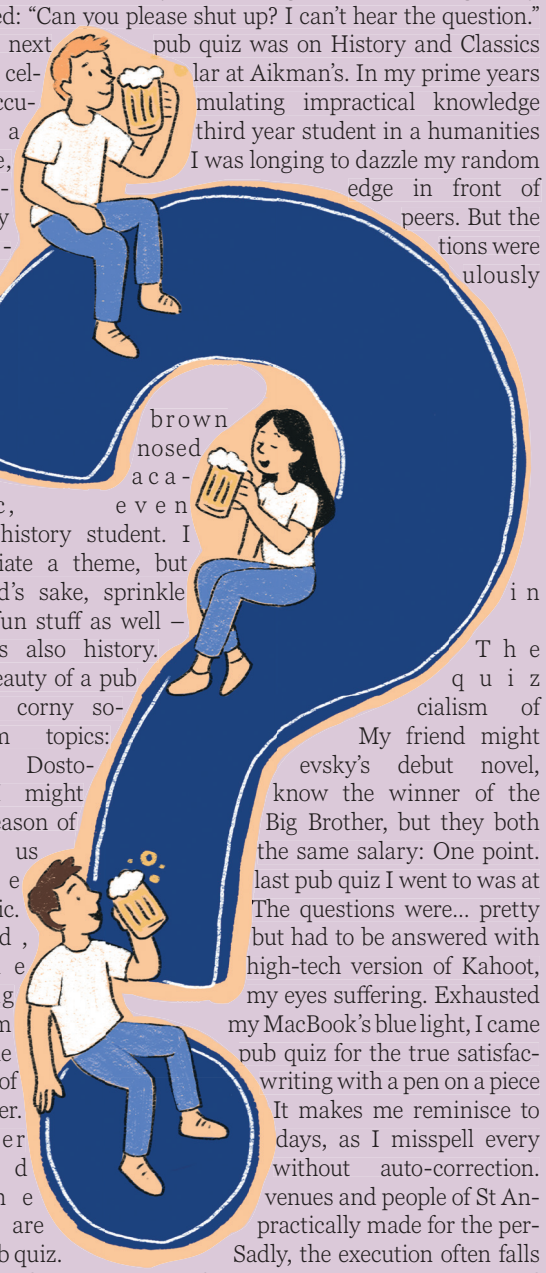
Agnes in St Andrews

BY AGNES BRENNA

A good pub quiz is unbeatable. With a mind both intoxicated and concentrated, the combo of nerdiness and coolness is at its peak. Ideally you're in a crowded pub with a low roof, sticky seats, and an indoor aroma of sweat and ink that is barely tolerable. After all, if you're quizzing in a clean room with sufficient chairs — aren't you just at school?

With such an astounding number of 'neeks' and smelly pubs, you would think that St Andrews had the pub quiz down to a tee. But, since arriving, my experience with pub quizzes have ranged from pretty fun to lightly traumatic.

In the second week of the semester, I attended the first — and only — event for exchange students, a pub quiz at the Union about... you guessed it — Scotland. Not only did we feel like tourists, the exchange committee had missed the fundamental aspect of the pub quiz: socialising without socialising. Never meant to be done with a team of strangers, the quiz should be exempt from the pub's usual curse of incomprehensible chatter during loud music. Swiftly upon arriving to the Union, I realised that small talk at a quiz is like 'deep talk' at a rave — totally misplaced. As I tried to spark up a conversation with my team, the girl next to me rightfully snapped: "Can you please shut up? I can't hear the question."



The next pub quiz was on History and Classics in the cellar at Aikman's. In my prime years of accumulating impractical knowledge as a third year student in a humanities degree, I was longing to dazzle my random knowledge in front of my peers. But the questions were ridiculously brown nosed academic, even for a history student. I appreciate a theme, but for god's sake, sprinkle in some fun stuff as well – Y2K is also history. The true beauty of a pub quiz is the corny socialism of random topics: My friend might know Dostoevsky's debut novel, and I might know the winner of the first season of Big Brother, but they both earn us the same salary: One point.

The last pub quiz I went to was at The Vic. The questions were... pretty good, but had to be answered with some high-tech version of Kahoot, leaving my eyes suffering. Exhausted from my MacBook's blue light, I came to the pub quiz for the true satisfaction of writing with a pen on a piece of paper. It makes me reminisce to simpler days, as I misspell every word without auto-correction.

The venues and people of St Andrews are practically made for the perfect pub quiz. Sadly, the execution often falls into the classic St Andrean-trap: pretentiousness and flamboyancy. Dear quizmaster, just give us a piece of paper and some strange and fun questions. The rest will resolve on its own.

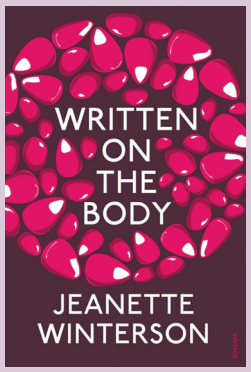
ILLUSTRATION BY ANA BROCKMANN ALDASORO

Erotica: with Topping & Co.

Looking for your next read? *The Saint* and Topping & Co. have come together to save the day. Find below the best stormy reads, all books are available locally in store.

Topping & Company BOOKSELLERS

BOOKSELLER PICKS



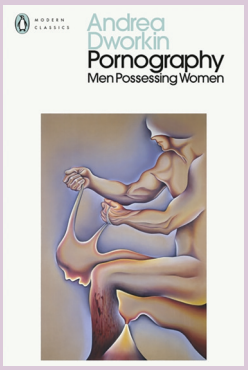
A Book Club Member Recommends

Written on the Body by Jeannette Winterson

Poetic, passionate and explicit, Written on the Body is an under-read volume in the bibliography of iconic lesbian writer Jeannette Winterson, best known for her 1985 novel *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*. Following the affair between an unnamed narrator and an unhappily married woman, it languishes in erotic language to the point of overindulgence, painting a beguiling, sensuous and melodramatic portrait of the hazy desperation of falling-in-lust. A novel not only about the desire for one body, but about desire and embodiment itself.

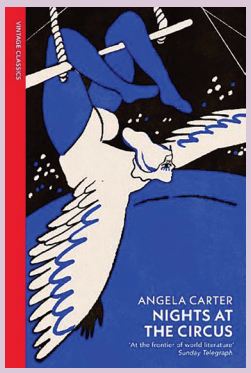
Mikey Recommends

The Writing Retreat by Andrea Dworkin



Of all the figures of American second-wave feminism, Andrea Dworkin was among the most fearless, fierce and radical. Even when you disagree with her, she writes with such force and power that her arguments simply cannot be discounted without first provoking thought. Anti-pornography positions are far less in vogue in current mainstream feminism than they have been in previous feminist movements, and are even sometimes constructed as regressive and conservative – Dworkin's historical analysis and cultural critique of the pornography industry, however, is a vital framework for feminists in the age of the internet, where porn is more accessible to more people than ever before. This unapologetic diatribe, fifty years after its publication, reminds feminists of the 21st century to always question the status quo of patriarchal sex culture.

STAFF PICK



Arnaz Recommends

Nights at the Circus by Angela Carter

Nights at the Circus is a sweeping, indulgent, nearly panoramic work, following the larger-than-life character of Sophie Fevvers — seductive and supposedly half-swan — as she travels across the capitals of Europe at the turn of the century, courted by the royals of pre-WWI Europe and an American journalist who follows her and the circus' troupe. Often cited as Angela Carter's most accomplished work, full of recurring metaphors and images, the novel transcends typical associations with erotica and instead delves further into an embrace of female sexuality. The most striking aspect of the work is how it explores relationships between women, and their role in the early twentieth century itself, both meaningful and raucous.

You've Got Mail!

How emailing deepened my relationships

SOPHIE LYNN
RELIC WRITER

Towards the beginning of Irish author Sally Rooney's third novel, *Beautiful World, Where Are You,* one of the protagonists sends an email to her best friend. She writes, "You should know that our correspondence is my way of holding onto life, taking notes on it, and thereby preserving something of my — otherwise almost worthless, or even entirely worthless — existence on this rapidly degenerating planet [...]" While this might sound bleak, there's something moving in this sentiment, in the idea that writing to someone — really writing, with time and attention — is a way of making meaning out of life.

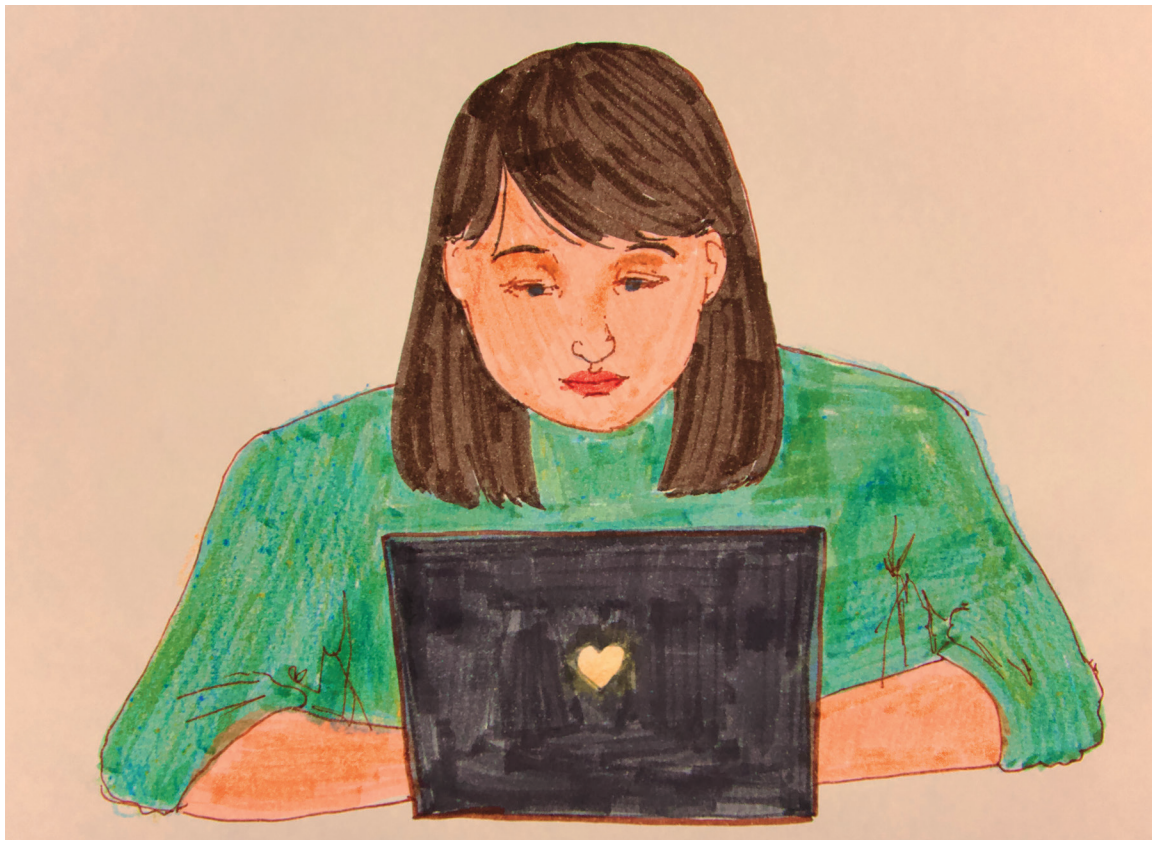
Emails are, in that sense, an evolution of letter writing. Lord Byron once wrote that "letter writing is the only device combining solitude with good company," and emails, in many ways, carry forward this legacy. They do so by offering a space that is both private and shared: private, in that the writer can reflect, revise, and dwell on their thoughts, and shared, in that those thoughts are intended for another, and they can transcend distance and time. Emailing also occupies a strange, beautiful space between the immediacy of instant messaging and the formality of traditional letters — there's room to think of and edit what you really want to say before pressing send, with the option for a quick response that letters never have.

In several of Rooney's novels, she uses emails as a counterpoint to the spoken world, where her characters can express the parts of themselves that don't quite fit into casual conversation: the doubts, longings, and contradictions that can only be untangled in the space that written communication demands. The popularity of Rooney's novels among a certain demographic of readers — often young, educated, and literary (a.k.a much of the St Andrews student demographic) — has helped spark a small-scale resurgence in emailing as a form of expressive communication between peers. In the last year or so, I've had multiple people propose emailing as a way of staying in touch, and while several of these people were long-distance, there were a few who live close by and who simply wanted to make space for more thoughtful, reflective conversations than a quick coffee or instant message allows.

> "It allows for imperfection, contradiction, and release."

My experiences with emailing have highlighted how starved for real conversation many people of my generation are. In a culture dominated by rapid-fire texts, social media updates, and passing interactions, taking the time to compose an email can feel radical in nature. It demands real patience, attentiveness, and a willingness to linger in thought, both for the writer and the reader. In our writing and reading of emails, my friends and I have reclaimed a sense of intention that the modern digital world so often erodes — a chance to articulate ideas fully and to connect with another person in a way that is both reflective and potentially immediate. In this digital space, we've found the form of intimacy that Rooney captures so poignantly: an intimacy born not from proximity, but from the shared labour of paying attention to life, and to one another.

ILLUSTRATION BY RAMONA KIRKHAM



Protest Through Poetry

EMMA INGRAM JOHNSON
Relic Writer

In a town unduly concerned with the performative reading of poetry in public, *Forest of Noise* should be next on every humanities or STEM student's 'to be read.' Perhaps, however, this poetry collection should be read in private. On my first read, I tore from page to page, desperate for more of Abu Toha's words, more of his careful balance between delicate, natural imagery and a cacophony of desolation, more of how he is, paradoxically, able to communicate such bleak silence through the construction of a poem.

'This Is Not a Poem' in particular harnesses the sheer absence which exists within a people who have been decimated, entirely cut off, and starved. The word "or" is used seven times within the 34 lines of this haunting, elegiac poem; the empty space of what used to be his homeland is filled with a list of detached body parts, attempting to make sense of the overwhelming vacuousness. It makes its Western reader aware of the plentiful nature of our lives — the boundless lists of belongings, futures, "or" choices we make each day rendered not only privileged but also unnecessary.

'Younger than war' opens Mosab Abu Toha's potent dedication to a life lived under attack. Removing the pomp and fanfare of news reports and the ever-growing numbers of casualties, the vulnerable, raw words of this Palestinian writer capture the daily life of those living under siege with new vigour. He describes being "older than the bombs" at "seven" years old, yet "younger than war." The poem moves with remarkable dexterity from Abu Toha's first memories of large-scale violence when he saw a "helicopter fire a rocket / into a tower" to the taste and grit of "Loaves / of stale bread" in his hand as he watches. It is the feel of this bread in his hand, in his mouth, that he associates with this performance of violence; the micro-level actions that directly coincide with the images of destruction we see on screens provide a context that a Western reader will never have. He roots his discussion of the 'big' questions in the personal and corporeal, accessing and unsettling the reader's conscience with ease.

Similarly, by the time you reach the final lines of the collection, 'rag of paper', Abu Toha has lyrically sung to his children through his poetry, lamented the death of his friends, his brothers, his grandfather, while also granting the reader a tactile sense of the landscape in Gaza. In 'Palestinian Village', it is "yellow", it is alive, it is "humid"; you can "dig a hole with your hands / and find an earthworm breathing." The collection breathes with Abu Toha through the "wrath" of fending for both his own life and that of his children and family, to the abundance of "fresh sage or more mint." The poet captures the vitality and strength of not only his people but of the ground beneath his feet, while eliciting an extreme emotional reaction from his reader.

After closing the book, feeling compelled to protest against what has scarred the life of not only Abu Toha and his family, but millions of people in the Gaza Strip, it is hard not to see these poems as a fervent plea for the reader to feel every minor fluctuation of emotion and of survival alongside Abu Toha. Only one poem features Arabic script, the rest written entirely in English. An acerbic poem, 'True or False', is addressed directly "To the West." Abu Toha directly challenges his reader *not* to feel complicit, not to align their own life experiences of comfort and prosperity with the pockets of home warmth that Abu Toha litters throughout the poems. The poet shatters the illusion that we feel empathy for those suffering in Gaza today by forcefully offering up his own world to the eyes of others, mobilising not only his own strength to survive and continue by writing, but also that of anyone who reads it. This poetry is a personal and political protest.

West Sands as a Canvas

ALEX BRUBAKER
Relic Writer

As I walked down the stairs leading from Saints Sizzle to the shore, I felt Storm Amy's wind whip off the sea. Turning the corner towards West Sands, I saw the beach transformed with drawings of sailboats, aliens, and the sun. Bundled students dotted the beach with windswept hair, some chasing after their hats. Still, I heard laughter and music coming from the beach. People held rakes, dancing around a speaker, their cups filled with Pimm's. The beach had become a canvas for both the drawings and the play that was taking place.

This was the second meeting of the unofficial St Andrews Beach Sand Art Society. The 'society' was founded by Molly Clements, a third-year student, encouraged by her dad, Mike. "When he moved me in, on the pier walk, he wrote in the sand, 'Hi Molly!'" she explained. "All the kids could see, and I could just hear people going, 'Who's Molly?' But from there, we got the idea, and he was always talking about how fun it would be to get the rakes out."

It figures that they had the idea for this society together. What I remember about Mike's home in Venice, California, are bookshelves to the ceiling, a work table with stones colourfully painted with eyes and patterns (if you're lucky, he'll give you one), and a hogtied Snoopy plush hanging over the stairs. He has a keen eye for design, but with playfulness and whimsy. "He loves stuff, like, twinged with humour," said Molly. This trait has definitely been passed to her as she creates her own art. A fitting example is her highly desired fish-shaped bags, which her friends proudly wear around town.



Though they had the idea on her first move-in day, the first meeting of the 'society' wasn't until another visit from Mike in Molly's second year. "I think when I was adjusting as a first year, I didn't feel confident enough to start a new society," she said. "And then he finally got around to visiting me last year, second year. At that point, I was comfortable enough in my friendships, and that the people I was surrounded with would be able to both laugh at it, but also embrace it and find it fun."

The first meeting took place on a sunny spring day with the tide low enough to fit plenty of designs. Molly went to Home Improvements to buy rakes, Mike made his signature Pimm's recipe, and they set up a speaker on West Sands. He also unveiled a surprise — plastic cups with a custom logo he had designed for the new society. Their excitement radiated, and people embraced it, using rakes to cover the sand in patterns, words, and figures. "They were so excited about it, it was so sweet," said third year Lola MacKenzie. "It's easy, and everyone was creating something. It made me want to, too." She drew a minion.

The attendees left the first meeting beaming and giddy. The drawings had people stopping at the overlook to take photos and approaching the sand artists to ask what was going on. "I feel like it was one of my happiest days ever," Molly said. "[My dad] has described it as that to me, too." It was only natural that the 'society' would want another meeting. "We honestly had to just honour his work and dedication to the first one. So we obviously had to replicate it," said third year Tabor Dempsey. Even with Mike gone, they took the rakes, made a pitcher of Pimm's, and faced the October weather. "It was so windy, and I still was walking back thinking, like, 'this was so awesome,'" Molly said. "It's actually therapeutic to start taking up the rake."

It's rare to be the type of person who would see West Sands as a blank canvas and to realise that vision with such enthusiasm. It's rarer still to be surrounded by people who would embrace it out of love for art and the beach, but also for their friend and her dad. Though the wind and tide washed away the drawings, the joy of the experience lingers on.

Photo by Molly Clements

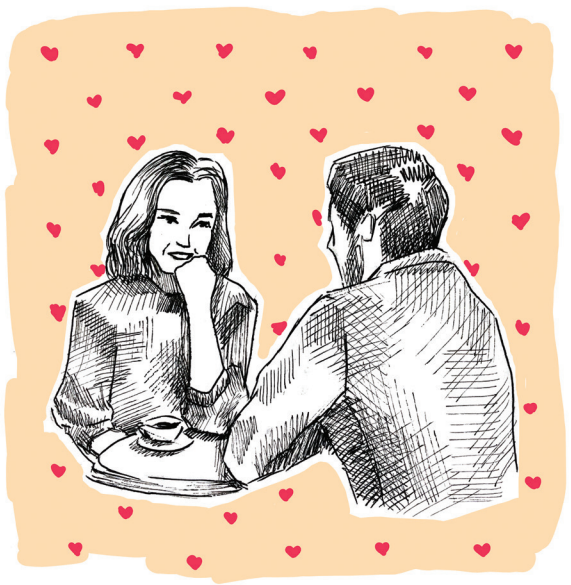
The Art of an Unboring Date

Twelve date ideas that are not a walk on East Sands

MARI CLAUDIA REIMER
Relic Writer

In February of my second year, I messaged a boy: "Meet me at the St Mary's entrance around 9pm, and bring a mug." His response: "How cryptic." Besides this, I had previously slid into his DMs by sending him a photo of the 'split G' of my Guinness glass I had just drunk in the Edinburgh airport at midday (impressive). I had just met him, and I liked him, so I asked him out. This date was absolutely not a typical one. In my opinion, the first date is not just about how well you both connect, but also where you both go and what you do. This sets up what the rest of the relationship may look like. I will never bring someone on a boring date; I am not a typical girl, and therefore, I will never be in a typical relationship.

So when I asked this man to meet me at night, for all he knew, I could have been a psychopath trying to pin him up against the wall of the library to steal his Emma Bridgewater spaniel mug. However, we ended up drinking Porta 6 wine from our mugs and laughing by the castle, listening to the waves until late at night, giggling.



And I think it worked; I remember him being pretty infatuated with me. So, this goes to show one skill I do have in life: planning things, especially dates, and especially unique ones in this microscopic town.

I often see couples around me go on the same redundant dates: a walk down East Sands, sitting on the leather couch at Taste, or going out to eat at Maisha, just to end up knowing the entirety of the table next to you. Eventually, after a few outings, instead of asking each other to go on a walk or grab a bite to eat, it becomes lying in bed and "watching a movie." This is how relationships crash. When you associate someone solely with comfort and bed, next thing you know, you have not seen any of your friends in weeks, have watched one too many movies, eaten one too many ice creams, now both living within your own world, dissociated from everything beyond the two of you.

When excitement in a relationship disappears, the relationship burns out. You must associate the one you are seeing with doing enjoyable things. This, in my belief, is a key component in keeping a relationship moving and alive. So, generously, I have put my fabulous and creative mind to work and curated the most perfect, spontaneous list of twelve date ideas for lovers looking for something unique to do together in St Andrews:

1. Both dress in matching Christmas sweaters and secure a hatchet. Go to St Mary's Quad and cut down the small, puny tree that Queen Mary of Scots planted to later decorate with ornaments.
2. Write each other's extension requests and see who can get approval the quickest with the most days allocated.
3. Sneak into the other half of Sally Mapstone's house that she does not humbly use and have a three-course dining experience. Both of you wear matching red pantsuits that you find in Sally's closet.
4. Go flower picking at the Botanic Garden.
5. Steal a loose cobblestone on College Street and carve each other's faces out of it.
6. Wake up early and catch the sunrise on Castle Sands; while holding hands, discuss what it means to love someone romantically.
7. Between a theology tutorial, have a pack race and see who can smoke the most cigarettes while speaking on the core doctrines of the Christian faith.
8. Go bungee jumping together off the scaffolding of St Mary's Library. Perhaps borrow a helmet from the Medieval Fighting Society for safety precautions.
9. Hike the long track to DRA, and share a pint of Guinness with one straw at the legendary Dragon's Den.
10. Sneak into the cathedral late at night and replicate the Reformation in 1559.
11. Attend a film student's average weekly tutorial and have a movie date (bring buttered popcorn and maybe a journal to pretend you are taking notes).
12. Both leave your bags on the seats in the main library, perhaps take up an extra seat or two or four at the height of exam season, and go on a long walk to Crail and back. Then maybe do it once again (with your things still in the library).

Illustration by Marios Diakourtis

The Habits of Famous Authors

Can habits change our lives?

ALIX RAMILLION
Relic Writer

Does a writing habit actually shape how creative and efficient our writing will be? For a while, I tried incorporating the *Artist's Way* into my routine and writing in stream of consciousness, but it felt more like journaling a therapy session every morning. And the truth is, as a non-morning person, my brain can't function properly before 11am. I am more of a night owl, and so are many authors. Balzac would drink 50 cups of coffee a day and famously would write from 1am to 7am. Maya Angelou was an adept of an early rise, whereas Nabokov loved a midday writing session. Mine resembles more of Kafka's: extreme and nocturnal.

Ritualised entry points supposedly set a schedule that lowers the 'blank-page' barrier, allowing the mind to enter a flow state. The isolation of the voice, meaning ignoring external prose, preserves an authentic tone, encouraging bold, original expression. As someone who is wildly not made for routines, doing work on a whim and going from one extreme to another, this idea terrifies me. Incorporating some of this advice into my routine made me believe for a while that I did not have an ounce of creativity in me and that I was just supposed to consume art as a reader. Stephen King's *On Writing* helped me get out of this mindset, as he likens writing to telepathy, a direct transfer of ideas from one mind to another across time and space. This emphasises the intimate connection between writer and reader.

A lot of creative media platforms pressure you to write meticulously with drafts and self-editing. Setting goals for writing a bigger work is not always a means to an end. Living through our habits, writing on a whim, and typing like you are being chased are the best ways for you to free yourself from the fear of not producing anything creative.

I actually hate the idea of setting a time window and warming up with morning pages. It just feels like a chore that I have to do, similar to writing an essay that does not spark my interest. Humanities students spend most of our days (perhaps six to eight hours during exam season) in the library aimlessly writing on a computer. That definitely shapes our relationship with creativity and finding our own personal narrative voice. Dedicating time to writing is a privilege, even if you can squeeze in a few minutes.

I like to think that writing habits are contingent on certain seasons. On a cold fall day, I love to sit down near the cemetery by East Sands and look at the fog; on a sunny day, I rest in my little front garden by my front door. I've tried drinking a glass or two of wine late at night, still tipsy from a night out, writing on scraps of paper and in a nice notebook. I came to the conclusion that I need to write in diverse spaces and have background noise, whether it is music or the sound of the rain. There are days I can't write, and my patience slowly erodes (so does my confidence in my writing abilities, and that is ok). I think part of that frustration is due to how we look at fictional writers portrayed in films, as they always seem to have a *leitmotif* of having a sudden sense of inspiration based upon a particular event of the day and words seamlessly flow (Carrie Bradshaw, for instance).

Would most of these writers actually enjoy their posthumous works to be published in this way? A writing routine is an opening to someone's soul and a connection to their most inner parts. I read an article about Joan Didion's writing habits. She said she spent "most of the day working on a piece not actually putting anything on paper, just sitting there, trying to form a coherent idea and then maybe something will come to [her] about five in the afternoon and then [she'll] work for a couple of hours and get three or four sentences, maybe a paragraph." She kept a small, windowless room and entered it each morning "as if punching a time clock," a ritual that turned dread into focus and insulated her from distraction. While drafting, she deliberately avoided other novels, fearing their rhythm would invade her own "dream" of prose. She recorded every observation, from a "dirty crepe-de-Chine wrapper" to the light on a pear tree; later she mined these fragments for texture, metaphor, and narrative momentum. After each day's output, she rewrote the pages the next morning, using a drink to create emotional distance; this forced constant revision and revealed hidden connections. She layered recurring details through detail, rhythm, repetition, and musical phrasing, turning mundane facts into a symphonic texture that fuels imagination.

I saw a Substack post that claimed that you should make your day job serve your art, and not think a job or studying will pay for your side hustle of writing. My inner child, who always dreamt of becoming a writer, collecting scraps of paper and napkins of stories that came to my mind, would probably agree with this.

The Performances of Our Small Town

SOREN RASMUSSEN
Relic Writer

One day in Week Two of first year, I noticed a small crowd filing into the McPherson Recital Room as I was leaving the music centre. Laidlaw was still new to me, so I asked the man stationed by the door what was going on, just out of curiosity. He handed me a pamphlet and said it was a concert: Caroline Fauchet, a brilliant pianist visiting from France — was I a Music Centre member? I said yes, and before I could glance at the programme in my hand, the man ushered me into the room. "Free for members", he explained. Suddenly afraid to disappoint this man I'd never met, I thanked him and found a spare seat among the audience of elderly couples. In the time before the show began, I skimmed the pamphlet and recognised only one piece in the program, Claude Debussy's 'Claire de lune.'

Every piece Ms Fauchet played that afternoon was spectacular, but I'd be lying if I said the Debussy tune I admittedly only knew from *Ocean's Eleven* didn't stand out most. It's one of my strongest memories from first year: listening to the performance and staring out McPherson's narrow windows at the trees lining the road outside. Over the last two weeks, I'd been trying to grasp what living in this town meant. Like many of us, I'd considered other schools in cities, and this comparative hamlet with fewer streets than I had years here to go, while lovely, seemed to come at a small expense — of art and museums and shows and cultural experiences



that never fully reach the quieter nooks of society. Looking through the window at that moment, though, the town swelled. Not to the size of a city, but big enough for surprises. Big enough to stumble into a room on a Wednesday afternoon and have an experience.

Two weeks ago, Caroline Fauchet returned to Laidlaw for another recital of Debussy compositions. On another quiet Wednesday afternoon, I found a seat among the town's older demographics and let myself be surprised again. And while she didn't play 'Claire de lune', the town did expand again.

In the time between these two concerts, which comprises the near entirety of my time in St Andrews thus far, I've often returned to the common claustrophobia many of us experience. Especially for those of us familiar with big cities, St Andrews can feel like relative peace and charm at the cost of a cosmopolitan or artistically textured life. To some extent, this is only right; St Andrews isn't New York or London, and nor should those of us from such places impose our standards on it, dismissing what makes the town itself in the attempt to make it like everywhere else (a well discussed phenomenon in this paper). And yet, this claustrophobia is still partly ignorance. When I felt like there was nothing to do in this town, that's because I wasn't doing anything. I didn't learn from that first Lunchtime concert; I didn't stay curious about the things that happen in this town.

It's true, the town has lost its movie theatre. But there are still profound cultural experiences to be discovered, even if they don't come from figures with profiles in *The New York Times* or reviews from the *BBC*. If the age demographics of Ms Fauchet's audiences are any indication, most of us don't take advantage of this fact. I know I haven't.

Like anywhere else, St Andrews is only as big as your engagement with it. If you walk through enough doors, it can be (almost) as big as you need it to be.

Illustration by Haalah Bint Hashim

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Liberté, Egalité, Fromage

An evening of wine and cheese with the French Society

AMELIA BEATTIE
EVENTS WRITER

"What's the most French thing about you?" A philosophical question for the ages, truly, and as it happens, my question to the members of St Andrews French Society committee. Among a myriad of answers — some of which I dare not repeat in print — the most popular by far was variations of "wine" or "cheese." A fitting response for the evening of 5 November, on which St Andrews French Society (or La Société Française de St Andrews, depending on your proclivity) hosted their Wine and Cheese night in St Mark's Parish Church.



The night promised to bring a taste of continental sophistication to the ever-darkening Scottish evenings. For the £11 price of admission, members of one of the University's oldest societies could sample their way through an assortment of French wines, and an encouraging supply of cheeses sourced from local favourite fromagerie IJ Mellis.

The evening was advertised as a commemoration of the 730th anniversary of the 'Auld Alliance', or the special relationship between Scotland and France forged by a mutual distaste (to put it lightly) for England. However, the evening lacked commitment to this theme beyond the afterthought to put on some background bagpipes over the speakers. There was, however, an admirable attempt later in the evening to rouse a rendition of 'Auld Lang Syne' that was met with a mixed range of efforts.

The French Society may conform to the oh-so-St Andrews appeal towards high-brow tradition, but it boasts the history to back it up. Over the course of the night, and a couple of glasses of Burgundy, I underwent a crash course in the centuries-long history of the society from the current President, Cyril Corneille. Highlights included, but were not limited to, an unpopular collaboration with the German Society following World War I, a recent (non-academic) wedding of former committee members, and correspondence with the French consulate in Edinburgh.

Despite their history and prestige, the venue and facilities of the evening were rather unassuming, taking place in the smaller, rather unglamorous room of a parish church. I would argue that the informalities of the evening helped to gently humble what could otherwise be a dauntingly pretentious evening. There is a fine line in St Andrews events between ancient academic sophistication and tipsy student shenanigans, and the French Society struts this line with determination. Even when you're drinking fancy French wine curated by a centuries-old institution, drinking it out of a plastic supermarket cup under fluorescent lights helps to somewhat tether you to reality.

A return to dramatics was inevitable and was heralded by the sounding of a trumpet played by the society's president. Standing atop a plastic throne, Corneille commenced his speech. It began with housekeeping and formalities such as the devastatingly French disclaimer that smoking indoors was strictly prohibited, as well as a mysteriously secretive reminder of the "rules and regulations" of the evening (of which you will have to purchase a membership to discover). Finally, Corneille concluded by revealing the evening's most anticipated announcement — the launch of the society's very own wine. Collaboration with an alumnus' member's vineyard in France has spawned a batch of bottles crafted at Château Haut-Grelot in Bordeaux and imported exclusively for the St Andrews French society.

An impressive and, as I was repeatedly assured, entirely legal accomplishment.

Admittedly, I began the evening with very little prior knowledge of the society or its members. However, as the night went on, I discovered that the event attracted a demographic as diverse as St Andrews itself. Around the room was a lively blend of French natives, avid linguists, self-proclaimed French haters, as well as those who, like myself, simply couldn't refuse the promise of as much bread, wine, and cheese as you like. Such a mixed bag of eager attendees was a pleasant reminder that elegant tradition and exclusivity need not always go hand in hand at this University.

I concluded the night with a conversation with Luana Van Oranje, the society's Health & Safety Officer. Whilst much conversation throughout the night had centred on the society's long-storied history, Van Oranje illustrated the bright future on the horizon: visits from diplomats, a ball in the works, and rehearsals of a French language play well underway, not to mention the recent foray into wine production. St Andrews French Society no doubt benefits from the prestige of its legacy and the generosity of its alumni, but perhaps its greatest strength lies in its ability to adapt and move towards the future, one sip at a time.

PHOTO BY AMELIA BEATTIE



"You can't write unless you read."

Simon Armitage comes to town

MALI DELARGY
EVENTS WRITER

Walking the steep hill to St Andrew's Episcopal Church as the sun went down on 29 October, I found myself out of breath for two reasons: the first was obvious — it was a steep hill! — and the second was because the biggest literary event of the year was about to begin. Simon Armitage was in town to read from his latest poetry collection, New Cemetery.

I first encountered him at GCSE through his poem 'Remains.' He may also be familiar as the founder of the Laurel Prize, or as a musician and podcaster. I, along with the rest of the audience, came to know him as a comedian from the moment he took his coat off. Underneath was a tartan shirt which, he confessed, he had chosen by accident.

The title came from plans for a new cemetery at the top of his hill, against which local people protested. Considering their signs had spelt "cemetery" incorrectly, he joked that it would be bad luck to sign their petition. As the fifth-or-so peal of laughter rang out from the audience, I reflected on who this famous 'Armitage' was. Where was the melancholy, perhaps even severe figure of my imagination?

Each reading was prefaced by an explanation of his creative method: his memories, emotions, thoughts, and also how he felt about a piece upon its completion. Having spelt out the first word to indicate his clever wordplay, Armitage paused before reading 'Deer Diary' to say, "I was so pleased when I thought of that." Another burst of laughter ensued, but this time in response to his self-awareness and ability to praise his own work. Armitage removed the poet from the mythical realm and, in doing so, created a much more interesting evening.



Armitage's father died during the writing of New Cemetery, taking his thoughts back to the shirts washed and hanged, to his childhood holidays and times driving up and breaking down on the steep Garrowby Hill. Armitage recalled his dad's sayings — "If you can't fight, wear a big hat," or "This isn't a competition, but we can still win." If these sayings were enough to make the audience laugh, others were enough to make us cry — "I'm going now, Simon. Stay here with your Mum".

During the Q&A, I asked him about scrutiny and what it is like to know that he is on the curriculum as the Poet Laureate. He told me he felt immense privilege, hoping that, as Ted Hughes had done for him, he could get the students bored stiff at the back of the class to wake up. He said that he is often sent student essays and was at one point called "sexually incapable" in an analysis of 'Remains', which put the audience in fits of laughter once more.

As the evening ended, I again found myself ruminating. I had listened to the Poet Laureate, and he was a real person, full of optimism and creativity.

As he sat for dedications, I asked him if he had any advice for young writers. "Read. You can't write unless you read." He handed me my copy with a smile, signed and fresh from the press. With Simon Armitage sitting in front of me and his new collection in my hand, there was no doubt in my mind where I would begin.

IMAGE FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Welly Ball Comes of Age

JOSS WILDGOOSE BULLOCH
EVENTS EDITOR

Welly must begin with a history lecture.

Once upon a time, Welly Ball was the riotous finale of the St Andrews University Clay Pigeon Shooting Tournament. Students from across the UK would descend on Fife, full of hubris, champagne, and recoil bruises. The ball was their catharsis — a place to fling both food and inhibition. For years, the food fight made Welly infamous: waiters fled, potatoes flew, and somewhere between the wine and gravy, someone usually cried.

Recent Welly Ball committees have been especially anxious not to have this occur. Fearing concussions and bad press, they called time on Neverland.

8 November 2025. The highlight of my day had been touring my grandparents around town — Welly stayed reserved in the back of my mind. As I walked my grandmother down South Street, we stumbled into a member of the Clay Committee.

"We've been told to keep away from you," he said, grinning. "Things could get a bit... *out of hand*."

A lofty promise. One, I'm afraid, Welly didn't keep.

Balls in St Andrews are never just nights out. They're 24-hour productions — hair appointments, ticket resales, and post-ball hangovers. The wellies started appearing in the morning, and by late afternoon, they had lined up through Tesco like a bread line. There I met Max: moustached, tipsy, and his hands gently caressing a bottle of Hardy's Sauvignon Blanc. He was thrilled to learn that I'd be writing about the event.

"Put my dating profile in there!" He ejaculated. "I'm looking for a Latina baddie. Bonus points if she can speak Catalan."

Amused, I nodded and wrote it down. Best of luck, Max.

By quarter to ten, I arrived at Falside Mill. My tour of duty began with several delirious students — the afternoon's wine had put them right to sleep. Falside Mill's exterior resembled a slightly posher Skid Row; it smelled like it, too. Toilets are never the classiest part of any ball, but I only draw attention to it as I was enlisted in a shield wall to block security's eyes while a few gents took turns relieving themselves behind the bins. Tough times; tough decisions. I could've kissed whoever had made wellies the footwear of choice — their foresight when it came to vomit, piss, and spilt drinks was impeccable.

Inside, though, Falside played its part in the illusion of grandeur, fairy lights bridged the rafters, and flowers wreathed the walls. This year, the committee had gone further than usual, adding a live band — Since Juniper — to the afterparty, a first for Welly. Food trucks ringed the exits like sentries, preventing any early escape. I didn't sample the churros, but one cook's decision to pop one into his own mouth felt like a good enough endorsement.

The scale was impressive: around 2,500 guests, making Welly one of the largest student-run charity events in the UK — and one that raises tens of thousands for the Charlie Waller Trust each year. A remarkable operation.

"I paid £98 for the worst meal I've had in my life," said another. "But it's always terrible – year in, year out. Clay people just think the food is there to be chucked [rather than eaten]."

When I spoke to a member of the Welly committee, he looked almost relieved. "[The food fight] is a liability," he said. "Unfair to the waiters, the musicians, the security, the press."

A sensible decision. The right call. But what a dreary thing it is to be right; Welly Ball had come of age, and in doing so, had put away the absurdity and childishness of youth.

I stood towards the back of the main hall and watched the writhing mass of bodies and black tie. It was alive, sure, but fun? Debatable.

"I wouldn't have come if I had to buy a ticket," a bassist commented in the green room, which operated on drips of free tequila and comparing Welly pay cheques. "But Welly always pays well."

Perhaps this was inevitable; every generation sanitises what the last made scandalous. Welly, once dirty, vile, and degenerate, is now curated. Old traditions have had their backs broken, to the disappointment of every clay-er I spoke to. It remains ridiculously posh and expensive with all the unpleasantness that comes with Clay tourists visiting from up and down the country, but the shamelessness has been replaced with a quietness. It makes you miss the dirt — at least the dirt was honest.

The clock struck 1:30am and I'd had enough. I slipped onto the coach, mind heavy with thoughts about the night. Watching my breath fog the window, I realised what had gone missing. Welly used to be our Neverland — the one night when posh students could be ridiculous, messy, shameless. It was immature, classist, and often terrible. At least it was different.

Now it's just another ball. Safer, cleaner, quieter.

I walked home, feeling slightly relieved that I wouldn't have to take my suit to the drycleaners — and faintly bittersweet that there'd been no reason to.

Rest in peace Neverland.

The wellies are still clean.

Bioluminescence and Nature's Glow

ISAAC OLDHAM
SCI-TECH WRITER

Conan Doyle was a great aficionado of Scotland, Edinburgh, and St Andrews, having lived, studied, and mastered golf here. In the book *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Doyle writes about a spectral hound that luminesces in the night; the luminescence in this standout novel is the smearing of white phosphorus on the hound. White phosphorus glows green when exposed to the air, through a process called chemiluminescence,hencetheglowofthedog!

The reality of white phosphorus is that any biological organism coated in this substance would suffer horrendous chemical burns and not be long for this world. This, of course, gives a slight flaw to what is otherwise one of the better Sherlock narratives. If Conan Doyle were to visit St Andrews today, he would be able to plump for other, less toxic ways to make the great dog in his story glow; bioluminescence would be Mr Doyle's go-to option in 2025.

Bioluminescence is a chemical reaction that takes place within cells of specific organisms. It is one of nature's unique phenomena and can be easily observed in things such as fireflies and deep-sea creatures. The chemical reaction that results in the generation of light energy relies on three key components: oxygen, luciferin, and luciferase.

Bioluminescence is one of nature's convergent evolution complexities; multiple different organisms have evolved bioluminescence independently of each other, going from plankton, which can appear to make the sea glow under certain circumstances, all the way to some types of fungi.

As with all things evolution-based, a selective force has been at work, and bioluminescence is providing a competitive advantage, be it to avoid predators or to communicate between members of the same species; flashing a signal to each other in the pitch black is one of the pretty limited options you have for communicating in such a difficult environment.

In Japan, there is a bay that you can visit, where at certain times of the year, you can see a squad of squid glowing it up for each other, in what is believed to be a major breeding site for the aptly named firefly squid!

If you are lucky enough to go to the Maldives you can take a dip at night, and possibly swim through a bloom of bioluminescent plankton — pretty much like switching on a vivid green-blue light show. There have even been the odd sighting of "glow-in-the-dark" algae blooms off the coast of St Andrews, so when you are next out for a dip, weather and sea conditions permitting, you might just find yourself in the middle of your own glow.

Bioluminescence is not a natural phenomenon for the majority of animals and certainly not mammals, but science is now on hand, and genes like luciferase have been successfully inserted into a range of animals/mammals with a variety of different outcomes and uses.

Being used at the cutting edge of studying tumours, their growth patterns, and understanding drug uptake, and even amazingly being able to help doctors and nurses track progression of infections in patients, all through looking for the telltale glow!

Scientists have now harnessed certain bacteria (giving them the "glow" genes) to use them as environmental indicators. With the right bacteria, they have been able to harness bioluminescence to act like a large visual green-blue warning glow to signal the presence of certain pollutants in the environment.

Some research is even currently on the go using certain classic houseplants to try and get them to "glow" when they need to be watered [...] just think of the millions of plants around the world that would no longer suffer in silence!

The pace of research into bioluminescence is bounding forward, to date, science has produced glowing mice, fish, rabbits, rats and even pigs If you are one of the Molecular Biology students here in St Andrew, just think,— with right CRISPR system and a sample of glowing algae from St Andrews Bay, you could take the next big leap in Bioluminescence. By putting St Andrews back on the map alongside one of its famous visitors, Conan Doyle, you might even inspire his long-awaited sequel, *The Bioluminescent Baying Hound* — something worthy of a final year thesis, I feel.

Every DROP Helps

ORLA ROSTOM
SCI-TECH WRITER

According to the International Development Committee, in South Sudan, a woman is more likely to die giving birth than to finish school. For a group of students at St Andrews, that statistic is not something to read and forget — it is something to change.

That urgency is what drove Myada Eltiraifi, a recent St Andrews graduate with roots in Sudan, to create DROP, a student project tackling maternal mortality one safe birth at a time. Started in 2020 and expanded through Enactus St Andrews in 2022, the initiative channels student fundraising into birth-assistance kits for mothers in the Mangalla IDP Camp, South Sudan.

"Mothers in Sudan aren't given the appreciation they deserve or the support," she explains. "The idea is to give back to my community and reduce maternal mortality."

Years of civil war have left South Sudan's healthcare system shattered. Hospitals were destroyed, roads became impassable, and millions were forced into displacement camps where access to midwives or sterile equipment is almost non-existent. The country now has the highest maternal mortality rate in the world, at more than 1,200 deaths per 100,000 live births — a figure that gives weight to Eltiraifi's motivation.

DROP raises money through bake sales, music nights, and community events in St Andrews. The funds are then sent directly to James Lual Akech, a midwife working on the ground in South Sudan. Akech uses the funds to buy local supplies and assemble "Mama Kits" — bundles of items that can be used to support mothers in childbirth when they cannot reach a hospital. Each kit contains gloves, soap, a baby towel, reusable sheets, an apron, a cotton roll, a biodegradable bucket, a cord clamp, and a reusable pad. For many mothers, these items can be the difference between life and death, not only for themselves but also for their babies.

Akech also runs workshops for mothers and families on how to deliver a baby safely at home, helping to build community engagement. "They don't just hand them out," Eltiraifi explains. "They teach mothers, friends, and husbands what to do if they can't reach a hospital."

The project has already had a measurable impact: "Since our creation two years ago, we've delivered 128 packages," Eltiraifi says. "That's 256 lives affected". Each kit costs around £40, enough to provide clean tools and education for one safe delivery. It is the price of attending a ball in St Andrews, but it can save two lives.

The next stage of the project focuses on growth and storytelling. The team is developing a "Sponsor a Package" website and new partnerships with local businesses in St Andrews, such as Fisher and Donaldson, to make funding more sustainable. Laura French, DROP's project lead, described plans for an upcoming documentary screening series, educating local students about global women's health. Internationally, DROP is collaborating and working with other women's health NGOs, creating partnerships that will allow further collaboration and awareness in the future. Their team is currently in the process of proposing a documentary in South Sudan, allowing them to shed light on the complicated situation on the ground.



From bake sales and quizzes to community education, DROP continues to transform student creativity into life-saving care. With greater institutional backing, projects like DROP could amplify St Andrews' impact far beyond the town's borders. In a world where global crises can feel distant and insurmountable, the students behind DROP prove that even small communities can drive real change — one kit, one mother, one newborn at a time.

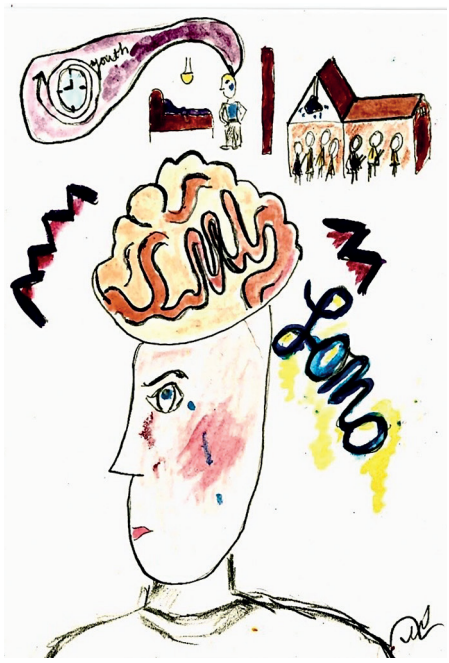
ILLUSTRATION BY ISABELLE HOLLOWAY

The Neuroscience of FOMO

Why your brain hates being left out

BHANI KAUR
Sci-Tech Writer

Imagine your brain as a finely tuned orchestra. Most of the time, the instruments — thoughts, emotions, sensations — play in harmony. But when you see a photo of friends out without you, one instrument suddenly goes off-key. A discordant note of anxiety, envy, and curiosity ripples through the mind. That, in essence, is the Fear of Missing Out (FOMO). Though it feels like a modern problem born of smartphones and social media, its roots lie deep within our neural wiring.



When we experience exclusion — whether from a group chat, a social event, or even an unreturned message — the brain responds as if we have suffered a physical injury. Neuroscientists have found that the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC), a region involved in processing both physical and emotional pain, becomes active when we feel left out. In evolutionary terms, this reaction was essential. To our ancestors, belonging to a group meant safety, food, and protection; isolation often meant death. Thus, the brain evolved to make social rejection genuinely painful, ensuring we stayed connected. In today's digital world, this ancient alarm still sounds, even when the "exclusion" is nothing more than missing a post on Instagram.

This emotional discomfort is magnified by changes in the brain's chemistry — particularly involving dopamine, the neurotransmitter responsible for feelings of pleasure and reward. Dopamine motivates us to seek out rewarding experiences, but when we witness others enjoying themselves without us, levels of this "pleasure chemical" dip. The result is a sense of emptiness or dissatisfaction that drives us to seek immediate relief — often by refreshing feeds, checking notifications, or scrolling endlessly. It becomes a self-reinforcing cycle: the more we scroll, the more fleeting hits of dopamine we chase, and the more dependent we become on external validation.

Social media platforms exploit this vulnerability through variable reward systems — a psychological mechanism borrowed from the world of gambling. Much like a slot machine that pays out unpredictably, social media offers intermittent bursts of gratification: a like here, a comment there. Because the rewards are uncertain, our brains remain in a state of anticipation, compelled to keep checking in case the next notification delivers a rush of pleasure. What begins as harmless browsing subtly transforms into compulsive behaviour, as the mind's reward circuitry is held hostage by the possibility of digital affirmation.

The discomfort of FOMO also activates deeper, older parts of our biological architecture. Human beings are profoundly social creatures, and our nervous systems are built to respond to inclusion and exclusion as matters of survival. When our brains perceive social disconnection, they release cortisol, the stress hormone that primes the body to act. In prehistoric times, such a surge might have spurred us to rejoin the group and regain safety. Now, it manifests as the uneasy restlessness that drives us to re-engage online. The body, in effect, cannot distinguish between being left behind on a hunt and being left out of a group photo.

Fortunately, neuroscience also offers hope for rewiring this response. Practices such as mindfulness have been shown to calm the brain's overactive reward circuits, reducing the compulsive urge to check for updates. By focusing attention on the present moment, mindfulness restores balance to dopamine systems and lowers cortisol levels. Similarly, consciously altering how we interpret social information can soften the sting of perceived exclusion. Instead of viewing others' joy as a reminder of our own absence, we can regard it as evidence of life's richness, one that we too will partake in at another time.

In an age where connection is constant yet belonging feels fragile, understanding the neuroscience of FOMO allows us to approach our digital lives with greater awareness. The orchestra of the mind need not play out of tune each time we encounter exclusion. With a little practice, we can learn to quiet the discord, restoring harmony to a system that has simply been playing the same ancient song — the song of survival — in a modern key.

Illustration by Mia Fish

AI Below Sea Level

HANNAN ANJARWALLA
Sci-Tech Writer

ChatGPT, Microsoft Copilot, and Gemini, once obscure technological terms, are now everyday essentials to millions of people. Artificial Intelligence (AI) now powers a multitude of tasks, from drafting emails to finding the best food spots or figuring out directions — it is a tool that can help us all. Beyond just productivity and convenience, AI is now increasingly venturing into complex scientific and environmental fields. Few could have predicted that AI could be used to help protect some of the planet's most vulnerable underwater ecosystems. As we race to save our seas from overfishing, coral bleaching, and pollution continue, AI is emerging as a powerful tool to give our oceans a fighting chance.

Led by the University of Plymouth and the Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML), the $2 million project named the "Deep Vision Project" uses AI to construct large-scale, detailed databases that identify the most vulnerable underwater habitats across the Atlantic Ocean. This noninvasive AI uses advanced seabed mapping to scan large areas of the ocean floor to discover the ocean species that occupy these microenvironments. Through analysing thousands of images, the AI model learns to identify the presence of Vulnerable Marine Ecosystems (VMEs), which are fragile and slow-recovering ocean species that require urgent protection from further ecological damage. These include deep-sea cold-water coral reefs, sponge fields, and seamount ecosystems found in underwater canyons or trenches that the AI can detect despite the difficult terrain. The AI then uses these images to identify the specific temperatures these VMEs need to survive, enabling scientists to understand how to sustain these specific conditions for their long-term resilience and reproduction. Currently, the project is in Phase II, with fifteenmicro-projects receiving additional grants to test the AI across various parts of the Atlantic. The ultimate goal is to upscale the AI to map global ocean patterns and safeguard all marine ecosystems for future generations.

This precise ocean data uncovered in the Deep Vision Project has another important purpose. This AI provides scientists and policymakers with tangible evidence to lobby for laws protecting these vulnerable ocean areas. The project team aims to strengthen advocacy and support for environmental management policies like the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) treaty, which protects biodiversity in areas beyond official national jurisdiction as part of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas. Further, the Deep Vision team also aims to showcase its AI research to investors, sparking broader interest in ocean protection among its more tech-focused funders. Supported by the Bezos Earth Fund — an organisation funding global climate solutions — the Deep Vision Project is backed by powerful organisations, demonstrating its powerful capacity to effect progressive reforms in ocean governance.

"As the deep sea becomes more accessible for exploitation, there is an urgent need to map its ecosystems to enable the conservation of biodiversity in this, the last wild frontier on Earth." This statement by Kerry Howell, University of Plymouth professor and leader of the Deep Vision project, reflects the critical importance of innovative approaches to protect our ocean ecosystems amid growing environmental threats. It is fascinating to explore how we can use artificial intelligence to help combat this threat. Beyond just helping us make lists or check for grammar, AI can empower scientists to tackle some of their greatest environmental challenges.



Illustration by Iona Talbot Rice

Puck Yeah: The Rise of the Typhoons

ISOBEL LISHER
SPORT WRITER

Even in an arena with a frozen pitch, the atmosphere is anything but cold. Blades slice through the ice as the puck zips from stick to stick, the eyes of an enthusiastic crowd tracking the colourful stripes on the rink. Ice hockey has a passionate global fanbase, but few in St Andrews seem to follow our own team.

The Saint sat down with social secretary Hannah O'Keeffe of the St Andrews Typhoons Ice Hockey Club to find out why the team continues to fly under the radar, even in a town filled with North American students.

"It's such a fast-paced sport — each game has three twenty-minute periods, five skaters and a goalie per team, and line changes every minute or so," O'Keeffe explains to an unfamiliar Brit. "There's barely time to think, you're constantly moving!"

Growing up in Canada, O'Keeffe was immersed in the sport from an early age. "It's huge back home," she says. "In the US, it's the same — it's what football or rugby are here in the UK." It's puzzling, then, that the sport has such a low profile in St Andrews.

But the club is growing and now boasts around 30 members — mostly Americans and Canadians, but with a steadily diversifying mix of backgrounds. "We've got four girls on the team this season, our biggest number yet," O'Keeffe notes proudly.

As with many sports at the University, funding remains the biggest challenge. "It's the most expensive sport at the University, the gear costs a lot," she says. "We have to hire a bus every week, and ice time is expensive and hard to get in Scotland."

Training takes place at the Fife Ice Arena in Kirkcaldy, almost an hour away. Rising energy prices have only made costs worse, and maintaining the ice isn't cheap either. The Zamboni machine that smooths the surface can cost upwards of £200,000 alone.

Despite these obstacles, enthusiasm from St Andrews' international cohort continues to grow. After unprecedented interest in the club, the Typhoons held tryouts for the first time this year — a sure sign of the sport's development in the town. "Everyone who made the team has played at a high level," O'Keeffe adds.

This shouldn't deter newcomers, though: "We've had total beginners pick it up here, which is amazing for such a challenging sport."

Still, many people remain unaware of the team's existence. "Whenever I tell people I play, they're surprised we even have a team," O'Keeffe laughs. "We just need to get our name out there more."

The club's annual Johnny Wookey Memorial Game is the highlight of the calendar, as the Typhoons take on rivals Edinburgh. "It's such a fun, high-energy event that really shows what hockey is about."

Whether you're from North America or somewhere closer to St Andrews, if you're thinking about lacing up your skates, O'Keeffe strongly recommends giving it a go — if not as a player, then as a spectator. *The Saint* will, as ever, be there to cover the next edition in April 2026.

> "The team continues to fly under the radar, even in a town filled with North American students."

The St Andrews Typhoons Ice Hockey Club proves that even in a historic town dominated by golf, there's room for a sport that thrives on speed, teamwork, and a little chaos. Ice hockey may be a cold game, but it's fiery and completely addictive.

Lykke Li and Maccy D's: Tennis Away Days

MAY-LING TURNER
SPORT WRITER

The journey to a tennis away match begins long before the team of four squeezes into the AU Sports minibus. It starts in the early morning training sessions, when the walk to practice is so dark the line between 9pm or 7am starts to blur.

The five men's teams and three women's teams gather around the dinner table the night before matches for a carb-filled, pesto pasta squad dinner. The kitchen is crowded, the table full, and the conversation lingers long after the food is gone.

When British Universities and College Sport (BUCS) match day comes, every team goes their separate ways — different courts, different matches, different results. With bags zipped up, racquets regripped, and tennis shoes packed tight beneath layers of Saints Tennis kit, the teams are ready.

On travel days across Scotland, you really get to know your teammates — including who can sing, and those who definitely cannot. Lykke Li's 'I Follow Rivers' is belted out as the road to another away match stretches ahead. No two matches are ever the same, but the song always is. Consistency is key in tennis — even if it's just in the playlist.

The song could play anywhere in the world now, and it would take every St Andrews tennis player back to a motorway somewhere in Scotland, heading towards another match.

Each fixture includes both singles and doubles, with players ranked one to four. Unlike other sports, where matches are timed, you never know whether tennis will last three hours or stretch beyond four. It could be a quick victory or a gruelling tie-breaking battle of mental and physical endurance. Maybe you even take your opponent to the bakery with a bagel (6–0) win.

Victory is always the goal, but in some matches, the mission quickly becomes simpler: avoid the bagel. One game. Just one.

"Allez!" is the team's favourite on-court chant — the word that brings focus back to the point and connection back to the teammates playing on the courts beside you.

Tennis is unpredictable. Being up 5–1 doesn't always mean safety; momentum can shift in an instant. Equally, being down 8–2 in a tie-break can sometimes be the best thing that happens. With nothing to lose, you loosen up, swing freely, and somehow make your comeback — 8-6, 8-7, 8-8 — and suddenly, you're in it again.

Tennis is as much a mental game as it is physical. You play the mind before you play the ball.

At the end of match day, it's tradition to write a report where every player earns a nickname.

On the way home, laps are stacked with nuggets and fries after the custom McDonald's stop. With no golden arches in St Andrews, away matches are the only chance to curb those cravings. Not exactly peak athlete nutrition — but nobody claimed we were professionals.

The commitment, teamwork, and competitiveness — those parts, Saints Tennis takes seriously.

The McDonald's order is optional; 'I Follow Rivers' is not.



The Rugby Club United

ANNE-CARTER RIGGS
Sport Writer

November brings colder weather, less sunlight, and deadline season, but for rugby players, it's one of the best times of year. The club has long supported Movember, raising over £21k last year. Their fundraising efforts culminate in the annual Mo Ball, hosted at the end of November.

It's been a strong season so far for the women's first XV, who find themselves top of the league for the first time ever after an impressive victory over Edinburgh's second team. The second team got off to an equally strong start, sitting third in the league after back-to-back wins.

The second team's exceptional form is particularly important to third-year Rosie Grist, who joined the team after its formation in her first year.

A relationship with a sport is not always a linear one, and Grist's relationship with rugby reflects that. She started playing at the age of thirteen, inspired by her mum, who played at university. Growing up in the Highlands, women's rugby wasn't particularly well-organised, and initially Grist played in men's teams.

"I wore a bib so they wouldn't tackle me and I wouldn't tackle them," she said. Eventually, Grist quit to dedicate herself to swimming, but her love for rugby never disappeared.

Once at university, she did not join the rugby club straight away, but ultimately decided to reunite with the sport: "It was the best decision I've ever made. It was great to be back playing."



Traditionally a men's sport, the women's game has not always been as popular as it is now. The women's club at St Andrews began as a separate entity from the men's club, practising with the Madras Rugby Club. The two clubs later merged to form the St Andrews Rugby Club we know today. The women's club is still growing, having recently formed a third team.

The unified men's and women's club is unique to St Andrews. The majority of other sports clubs remain separate, whereas the Saints have come together on and off the pitch. "The way we manage our socials, together at Madras, and our group coaching means you can meet everyone from across the club," says Jean van der Spuy, a second-year men's player.

Everyone at the club works together to plan Mo Ball, and women's and men's club members sit together at one long table at the ball.

Last year, the club bridged the division on the pitch with touch rugby matches. Spearheaded by injured players Charlie Burns and Tilly Hammer, touch rugby has been a welcome addition to the club. "It's really nice to have a point of contact where the men's side and women's side play together," Grist explained. Both van der Spuy and Grist were on their way down to Nottingham for a BUCS touch rugby tournament on the day they spoke to *The Saint*.

The club takes most pride in its philanthropic work, which extends far beyond Movember. They work with the OddBalls Foundation, a charity supporting awareness of testicular cancer.

This summer, the club also announced a partnership with the Shamas Rugby Foundation. Through fundraising at their sevens tournament, the club was able to donate £1,000 to Shamas to fund Kenya's first girls-only sevens tournament. The club's dedication to charity seems to be ever-growing, and their new partnership with Shamas has already seen their efforts come to fruition.

While smaller than other rugby clubs, they have been able to build a strong community through both their athletic achievement and outreach efforts. This Movember continues to reflect that devotion.

Image Provided By USTA Rugby

How to Love a Sport in 10 Days

GABRIELLA THOMAS
Sport Writer

"This is all a ploy to get someone to watch football with you," Nora Donovan laughs. Unfortunately for her, the writing is on the wall: in ten days' time, she will love sport.

Sport has everything that I love: community, competition, and a challenge, both physical and mental. It's one of those rare things that is as addictive as it is good for you. It's hard for me to understand how anyone wouldn't share my enthusiasm; so, I decided to take on the challenge of converting my friend, who is completely disinterested in sport, in just ten days.

> "She raises her hands to her face in the style of Arsenal's new striker, Viktor Gyökeres."

The first two days were slow-going — like a proverbial wet, windy night in Stoke, if you will. Despite dropping hints about going for a run or trying to start small talk about this season's Premier League, I was met with nothing, or arguably worse, a polite smile and a change of topic.

The next two days were worse: with deadlines fast approaching, listening to me muse over the effectiveness of Arsenal's new signings wasn't only boring, but distracting. Instead of the gym, we took shelter in the library, where animated discussion about my Fantasy Premier League team was met with silence.

However, all hope was not lost. The more time we spent at our desks, the more Donovan seemed to crave excitement — a break from the monotony of scanning for spelling errors. For once, procrastination was on my side. Deadlines might just have made her exhausted enough to seek joy in something unexpected.

"Just give me Monday to recover," she asked me. I reluctantly agree.

Day six: tonight, Liverpool play Real Madrid and tonight, we will watch.

"I definitely didn't realise how many people came out to watch," Donovan admitted as I attempted to explain the offside rule with a menu and some cups.

Surrounded by screens, she experienced her first professional penalty (a shocking miss from Richarlison) and potential handball (along with the painstaking minutes of VAR deliberation that followed). Out of the corner of my eye, I saw her hold her breath at corners and smiled as the Liverpool fans erupted into cheers.

Finally, the ball was rolling as day seven approached.

Fresh air could do us some good, I thought. I grabbed a ball and texted Donovan to meet me at the park.

"It reminds me of when I was younger," she called, backing out of a catch. I pushed her to continue, and she rolled her eyes, sarcastically lecturing me on the benefits of sport. But I believe one of the first steps to loving something is not taking it too seriously.

Ten minutes later, she started committing to her catches, and after a tough one, she raised her hands to her face in the style of Arsenal's new striker, Viktor Gyökeres. She'd absorbed more than I'd anticipated.

Day eight. It was time for something different. We strapped our feet into the gym's rowing machines, and I put my coxing skills to use. Donovan learned quickly, and as we focused on staying in sync, we began to chat more freely.

Donovan goes to the gym once a week, but a combination of crowded machines and self-consciousness when trying new exercises stops her from enjoying it.

"The best bit is the descent," she laughed, reminiscing about her time as a climber. I cringed; as someone who is not a fan of heights, it sounded to me like a nightmare. Donovan didn't waste a moment, using my moment of weakness to turn the tables on me. She asked why I love sports so much. The apprentice has become the master.

Day nine. Sunset. East Sands. I broke out the tennis ball again, but this time, we just messed around. I taught her to bowl like a cricketer, and she showed me her baseball throw.

"How would you like to watch St Andrews United play tomorrow?" I asked, bracing myself for the inevitable. Surely, going to an amateur football match is a step too far.

"Sure," she replies. Didn't see that one coming.

Day ten is planned, and I think I might just find myself pacing the sidelines with a brand-new sports fan.

The St Andrews Challenge

Hidden in plain sight

ELODIE COWAN
SPORT WRITER

Ever wondered what was occurring on the morning of Welly Ball? While the rest of St Andrews applies the last of their fake tan and debates dinner suit versus tux, somewhere just outside Leuchars, 300 students participate in the St Andrews Challenge.

Hosted each year at the Scottish Clay Shooting Centre by the St Andrews Clay Pigeon Shooting Club, the Challenge is the UK's largest university clay pigeon shooting event.

It's one of those St Andrews secrets hiding in plain sight. Ask most students what happens on the morning of the ball, and they would shrug, but for the shooters, it's the heart of the weekend — the real start to Welly.

At 7:45am, the first teams began arriving for check-in, clad in tweed and gilets, ready for the jam-packed day. It was an early start, but spirits were high — and if the 'friendly' banter between teams was anything to go off, then so, it seemed, were the stakes.

This year, teams from seventeen universities made the trip north to compete. The Challenge's reputation stretches far beyond Fife, attracting the likes of Exeter, Durham, and Edinburgh. It's become the premier student shooting event in the UK, and a prelude to one of the wildest nights on the University social calendar.

"It's a good way to break the ice," said club secretary Lily Algate. "We see a lot of these faces throughout the year, so it's great to catch up before the big day."

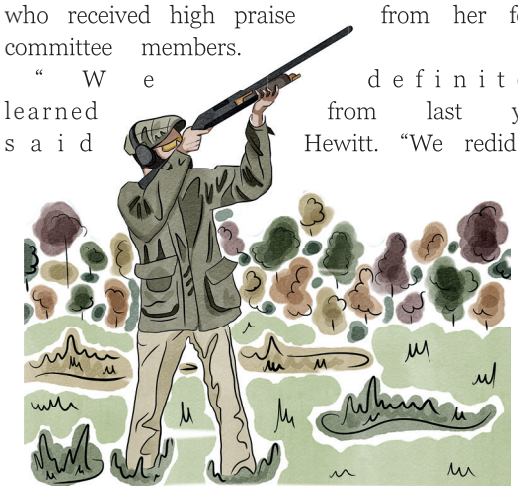
Founded in 1854, the St Andrews Clay Pigeon Shooting Club is one of the oldest university societies in Britain. Over the decades, it has evolved into a large club, responsible for organising this now national competition.

Teams from all corners of the country make a full weekend of it, shooting by day and Welly-Balling by night. The overlap is part of the event's charm: what could be more St Andrews than swapping gun cartridges for cufflinks?

The camaraderie between universities was clear, though not without its competitive edge. Algate grinned as she recalled one interaction: "The Exeter ladies told us, 'Good luck beating Exeter!' when they were sitting on 14 points [...] friendly competition, of course."

This year, the event ran like clockwork, largely thanks to the tireless efforts of Vice President Megan Hewitt, who received high praise from her fellow committee members.

"We definitely learned from last year," said Hewitt. "We redid the timesheets and, well, trimmed the guest list a little. Some of the rowdier teams got a year off," she laughed, adding, "I'm a big believer in retribution. They'll be back next year once they've redeemed themselves."



The competition displayed the best of amateur shooting and banter alike. "It's very, very good fun as always," said men's captain Elliot Wright. "It's nice to see all the different unis coming up and having fun. We've got some really strong teams this year."

Among the competitors was Rohan Thandi, the club's postgraduate representative, who had previously shot for Durham before moving north for his Master's. He admitted that the St Andrews club was more open, more welcoming, and — he added with a grin — "a lot more fun."

President Henry Tebbutt summed it up simply: "Chaos," he called it, "but brilliant chaos."

By late afternoon, the last clays were shattered, and attention turned to the next target: Welly Ball. Within hours, the same shooters, now scrubbed up and suited, were filing into Fallside Mill.

The moment the shooting ended, it was straight into black tie. The men often finished late, tying bow ties in the dark while the women rushed home to get ready. Then everyone piled onto buses and joined the rest of St Andrews, most of whom, as Tebbutt put it, "had no idea this was happening."

Although Welly Ball began as the shooting club's own ball, it is now organised by a separate committee. Treasurer James Barable acknowledged the split made sense; no one wanted to run a 2000-person ball and a national shooting competition in the same weekend. Still, he said it would be nice to see a little more overlap. Relations, he added, were strong, with good correspondence between the club and Welly Ball president Eva Shrimpton, who had been supportive throughout.

Despite composing half of Welly Ball's guest list, the shooters rarely crossed paths with the dinner crowd. Instead, they were tucked away in a separate section of the venue — "in the tent, where they keep the animals," Tebbutt joked. Self-proclaimed animals, he clarified, since that was where the club handed out prizes before being released into the chaos.

One thing likely to stay under control, though, is the infamous food fight, which was finally banned after years of frustration from the venue. Hewitt confirmed it was "not exactly popular with the venue," while Tebbutt admitted that it had been "pretty chaotic last year," and "a bit much." Both agreed that the decision to call it off was probably for the best.

The Challenge might be St Andrews' best-kept secret, and perhaps that is the real allure of Welly Ball: the hundreds of unfamiliar faces in the town where everyone normally knows everybody. Among the Henry Cavendishes studying PPE at Durham and the ExeRAH girls in matching tweed lay the reason St Andrews' biggest night felt so big. It wasn't just a ball; it was the afterparty to Britain's largest student shooting event.

Sometimes it was easy to forget that the first shot of Welly Ball weekend wasn't poured, it was fired.

ILLUSTRATION BY EVE FISHMAN

Sunday I'm in Love

Your weekly Sunday League round-up

BEN BAGLEY
SPORT EDITOR

It was very much squeaky bum time heading into the penultimate weekend of the Sunday League season, with the top four jostling for a spot in the Week 11 final and the bottom half fighting to avoid the drop.

Strokers shook off their early Welly-Ball-induced hangovers in style, coming from down 2–0 to cruise past strugglers Sheffield Tuesday in the early kick-off. Three wins on the spin have knocked Beavers off the top spot and installed Strokers as title favourites heading into the final weekend.

Spartans have timed their run after a sluggish start to the season, toppling the league leaders. A win against Division 1 whipping boys Bolton Fondlers should be enough to seal their place in the final.

Botswana Meat Commission remain firmly in the conversation after a ruthless 8–0 demolition of Butts Wynderers. Goal difference could yet prove crucial, and that result might be decisive come close of play next Sunday. As for the Wynderers, they travel to Sheffield Tuesday knowing only a win will secure their place in Division One next season.

Fondlers' second no-show of the season has all but confirmed their relegation. Much like Engelbert Humperdinck at Eurovision 2012, their only target now is avoiding the dreaded *nil points* and a place in the history books.

Down in Division Two, it's all eyes on Real Sosobad versus DLL in a winner-takes-all battle for automatic promotion. The loser will face either Butts Wynderers or Sheffield Tuesday in a play-off for a place at the top table of St Andrews football in the new year.

The Saint will be across all the big games next weekend with Patrick Maitland and Gregor Murray — our in-house Chris Kamara and Alan McInally — on hand to bring you all the drama as it unfolds.

Pos	Team	Pld	GD	Pts
1	Strokers	6	+14	15
2	Botswana Meat Commission	6	+14	13
3	Spartans	6	+13	13
4	Beavers	6	+8	13
5	Paqueta Crisps	6	-3	8
6	Sheffield Tuesday	6	-9	4
7	Butts Wynderers	6	-14	3
8	Bolton Fondlers	6	-23	0

Weekend Results		
Bolton Fondlers	0 - 3	Paqueta Crisps
Botswana MC	8 - 0	Butts Wynderers
Sheffield Tuesday	3 - 7	Strokers
Spartans	4 - 1	Beavers