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Uber Submits Application to Open Services in Fife



CHARLOTTE SMITH
News Writer

Uber Scot Limited has applied for a booking licence to operate within Fife County. The application, which the Fife Council is currently reviewing, was made on 23 January this year. If granted, this office would open Uber transport services from the Rosyth Business Centre.

Despite the application, the East Fife Taxi Association (EFTA) has raised "serious concerns" about Uber's application.

Spokesperson Linda Holt said: "We have significant concerns about the impact this application could have on local drivers' livelihoods, passenger safety, regulatory fairness, and the long-term sustainability of the trade."

EFTA has submitted a formal objection to Uber's plans, which viewers can sign from the organisation's website. The deadline for objections was 20 February, and over 600 signatures were collected.

The Association highlights several concerns in their objection — namely, that Uber does not meet the "fit and proper person" test required under licensing law. The objection raises several concerns: that the named day-to-day manager resides in York; that the corporate control and operational systems are centralised outside Fife; and that the Rosyth premises appear to be a nominal administrative address rather than a genuine operational base.

EFTA has also criticised Fife Council for what it describes as poor communication with local drivers. In a press release issued on 12 February, Holt said the Council had convened a meeting with operators in Fife to improve communication. However, she said that "many operators are surprised and disappointed" that the Council "did not mention the Uber application, despite it having been lodged on 23 January."

Uber has been operating in Edinburgh and Glasgow since 2015, and launched in Aberdeen in October 2024. Though it gained a Dundee licence in June 2024, the service has not been operating there, despite telling online customers that it is available.

Holt told *The Saint* that while some people use Uber as a cheaper, more readily available taxi, "experience across the UK shows that this is not true."

She continued, "At times of high demand, Uber operators surge pricing, which means prices are much higher than the fares of Council-regulated taxis." She stated that at times of low demand, getting any taxi might be more difficult, adding, "local drivers will be thinner on the ground because many will be driven out of the trade by Uber."

Holt also highlighted the risks posed by drivers who cannot be easily traced, particularly for female passengers. She said the safest way to take a taxi in St Andrews is "to book with a locally established

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Hooked on a Feeling: St Andrews Angling Club

By Freddie Coughlan

Fishing is one of Britain's most popular pastimes. In fact, each year approximately 1.5 million adults in the UK go fishing in some capacity. With its positive impact on physical and mental health, benefits for concentration, and sociability, it's easy to understand the sport's popularity.

Watch the video at @thesaintsta

Read on Page 31.

A Day with a Local 24-Year Old Sheep Farmer

By Isabelle Holloway

"How early do you want to start?" Craig Byrne messaged the night before, adding a laughing emoji. Byrne, a 24-year-old sheep farmer, manages 3,000 sheep.

Nine hours later, I waited on a bench outside Taste. Seagulls broke through the flush of day.

Byrne emerged from a white panel van and we shook hands, his hands blackened with oil.

"Are you sure you're going to be warm enough?" he asked. We grabbed coffees for the road, preparing for the day ahead.

The van was, as warned, coated in mud and dust, sharp with the smell of oil. I felt a poke from behind. Lynn, Byrne's fourteen-month-old border collie, was helping with the sheep.

Read on Page 16.



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EDITORIAL

One road trip, three regional wins, and nineteen shortlists (oh my!)

Needless to say, we had many victories to celebrate this past weekend and earlier this week with regard to the Student Publication Awards. Not only did we walk away with three coveted honours at this weekend's regional conference at the University of Stirling, but *The Saint* was also short-listed a record nineteen times for the National awards, to be hosted later in March in Norwich.

This Saturday, we ended up winning Best Publication (highly commended) and Best Digital (highly commended), and accepted the award for Best Journalist in Scotland, awarded to our incredibly talented and deserving Features Editor, Mrunmayi Kamerkar. The awards were all but a few slips of unassuming, yet high-quality paper, but we practically skipped off of the University of Stirling's campus, with our Deputy EIC Alden Arnold shielding them from the rain as if they were worth millions. To us, they may as well be. They're worth every email sent to the Press Office, every 11pm run our other Deputy EIC Arnaz Mallick makes to Tesco for late-night bananas, and are certainly worth the three-hour car ride to and from the Regional Awards (a massive thank you to our fabulous News Editor Maria Ebrahim for the ride).



It may sound corny, but you don't spend the amount of time we do discussing headline font sizes, chasing up sources for comment, and writing up SPA nominations without walking away with a kind of makeshift family. That became abundantly clear this weekend. We were sandwiched together in the backseat of Maria's car alongside our Viewpoint Editor, Sam Spandlove, all of us sharing an assortment of M&S's finest snacks, wet from a sudden downpour, and having lost a day needed to complete our ever-piling fourth-year workloads. Yet, none of us could stop smiling or laughing. There was truly no better way we could have chosen to spend our Saturday.

And once again, on Monday, we found ourselves back in the Union, writing this very editorial, eagerly refreshing Instagram as the SPA shortlists came rolling in — our apologies if you heard our shouting outside of Society Room A. Our enthusiasm was akin to a group of overly passionate sport fans.

Despite the kudos both of us have received since accepting this past Saturday's awards in Stirling, we would be remiss not to acknowledge the fact that we are splitting each and every recognition with our team of over 100 writers, copyeditors, photographers, illustrators, and Business and Digital Team members. As much as we rhapsodise about our tumultuous biweekly trips to the Union to lay out each issue, our labour is only half of it. It's one thing to lead a team — it's another to lead a team which makes your job seem easy and rewarding. We owe it all to the collective people who are *The Saint*.

Hannah and Ilaria

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Corrections
James Paumgarten was miscredited as Loulou Sloss

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University Responds to Open Letter Calling to Cut Ties with Israeli Universities

IONA CARRUTH
News Writer

The University of St Andrews has responded to the open letter signed by both staff and students demanding the University sever ties with the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (HUJ) and all other Israeli universities over the genocide in Gaza. The open letter was organised by staff and students with support from the University and College Union (UCU) in October 2025. The University has now responded, stating they will not be cutting ties with any Israeli universities.

> "We remain open to dialogue with [the] community who hold differing views."

The response by the University was forwarded to staff and students' emails who had signed the open letter on 9 February by UCU. In their response, the University highlighted the problems with academic boycotts: "Academic boycotts risk silencing precisely those voices and institutions that sustain debate, critique, and opposition. They also undermine academic freedom by imposing collective punishment on scholars and students on the basis of nationality or institutional affiliation rather than individual conduct." The statement continued, "For these reasons, the University of St Andrews has consistently resisted calls for academic boycotts as a general principle, including in other global conflicts."

However, the University has previously participated in an academic boycott, outlined in the open letter. It states that in February 2022, within a fortnight of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the University suspended its Joint Masters programme with Moscow State University, as well as divesting from Russian holdings.

The University's response to this highlights that Israeli universities have not made public stances on the genocide in Gaza, whereas in 2022, the Russian Rectors Conference publicly supported the invasion of Ukraine, aligning Russian universities with the actions of the Russian government. Hence, according to the University, "The distinction is therefore not one of selective morality, but of materially different institutional behaviour."

The open letter also expressed concern over the University's involvement in the Global Universities for Societal Impact Network, as HUJ is also participating in this network. According to the open letter, Global Universities for Societal Impact is a collaborative research network on AI. The open letter discussed reports from Israeli journalists that claimed that an AI programme called 'Lavender' was used to prepare "kill lists," operating with little human supervision.

The University's response addresses these concerns, stating: "The University does not support, participate in, or condone the development of technologies for unlawful harm to civilians [...] Engagement in AI research is not synonymous with military application, and disengagement from Israeli universities would not meaningfully constrain the use of AI in warfare." They added, "What it would do is remove opportunities for ethical challenge, critical scholarship, and the development of norms governing responsible use."

The University also disagreed with the open letters' claim that HUJ is built on "occupied land" as well as HUJ being described as a "militarised campus." The University recognised that several hundred of the 20,000 student body at HUJ are currently in active military duty. However, the University's response also states that "while it is understandable that some students may feel discomfort, the campus is not a military base."

The response concludes, "We remain open to dialogue with members of our community who hold differing views and are committed to ongoing reflection on how the University can contribute, through scholarship, education, and engagement, to peace, justice, and human dignity for all."

The Saint reached out to UCU for comment, who then forwarded this statement from the group of staff and students who wrote the open letter:

"We consider the response from senior management to be wholly inadequate. It fails to recognise the gravity of Israeli institutional complicity in war crimes, educide, and genocide. We will be taking further steps to advance our campaign in due course, and invite any interested student or staff to get involved."

The St Andrews Palestine Solidarity Society told *The Saint*: "The University's response does not deter our efforts to do our part in supporting the Palestinian cause. It simply means we will continue to do what we are already doing with more creativity and effort."

They added, "The Hebrew University of Jerusalem oversees several archaeological digs in Israeli settlements on what was originally Palestinian land, such as Tel Hazor near Tiberius. The partnership with [the] University helps to continue these ongoing projects."

The society spokesperson continued, "We understand that universities are not tools of government, and that HUJ does not publicly support the genocide, however, the University's response is not, in our view, sufficient. Going forward, we expect the University of St Andrews to provide a clear outline of how they plan to use this partnership to the benefit of those who are impacted by the actions of the Israeli government."

National Focus — Stories from Scotland

MICAELA LOPEZ
News Writer

Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor Arrested Amid Epstein Files Investigation

Former Prince Andrew, now Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, was arrested on Thursday 19 February on suspicion of misconduct in public office in connection with documents released as part of the Jeffrey Epstein files. Thames Valley Police confirmed they had detained "a man in his 60s from Norfolk" and were searching addresses in Norfolk and Berkshire. Although the force has not named the detainee, reports from the BBC identified the arrestee as Mountbatten-Windsor, who served as the UK's trade envoy from 2001-11. The inquiry centres on whether he passed on confidential government documents — including those detailing official trips and trade matters — to Epstein. The 66-year-old was taken into custody on his 66th birthday. Although he was later released after several hours, the investigation continues. Buckingham Palace highlighted support for due process, and authorities stressed that no charges have yet been brought.

Political Storm over SNP Finance and Legal Transparency

Scotland's political scene faces fresh controversy as Edinburgh Sheriff Court documents have revealed that Peter Murrell —the former Scottish National Party (SNP) Chief Executive and estranged husband of former First Minister Nicola Sturgeon — faces eight charges of embezzling approximately £459,000 of party funds over more than a decade. These allegations include the purchase of luxury items and vehicles bought with SNP money. Tension escalated this week after Scotland's Lord Advocate, Dorothy Bain, privately briefed First Minister John Swinney about key details of the case before this information was publicly disclosed. The briefing discussed the scale of the alleged embezzlement and the likely timing of trial proceedings. Opposition parties have accused the Scottish Government of undermining the impartiality of the justice system and giving political advantage ahead of the Scottish elections in May. The Lord Advocate has denied any impropriety, insisting that communication with ministers about major cases is not uncommon.

Rising Council Tax Bills Hit Households Across Scotland

Households across Scotland brace for another round of significant council tax increases, as local authorities grapple with budget pressures. New proposals could see tax bills rise by around 5% in major population centres, including Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Fife, contributing to escalating household costs. Councils elsewhere may push even higher rates, with some areas considering double-digit increases to balance strained budgets and maintain essential services. These planned rises come following sustained tax increases last year and could see homeowners paying significantly more annually. Critics argue that long-term funding shortfalls and unfunded statutory pressures on social care, education, and infrastructure have left local authorities with little choice but to pass costs on to residents. Meanwhile, councils stress the necessity of tax rises to avoid deeper cuts to community services.

Continued From Page 1

company (with a landline number)," and advised lone female passengers to "take a picture of the driver's taxi badge (which drivers are legally obliged to display)."

Holt also told *The Saint* that Uber will drive local operators out of business and drain local economies of revenue and spending, stating that "Uber made £31 million gross profit in Scotland last year," but did not pay UK taxes and transferred all profits to their HQ in California.

Grzegorz Laska, a local taxi driver with Quick Taxis, told *The Saint* that he would oppose Uber operating in Fife, citing concerns about the potential loss of jobs among local drivers. He said that "local taxi services rely on regular customers and long-term relationships built on trust and reliability," which would be undermined by increased competition with Uber.

He also raised the issue of a lack of passenger familiarity with Uber, pointing out that "local taxi services offer consistency." Laska added, "Over the years, I have built strong relationships with regular clients who know me personally and are satisfied with the level of service I provide. This personal connection and accountability would be lost."

He stated that "for these reasons, I believe that approving this application would have a negative impact on local drivers, businesses, and the wider community."

Ross Newton-Taylor, a fourth-year student at the University, noted that the introduction of Uber would be harmful for local taxis. However, "for the students in the town and for the residents, it would be much more convenient." He stated that he would be likely to opt for Uber if it were available.

Some students expressed more favour towards local services. Emme Nelson, a fourth-year student, said that even if Uber were available, "ordering a taxi is just as easy here." She stated that she used Golf City taxis the most, and that she "got to know a few [drivers] well [...] it was just very welcoming."

Molly Joachim, a first-year student, told The Saint she appreciates that local taxis "feel a little less commercialised." While she acknowledged it can sometimes be difficult to find a cab on busy days, she said she worries the town is "already being taken over by big names," and that this addition would only contribute to that trend.

EFTA issued a press release just four days after lodging its objection to Uber, demanding the resignation of the Licensing Committee convenor of Fife Council for failing to meet the deadline for raising taxi fares.

EFTA said fares were due to rise on 3 December 2025, but that Fife Council missed the deadline, meaning any increase will now not take effect until the summer. This leaves operators short by more than six months of what they describe as "urgently needed fare income."

Ayton House Residents Forced to Relocate Due to Roof Damage

AVA GOODMAN
News Writer

Several students living in the private student accommodation Ayton House have been displaced from their housing, after issues with the building's roof forced their removal.

The impacted students, all living on the 'B-Block' building's top floor, were told they had to move out when they returned to St Andrews after the winter break, with little to no warning in advance.

An anonymous male third-year student shared his experience with *The Saint*, saying that upon his return in late January, "not even five minutes of being there," a woman entered and told him and his flatmate they had to move out that night because the roof was leaking. An anonymous female second-year student living at Ayton House said she received no official prior notice, but received a text from a friend informing her in advance.

Impacted students were told to temporarily go to the SPACE private student accommodation. The male student explained, "We didn't even finish packing; we just got our suitcases and went back down." Students were initially told they would only be displaced for a week, but were sceptical.

"I saw there were problems with the roof in the middle of December," he said.

By the end of the first week, Ayton House contacted the affected students and told them that upon further investigation, the repairs would actually take six weeks because "it's not repair[s] they have to do, they have to replace the whole roof," the male student explained.

Ayton House then notified the students that they would receive housing offers from the University of St Andrews, but also told students that if they declined this offer, they could provide no alternative.

The male student told *The Saint* that he tried to stay in SPACE, but he would have been required to pay £120 per night. When he returned to Ayton House to pack the rest of his belongings, a student resident informed him that Ayton House had spare bedrooms. Only when he asked reception did he officially discover the spare rooms, but he didn't take one, since they were in flats already occupied by unfamiliar students. "Just the fact that they didn't even tell us is frustrating," he said.

The female student had a similar experience, where she only discovered the available Ayton House flats when she asked about alternative accommodation. Both students also noted that their move-outs were poorly supervised and that Ayton House gave them little help — the female student said the only staff present during her move-out was the grounds security guard.

Neither the male nor female students are sure if Ayton House has begun the roof construction yet, as they informed the impacted students that construction cannot begin until they have a 24-hour dry period. Both students expressed their frustration with this. The female student said, "A 24-hour dry period in Scottish winter is like asking for unicorns to exist."



Both students said that communication from Ayton House has been inconsistent. The female student explained that at the beginning, they were "not communicative at all," but since their departure from SPACE, Ayton House has sent weekly email updates. The male student said these communications have been vague. "One of the update emails was just, 'if we get any updates we'll tell you,' I was like, that's crazy!"

Impacted students have been told they will receive compensation once maintenance is over.

The students explained that this situation has been difficult and disruptive to their lives. The female student told *The Saint*, "The first two weeks of school, I was doing all my school, but I was also trying to figure out where I was going to live and what my accommodation was going to look like for the foreseeable future." For her, the most stressful moment was moving out and having to move back in with no assistance from staff.

As the male student opted for the University accommodation instead, he explained that it's been mentally exhausting to reroute his routine. He also cited additional expenses, saying, "I had to order so many taxis recently because I wasn't sure how to get places."

He continued, "Now I'm more settled, but [...] come March, [...] [I] have to move back."

Both students expressed scepticism about the truth of the March move-in date, saying they felt like the work could take the full semester.

For now, the impacted students are mostly living in University accommodation in Fife Park and David Russell Apartments.

A University of St Andrews spokesperson told *The Saint* that they were "approached on 23 January by Ayton House to ask if we had any rooms available. We met with their representatives on 28 January and offered rooms."

> "It's been mentally exhausting."

They continued by explaining they've been given an initial end date of 13 March for the repairs, but "there is an option to extend if required. We have not received any further updates on the end date."

When asked about their relationship with Ayton House, the University explained this was their first formal collaboration with the company, but they have informal contacts with Ayton House through several local accommodation groups.

Ayton House did not respond for comment at the time of publication.

Photo By Manraj Gill

University Appoints First Orthodox Theologian

NATHALIE HANZLIK-MEECH
News Writer

The University of St Andrews has recently appointed Professor Marcus Plested, an acclaimed Orthodox theologian and academic of the Byzantine world, as the new 1643 Chair of Divinity. This marks the first time in the University's 613-year history that an Orthodox scholar has been appointed to a Senior Divinity Role.

Raised and educated in London, Professor Plested studied Modern History and Theology at Merton College, Oxford. He later taught at the Institute for Orthodox Christian Studies and the Faculty of Divinity in Cambridge. According to a news report released by the University, Professor Plested has "played a significant role in Orthodox-Catholic engagement, serving on the St Irenaeus Orthodox-Catholic Working Group and acting as the Orthodox consultant for the Vatican's recent Bishop of Rome document." Professor Plested's current research focuses on the Christian East, particularly the patristic and Byzantine world, and on the relations between the Orthodox tradition and Western Christian thought.

As the University news report recorded, Professor Plested believes his appointment to this position "offers the perfect platform" for him to "continue pushing forward the conversation between Orthodox and Western theologies, both Protestant and Catholic, and indeed the modern secular world."

Plested added, "The long history of St Andrews as a spiritual centre of and place of pilgrimage is also something that attracts me." St Andrews emerged as this centre through the arrival of the relics of the Apostle Andrew, who was from the Eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Plested hopes that his appointment "will continue in some way this story of meeting and interaction between Greek East and Latin West."

Professor William Tooman, Head of the School of Divinity and Principal of St Mary's College, described to *The Saint* the selection and application process for the prestigious 1643 Chair of Divinity position.

"The process is trickier than most. Divinity is not a single discipline; it includes everything from ancient languages and sacred texts to intersections between religion and philosophy, art, and modern political life. It is essential that the panel has experts who can assess all these disciplines and more."

Tooman explained that this year's appointment panel was chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and made up of three persons from the Principal's Office, three from St Mary's, and two external academics. "We had applicants from all over the world, nearly a hundred in total. It's the panel's job to review each candidate to determine who is the best fit for us."

Regarding what the role of the 1643 Chair of Divinity involves, Tooman responded, "In some ways, the Chair of Divinity is like any other professor in the school, conducting research, teaching, supervising, and pitching in with school administration. In other ways, it is unique because it is the highest profile and only named Chair in the College. It is anticipated that the Chair of Divinity will show leadership in his subject area — systematic & historical theology and church history — [and] promote the College and University in the UK and internationally."

University Chaplain Revd Donald MacEwan told The Saint that he is "delighted to welcome the appointment of Professor Plested." Revd MacEwan recognises that "St Mary's College, once principally a college for the education of Presbyterian ministers, has for long been a community of students and scholars from across the Christian world and beyond."

According to Revd MacEwan, "[t]here are many Orthodox Christians among our students and staff, and the Chaplaincy supports them through the appointment of an honorary Orthodox Chaplain, and provision of space in St Leonard's Chapel for Orthodox liturgies all year round, usually two services a month."

One such student is Collin Cooper, a second-year student studying Philosophy and Theology at the University, and a practising Orthodox Christian. Cooper described to *The Saint* what Professor Plested's appointment means to him. "Not only is this significant historically to the University, but it also has personal value to me, as my ancestor, the Reverend Samuel Rutherford, was Professor of Divinity from 1639 to 1661, becoming Rector of the University in 1643, the year for which the position is named."

Cooper went on to describe his understanding of the journey Orthodox Christianity had taken before it "landed on the beaches of St Andrews in the appointment of Professor Marcus Plested."



"The first Russian Christians made their way to the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the pre-eminent church in the world at the time, during the tenth century. The envoys reported back to Prince Vladimir the Great, 'We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendour or beauty anywhere upon earth.' Such is the overwhelming beauty, history, and pursuit for truth that the Orthodox Christian theological tradition brings to our beloved St Mary's College."

Cooper added: "I am greatly looking forward to the uniquely blended perspectives of Professor Plested as Eastern Christendom meets West once again near the River Tay."

Photo by University of St Andrews

Man Pleads Guilty to Sexually Assaulting Woman Outside Union

ELEONORA NUCCI
News Writer

A 21-year-old male ski instructor has pleaded guilty to sexually assaulting an intoxicated woman at St Mary's Place in St Andrews, Dundee Sheriff Court has heard.

Fraser Baggaley, a ski instructor from Edinburgh, admitted to the offence on 9 October, 2024 at Dundee Sheriff Court after being seen by witnesses and filmed on CCTV "placing his hands inside [the woman's] lower clothing while she was unable to consent," *The Courier* reported, adding she could "barely stand or walk." The victim's identity has not been disclosed.

Baggaley works in Austria and is due to compete in a five-day championship in March. He has been placed on the Sex Offenders Register while awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty.

A safety officer at the St Andrews Student Union became concerned after seeing Baggaley carrying the woman outside of the establishment and attempted to check on her welfare. When confronted, Baggaley claimed he was worried about her, to which the officer replied: "If you were that concerned, you wouldn't have put your hand down her pants."

Baggaley is reported to have repeatedly tried to answer questions on her behalf, but the officer managed to speak to the woman directly before trying to assist her across the road.

The ski instructor's behaviour then attracted the attention of two bouncers outside The Old Vic, who wanted to establish whether Baggaley and the victim knew each other.

Prosecutor Ritchie said the security staff saw the woman facing away from Baggaley while "the accused had his hand down her trousers." Baggaley was also seen propping the woman against a window, the Court heard.

One of the Vic's security bouncers intervened to stop the incident after determining the woman was unable to consent. Baggaley was described as intoxicated, but less so than the victim.

According to *The Courier*, two women later shared a taxi with the victim, took her to her flat and placed her in the recovery position in bed.

Police were contacted after multiple witnesses raised concerns, and officers later found evidence that she had vomited in her bed.

Prosecutor Ritchie stated the woman had no memory of being outside, how she got home or what had happened to her. Officers carried out a welfare check days later, and she found she still could not recall the events.

Following his arrest, the man told police: "I don't remember doing this, so I must have been equally intoxicated."

Pleading guilty on indictment, he admitted to kissing the intoxicated woman and placing his hands inside her clothing while she was incapable of consenting. The Court heard the pair were known to each other but were not in a relationship. Defence counsel Iain McSporran KC said his client expressed "genuine remorse and, indeed, horror" at the offence and maintained he had no recollection of the incident.

Sheriff Alastair Carmichael deferred sentencing until April for the preparation of a social work report.

Storm Chandra Linked to Seabird Deaths on West Sands

EDEN LEAVEY
News Writer

With strong winds and heavy rainfall, Storm Chandra swept across the UK from 26 to 27 January, washing up seven puffins and two auk — a small seabird found in the North Sea — on the shore of West Sands beach. All nine birds were found dead, and the West Sands Ranger Service worked to collect the bodies shortly after they were discovered.

This phenomenon is not unique to St Andrews. Following the past few weeks of extreme weather conditions, puffin birds have been found, both injured and dead, all over the coast of Scotland.

One puffin was found washed up on an Aberdeenshire beach during a storm on 29 January and was taken to New Arc Wildlife Rescue alongside eight other birds. It died later that evening, but rescuers were able to identify the bird by a ring on its feet, which was issued by the British Trust for Ornithology. It marked the puffin at 34-years-old, the oldest bird the rescue had ever encountered.

The recent presence of these birds is highly unusual. Atlantic puffins typically do not return to Scotland to breed until later in the year, normally between March and August. However, North Sea wildlife has faced increased challenges amidst the intensified storm conditions. A spokesperson from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland reported to the BBC that "we are seeing an increase in dead, starving and exhausted birds reaching our coastlines."

Per the International Union for Conservation of Nature's last assessment, Atlantic puffin birds are listed as vulnerable on the Red List of threatened species.

Emily Burton, conservation manager at the Scottish Seabird Centre, told the BBC that seabirds in the North Sea were already facing "huge pressures" caused by climate change, stating that puffins "only return to land for a short period each year to breed, spending most of their lives out at sea, so finding them washed up on our beaches in winter is concerning." She added, "Seabirds can struggle to survive during periods of stormy weather, as it makes it harder for them to feed."

Burton continued: "Changes to our oceans driven by the climate crisis, threats from disease, and unsustainable fishing practices can all reduce food availability or contribute to these tragic mortalities."

University Astronomers Discover New Planetary System

CECILY TODD
News Writer

Astronomers have identified an unusually dense rocky planet orbiting the red dwarf star LHS 1903, a finding that complicates prevailing theories of how planetary systems form and evolve. The discovery was made by a global research team co-led by scientists at the University of St Andrews and the University of Warwick.

LHS 1903 — also known as TOI-1730 — lies 116.3 light-years from the Sun in the constellation Lynx. The star has a mass of 0.538 solar masses and emits just 4.7% of its luminosity. It belongs in the "thick disc" population of the galaxy, meaning it is older than the Sun and was formed at a time when heavy elements were less abundant. The star hosts four closely orbiting planets, underscoring that substantial planet formation was already underway during those early, metal-poor conditions.

In many planetary systems around red dwarfs, dense rocky planets lie closer to the star, while planets farther out tend to have lower densities, suggesting the presence of thick gaseous envelopes. As Professor Andrew Cameron from the School of Physics and Astronomy at the University of St Andrews explained to *The Saint*, "Many compact systems of this kind feature dense, rocky planets close to the star, and planets with comparable masses but larger radii further out, indicating substantial gaseous atmospheres."

The first three planets in the LHS 1903 system follow that pattern, "but the fourth is anomalous — nearly six times the mass of Earth, and far enough out that it should be able to retain a deep atmosphere, but with the density of an iron-silicate planet," Cameron said.

Planet LHS 1903 e has a mass of 5.79 Earth masses and a radius of 1.73 Earth radii, producing a density of 6.1 grams per cubic centimetre, consistent with a rocky, iron-silicate composition. By contrast, planets c and d have significantly lower densities, 2.91 g/cm³ and 2.09 g/cm³, respectively, indicating likely gaseous envelopes. The innermost planet, LHS 1903 b, is also rocky, but with a density of 6.82 g/cm3.

Conventional models suggest that planets form as gaseous protoplanetary discs and gradually migrate inward. As they move through the disc, they can accrete thick atmospheres from surrounding gas.

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Computer Science Building to Be Demolished as Part of Digital Nexus Project

PABLO BRIENS MONTERO
News Writer

On Wednesday 11 February, planning for the construction of a new Digital Nexus building at the University of St Andrews was unanimously approved by North East Fife Planning Committee councillors. The building will host the School of Computer Science within the Science and Medicine area of the University at North Haugh, marking a milestone in the University's efforts to modernise its facilities.



The planning statement by the University proposed the demolition of the New Technology Lab building and the John Honey building, as well as the construction of a new three-storey teaching and research facility. This new building will provide improved and expanded spaces for both research and teaching activities, including three lecture theatres, teaching rooms, labs, offices, and research spaces designed to meet the needs of the School of Computer Science.

The site will include a central plaza — a communal space where students and staff can socialise. It will also feature a cafe and dedicated study spaces adjacent to the plaza, facilitating movement between socialising places and working areas, and strengthening the appeal for prospective students and staff.

The site is expected to increase footfall, support local businesses, and become a vibrant student hub.

The demolition of the current buildings and the subsequent construction will increase employment opportunities in St Andrews during the building phase.

Through a collaboration with the St Andrews Botanic Garden to develop the planting scheme for the new site, the development will see the planting of 42 trees across the campus grounds, a net increase of 35. Furthermore, the University pledges the implementation of comprehensive measures to protect and preserve diversity during the project.

The project is in line with the University's ambitious commitment towards net zero by 2035 as well as complying with the Net Zero Public Sector Building Standard. The building will be 100% electric and will install PV panels on available roof spaces to generate electricity to the site. Additionally, the site will include 50 new cycle spaces and improved pedestrian connections, reflecting the University's efforts to cut carbon emissions and invest in sustainable energy.

The £60 million Digital Nexus building is part of the wider redevelopment of buildings on the North Haugh campus and forms a key component of the University's £300 million Making Waves campaign. It will bring greater opportunities for research and collaboration across the University tackling major scientific issues including dementia and climate change. The site also seeks to grow outreach activities such as the Gateway to Science programme and summer programmes offered by the University.

During the demolition and construction phase, the University will relocate students and staff alike to different buildings across the town, in order to minimise disruptions to teaching and research.

While the planning permission has been granted, the University has not yet confirmed a timeline for the construction of the Digital Nexus building.

Photo by Alisa Senses

Will AI Prove Marx Right?

A vision for the future

GEORGES TOULOUSE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

It appears that we might be wasting our time at university. My generation — which left secondary school in 2022 — was probably the last ignorant of what AI might have in store for us. As we all now sleepwalk through our little degrees with little knowledge of what they might amount to professionally, such a time appears blissfully tranquil.

Our future is much more uncertain than that which our parents anticipated. Lately, however, in a rare bout of optimism, I have clung onto a glimmer of hope: that, in the worst case, Marx might be right.

Now, readers — or might I now say comrades — I must stress that I am not of a woo-woo, Marxist, down-with-capital disposition; had you told me a few years ago that I would come to believe that the advent of socialism was increasingly inevitable, I would have scoffed. Yet now I see us run the risk of falling onto a fatal path which *would* prove Marx right; let me explain myself.

I do not claim to be an expert on the subject of AI, but as its shadow has grown ever larger, I have tried to keep up with its trajectory, listening to and reading what those *in the know* have to say about it. There is real debate around the extent to which AI will change the world, whether it is inherently limited in its capacities, and therefore whether the productivity gains it allows will simply increase output or radically slash employment. I recognise all of this, and stress that I am no expert. However, I do hold expertise in one crucial field: pessimism.

We are already seeing the impact which AI is having on the professional market, especially regarding entry-level posts. It has wiped out scores of jobs, from assistants to secretaries to interns. I fail to see how we could avoid it, leaving much of the population, educated or not, with fewer opportunities if they lack a concrete skill (yes, I do fear my degree in Modern History and International Relations might place me in this category).

If one asks what the impact of such a constriction of the job market would be, I only see one: the acceleration of the already-detrimental concentration of wealth into the hands of the few. The few lucky professionals who managed to hold onto their jobs, the already-wealthy, and the new AI-controlling *bourgeoisie* — with an ever-greater pool of dispossessed people living poorer and poorer lives. In other words, the new AI-powered capitalism will make inequalities reach new peaks.

Therein lies the crux of the problem: inequality, even at historically lower levels, cannot be tolerated by a given economic system. The slightest depression will threaten the stability of a system already flawed.

We very well might arrive at an untenable situation, whereby inequality will lead to resentment and tensions in the general population towards the new oligarchy. The more intelligent and/or democratic systems will either move towards a replacement solution for regular employment (might our future be a mediaevalist agrarian utopia?) or a universal income of sorts. The situation in less flexible and/or more autocratic political systems, unwilling or unable to provide employment and income for the masses, would eventually boil over into revolt, which I can only imagine would be harshly repressed if the beneficiaries of the new *status quo* have anything to do with it.



Whatever the system or coping mechanism, the majority will always wish to fight against the abject inequality they will experience, and therefore the concentration of production. In the most elementarily-Marxist terms: a class war against the bourgeoisie for the collectivisation of modes of production.

Maybe the socialists of the twentieth century were a bit presumptuous in believing that the final stage of capitalism was that inherited from the robber barons — I don't think they could have imagined the stage of capitalism we are reaching now, where even (to steal their rhetoric) the exploited masses will be replaced. At least exploitative capitalism gave people something to do; at least it gave them some income.

Now, as I inch closer to thinking Marx was right, my enduring centrism keeps me anchored in the real world and leads me to think there is still hope to prove Marx's claims wrong. I hope we will not have to put the majority of the world's population through such suffering before doing anything about it; I hope we have the intelligence to pre-empt all of this by asking ourselves whether individuals — shareholders or CEOs — should be allowed to control a tool as powerful as AI. We don't allow private individuals or companies to own or develop atomic bombs, so why on Earth would we take the risk of letting them develop a tool as potentially devastating as AI? Well-piloted, in the interest of the public good, it could be a leap forward for humanity; in the hands of voracious business interests, it could devastate us. Maybe the time to think about an ownership solution to guarantee AI's fair use is now, and maybe it is urgent to do so.

If we are unable to do it now — which, seeing the world's track record on climate change, is more than probable — it is necessary to prevent those who control AI from exploiting the tools of repression. If the Sam Altmans of the world manage to get our leaders eating out of their hands, protecting them from popular discontent through the means at their disposal, we will be in grave trouble. Given the bleak outlook in that regard (take note of the current American administration's ties to Big Tech), we must act now while we still can.

I think such an argument can speak to all sides of political thinking, excluding the Musks and Metas. To avoid mass poverty (hello, left), to avoid a revolution which would depossess the wealthy (hello, right), to avoid a bloodbath (hello, anyone with a heart), we must seize the opportunity to regulate AI now before it is too late.

A spectre is haunting humanity — the spectre of AI. All the powers of capitalism have entered into a holy alliance to push AI forward. We have the responsibility to fight for humanity while we can.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISABELLE HOLLOWAY

Devil's Advocate

Is the St Andrews F***boy Dead?



SAFFRON ROWELL

32% YES

SOPHIE RAE

NO 68%



To misquote Nietzsche, "The f***boy is dead. He remains dead. And we have killed him." This may seem like a big statement, but suspend your disbelief for 500 words or so, and even if I can't show you the light, I'll show you a good time. At least, a better time than you'd get after a Wednesday night out.

We can hold with no uncertainty that this is a relationship town. Around every corner, a couple lies in wait, as ominous and overt as if they were dressed in neon Lycra, supervillain style. Veg aisle of Tesco? *WHAM* — they're buying a meal for two. Silent floor of the library? *KACHOW* — there they are. Oh, you're in a tutorial? You think you're safe? *BANG CRASH SPLAT* — your lecturer is showing you photos of his Valentine's Day date. Final strike, you have no choice but to admit defeat.

> "A f***boy is, as I see it, a man entirely comfortable in being a slag."

Couples have redefined our entire culture. Along with the perfect grades, those new Dico boots, and the ability to actually go swimming in this weather, it is an indicator of cultural capital to be in a relationship. And it's a given that all of you single Simons would sell, not only your souls, but any additional appendages thereupon, to be in one.

Here is the dilemma. A f***boy is, as I see him, is a man entirely comfortable in being a slag. Once you reach the sacrosanct altar of the Union dance floor, he has one job, and one job only. And he is honest about it. To name its opposite, this is not a f***-with-your-emotions-boy. The f***boy, in his purest form, does not toy with you. In fact, he — let's call him Jamie (for fear that the expletives key on my iPad may break) — is no bad person. I like Jamie. I respect Jamie. He is honest. He is motivated. He is self-aware. A man on a mission — a pilgrimage if you will. Jamie knows what he wants, and boy does he get it.

But there is no space for Jamie in this town. Hookup culture doesn't exist here, not in the same way as at other unis. Sluttiness is no longer "in," even for men. Always eager to please, our men cleaned up their s**t, like any other early morning, and traipsed back to their own beds. Only — they've stayed there. And so, there is no one left who will eat you out without asking you out to lunch the next day. And this societal taboo leads to a lack of honesty — suddenly it's "I do want a relationship, it's just that we don't click together."



Every man I know is either in a relationship, actively looking for one, or recovering from the last. Is it a sign of the self-importance imbued in this town, the seriousness sewn into the cobblestones, the collective idea that we all have to have it all together, that we killed all our f***boys? Are we the first indicator in a generational shift? Or is it simply that after a while, the Market Street run-ins get a bit old?

Whatever it is, I will be grieving Jamie's death. If nothing else, he provided great entertainment.

Few things in life are guaranteed, but the existence of so-called 'f***boys' at university is a given. One of the most common associations around going to uni is that you are your own person for the first time. Naturally, you are going to explore new things about yourself, your living habits, and your sex life. Moving away means you can explore and reinvent yourself and, despite its smaller population, St Andrews is no exception.

They say that you either leave St Andrews married or as an alcoholic, and I think I speak for the majority of the student body when I say the latter is most likely. St Andrews has this built-in image of marriage and romance, largely thanks to the over-romanticisation of the 'Kate and Wills' style love story, which is so oversaturated it blocks out the potential for anything less. Don't be fooled, the f***boys of St Andrews are very much still here.

The most common way to get with someone is out at a club — St Andrews has 601 and it maybe has the Vic. That's it. Or Tinder. It's easy to miss the 'f***boy' culture because the pool for it here is proportionally much smaller than at bigger universities. If your vibe is going out for a silly night at the Union and dancing with friends, hook-up culture will hardly play a part in your night at all. But if you go looking for it, it's not going to be harder to find it here than anywhere else. After all, this is the town of the humble situationship, just take one look at the Crushdrews submissions.

> "The f***boy can take on many forms; he is not exclusive to a stereotypical one-night stand."

The 'f***boy' can take on many forms; he is not exclusive to a stereotypical one-night stand. Withholding commitment by being in a messy situationship also qualifies, because if he wanted a relationship, in this relationship town, surely he would ask, right? Just because he may go about looking for the same thing in a different way doesn't change his intentions.

On a societal level, men are not shamed for having casual sex in the same way women are. There is no risk of being 'found out' for having a one-night stand, no walk of shame, and no moral headache from the world around you if you happen to get pregnant from it. In an ideal world, the same would go for women, but unfortunately, that is just not the case. The possibility of knowing someone who knows someone who will know what you're up to is no turn-off for most men, as they'd be praised instead of slut-shamed.

St Andrews attracts students from far and wide; their internationality is part of the unique charm here. With so many people from so many different places and cultures, each with our own personalities and goals, a blanket statement which declares none of the students a 'f***boy' just can't be true. Exploring yourself and who you are at university is something each of us experience, and hook-up culture, while optional, is part of that. If a man, or anyone, just wants one thing, as long as it's mutual, consensual, and (somewhat) respectful, it's not necessarily a bad thing. For better or for worse, the 'f***boy' will always be alive and well.

ILLUSTRATION BY MOKSHITA NAGANDLA

Embrace the Freudian Slip

What not to say, and how to say it

STELLA PAK-GUÉNNETE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

There is something ironic about how much effort we put into *not* meaning what we say.

Freud called it parapraxis: the slip of the tongue that reveals what you weren't planning to admit. The moment when unconscious feeling overrides conscious presentation. It happens when your defences are low – when you're tired, distracted, or not actively managing perception.

Most of the time, though, we don't slip. We rehearse.

We will run a sentence through our heads three times just to remove the part that's true. "I was actually upset" becomes "it's fine." "I really wanted it" becomes "it would've been nice." "I like him" becomes "it's not that deep." The instinct is almost immediate. You feel the honesty rising, and you sand it down before it reaches the surface, as if sincerity is something that requires a disclaimer.

What's strange is that we're all attracted to 'genuine' people. We praise authenticity as if it's rare, just never in ourselves. When it appears accidentally, it suddenly feels miscalibrated. Too earnest. Slightly exposed. We admire clarity at a distance and then suppress it up close, all for the sake of nonchalance.

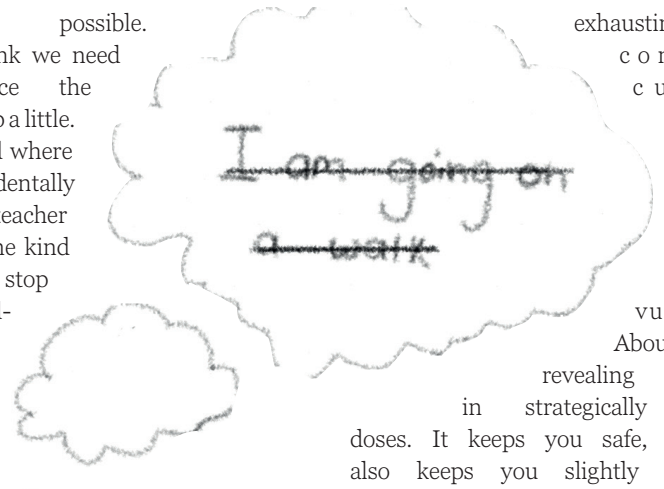
Our generation made visible investment seem socially risky. Caring reads as overcommitment, an indication you've put too much of yourself into something that might not reciprocate. The moment you admit you actually wanted the position, or that you were genuinely disappointed, you reveal the size of your stake. And stake implies vulnerability, which we tend to have an aversion to.

As a result, caring turns into a grand notion rather than a normal, daily one. Not because the feeling is dramatic, but because it's legible. The Freudian slip seems horrifically embarrassing, not because it's intense or accidental, but because it removes your ability to manage how invested you look to others. So we pre-empt it. We speak in half-claims and disclaimers so nothing definitive ever escapes.

University makes this instinct stronger. In a place where social circles overlap and impressions travel faster than intentions, clarity feels highly costly. A definite opinion risks defining you; a visible preference risks commitment. So we keep statements adjustable and easier to revise later.

But here's the ironic social consequence: the people who feel easiest to be around are usually the ones who *don't* do this editing. Conversations move faster with them. You don't have to decode what was really meant. The friend who admits she's jealous without pretending she's above it gives you something solid to respond to. Sincerity is magnetic, not just because it's rare, but because it makes interaction possible.

So I think we need to embrace the Freudian slip a little. Not the kind where you accidentally call your teacher mum, but the kind where you stop editing mid-sentence.



Interactions flatten when everything is 'fine.' Letting the honest sentence stand might make things briefly awkward, but at least it would make them real.

The slip is usually the only time something escapes unmanaged — before the downgrade or the automatic correction. And almost always, we rush to soften it as if clarity itself were the mistake. But maybe the accidental slip is the clearest version of you. The one not managing perception ... because at the end of the day, no one really cares.

There's something exhausting about constantly curating your own vulnerability. About only revealing feelings in strategically acceptable doses. It keeps you safe, yes. But it also keeps you slightly unreachable.

Embracing the Freudian slip isn't about blurting out every single intrusive thought you have. It's about resisting the reflex to dilute the real ones. It's about allowing yourself to be legible. Because the alternative is a generation fluent in irony and allergic to meaning. And I don't think we're actually as chill as we pretend to be.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE O'SULLIVAN

Why I'm Not Engaging with the Epstein Files

DESDEMONA SMYTH
VIEWPOINT WRITER

On 30th January 2026, the American Department of Justice released "the last batch" of evidence in connection to Jeffrey Epstein's conviction of federal sex trafficking charges. I will not be looking at these files. I have absolutely no interest in seeing evidence of children getting abused, raped, and murdered. The files include not only photographs that the investigators working with the DOJ took; they also include photographs and videos taken by Jeffrey Epstein and his associates. The evidence being reviewed by the 'internet courtroom' is not exclusively information gathered after the fact; much of the evidence being reviewed is photographs or videos taken by the abusers themselves.

The social response was immediate and intense. People opined about justice, accountability, and exposure. Conspiracy theorists leapt out of the woodwork, invoking devil worship; others described feeling sick, yet unable to look away. People want to validate the victims through witnessing their abuse and expressing outrage, yet few of these men have undergone meaningful investigation or consequence. The people most impacted by the release of the files are, unsurprisingly, the most vulnerable among us; the release of these files serves only to further the narrative that we might as well give up resisting horror and oppression because there is no hope. The material is so grotesque that "satanic worship" has become the internet's shorthand explanation. It is easier to reach for the supernatural than to confront the reality that ordinary men abuse children. I am bombarded with jokes, patterns and systems of abuse flattened into '-gate', teens joking about how they "dodged the draft"; the conversation is destabilising and dehumanising.

Curiosity does not always equal strength — sometimes it is self-flagellation. Not consuming graphic content of abuse is not a moral failure, it is an act of agency. There is a narrative in the information age that being fully informed is a moral responsibility, and to turn away is to be complicit in violence. I believe this to a degree, but saying one is complicit in this violence by looking away from images of the assault and murder of children is misinformed. Consuming every document, testimony, image, and detail does not make you more moral than anyone else; it is not a prerequisite for caring about justice. Bearing witness has value, but so does a level head and a regulated nervous system. I am not ignoring the Epstein Files — but I can only see too much before my hope starts to waver. As (the always relevant) bell hooks said, "Hope is essential to any political struggle for radical change, when the overall social climate promotes disillusionment and despair."

Sexual violence is not abstract for me; it lives in me, altering my ability to trust, to feel free in friendship, to have 'fun.' Engaging in material that exposes systemic exploitation — especially when it involves older men in power abusing girls — does not feel like reading the news, rather it stretches a wound that will not heal. I did not need to read the Epstein files to understand that many men *like* to have sex with girls who are incapacitated or unconscious. I do not need graphic documentation to understand that powerful men who abuse women are protected; I have been listening to the news my entire life. I do not need to see evidence of this abuse to know it happened. I believed these women from the moment I heard them.

There is a difference between seeking truth and immersing oneself in horror to the point of desensitisation. The facts of Epstein's crimes are already established. I do not need to absorb graphic details to believe survivors. Choosing not to engage is not always avoidance; it can be agency. Trauma, specifically sexual violence, strips people of control. Deciding what I allow into my mind and body is a way of reclaiming that control. I am finding strength in saying, "I care, but I will not consume this."

In an environment that rewards ragebait, restraint is radical. But my own journey towards self-actualisation and sexual empowerment requires discernment. Not every door needs to be opened by every one of us. I do not have a concise or uplifting conclusion. There is evil in the world, and it does not reside exclusively in 'evil people.' The world we live in was built to enable and protect white men; the system did not 'fail,' it is working exactly the way it is supposed to. Just because I'm not studying its minutiae, doesn't mean I don't know this to be true.

Here Comes the Sun!

Why we're so miserable

MEGHAN TITHERIDGE-STARK
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Something is happening in St Andrews. Swarms of people block the pavements of our three streets. Flocks of them lounge about on the stairs of Sally's Quad. Hordes fill the outdoor seating of our beloved pubs. This little town is undergoing a seasonal transformation, and I could not be happier.

My first semester here was a bit of a shock to the system. I was expecting the small-town hospitality I'd come to love during my year abroad in the Belgian countryside. What I was greeted with were cold faces, averted eyes, and a general sense of big-city-self-importance compressed onto three measly roads. Growing up in London, I know better than most how to power walk down a road. The unshakeable big-city-brain has only one steadfast goal: me, me, me. Get me to point B. We trample over toes, small dogs and baby's prams on our resolute mission. And nobody really cares. Eh, it's London. But here, in this lovely little town, I had hoped people would take time to stop and smell the sea air, revel in the ancient architecture, and dance to bagpipes. Call me naive, infatuated with an idealised Scotland but, at the very least, I was expecting friendliness.

One of my very first days here, I was out on a walk and complimented a local's sweet dog. I hardly got a grunt in response. The other week, I let a girl know her zip wasn't done up all the way on her dress. She seemed irritated that I bothered her. I try to smile at people on the street (my RBF is so very off-putting), and I'm not sure I've gotten more than a grimace back. I had all but given up hope. In trying to escape London's malaise, I had inadvertently moved to the one place in the UK worse than it. This town's coldness had turned me into what I sought to destroy. I became the haggard student, rushing from point A to B, entirely consumed in my own selfish purpose. But lately I've noticed a shift. Someone thanked me on the street for letting them pass. On opening my window, my room filled with outside laughter. Joyful chatter replaced the biting wind that whirls in your ears. Everything cold suddenly became warm.



The return of the sun after weeks of doom and gloom has changed people. I would hazard a guess that the majority of St Andrews residents suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder. Maybe that's extreme, but I doubt any of us are strangers to the winter blues in such an unrelentingly grey climate. I've had so many conversations the past few days about how people finally 'feel alive' again. That the sun has melted off their winter coats of misery. Life feels easier when nature doesn't work against you.

For many of us, it's easy to feel like this is it. Brighter days are coming! We made it through; life should be easier now. But, not to dampen your spirits, the oppressive days *will* be back. I'm not a meteorologist, just your average Debbie Downer. By the time the next academic year begins, we will all be back in that dark place, in this dark town. In this time of transition, it's important to reflect on what went wrong this winter. Curb your excitement, at least for now.

Take your vitamin D, talk to a doctor, spend time with friends. Get whatever little sunlight you can. Force yourself outside no matter how much the rain makes you want to cry, or the wind freezes you down to your marrow. We can't control the weather, but we must learn to cope with it. Spending over half the year in a constant state of torment is not sustainable. Enjoy the sun while we have it, but we all must enter the darker months with greater conscientiousness. We can enjoy life, even when it feels against us.

ILLUSTRATION BY DASHA ANDREEVA

Call Me, Maybe: Resurrect the Cold Call

MILLY SMITH
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Apparently, Gen-Z is plagued with a strange disease called telephobia, the fear of answering the phone. This is a phobia born and bred by our generation's social-media-induced social awkwardness, and perhaps a bit of pandemic-era social isolation. I wonder exactly when this disease began to spread. I can recall my euphoric reaction upon receiving my first-ever technological device, the iPad mini, which was to last me many years, many inane text exchanges, and many ill-advised Snapchat filter selfies. I whiled away evenings on FaceTime with my childhood best friend because, despite having spent the previous eight hours nattering at school, we clearly couldn't bear the parting. During lockdown was when my phone call habit peaked, given the government-mandated lack of any school-time nattering, whole days had to be taken up on FaceTime, exchanging banana bread recipes and favoured Chloe Ting workouts (god, dark days).



Yet, once life finally returned to normal, and we could swap FaceTime calls for park meet-ups, banana bread for a bottle of WKD, the phone-call mania of those days of hibernation faded away. We replaced calls with text messages, voice notes, or long-winded Snapchat video diaries. We stopped calling each other and never started again. A recent survey discovered that a quarter of people aged 18-34 never answer their phones; they just ignore the ringing and then respond via text. This is quite a departure from the attitudes of generations gone by. 90s rom-coms depict young lovers twisting telephone cords coyly, engaging in small talk with their crush, only for their sweet confessions of love to be overheard by half the family. Telephone calls soundtracked my childhood, whether it was my dad shushing my brother and my maniacal giggles from the car's backseats so he could pick up a business call, or my mum catching up with friends on the landline. Over university holidays, I've spent evenings desperately missing my friends, longing to return to the rather dark, smelly embrace of Aikman's cellar, looking at pictures of our nights spent together like a desperate ex while blasting the Cure's 'Pictures of You.' Yet, never did I think to pick up the phone, give them a call and live out a more sober, sanitised version of those Aikman's nights. Calling feels reserved for one's family, the scheduled Sunday night calls to prove you're alive and eating your greens. The thought of calling a friend, with no warning, almost feels perverted, like entering their house without knocking.

Becoming a (semi) adult is difficult for one plagued by this phobia, considering the amount of calling adulthood apparently requires. Upon turning eighteen, I was horrified that I now had to call the dentist, and my mother couldn't continue to be my walking, talking planner. "How awkward!" I gasped, "What am I even meant to say?" But this was just the start. Then came the GPs, the opticians, the restaurants that have refused to enter the 21st-century and create an online booking portal, and don't even get me started on when I had to set up my own mobile phone contract.

However, somewhere along the way, I eventually realised that this phobia is ridiculous and quite clearly made up. So, I relinquished my telephobia. I get a little buzz now when I call the GP; I almost want the receptionist to congratulate me on how far I've come. Over Christmas, I called a friend to catch up, instead of the usual 'Pictures of You' routine. I'm a convert, a believer in the cold-call, the 'I'm just calling to say hi.' It helps me feel connected to faraway friends, and speeds up days of back-and-forth texting.

The next step in my telephobia survivor journey might have to be installing a landline in my student flat so I can finally live out my coil-twirling fantasies.

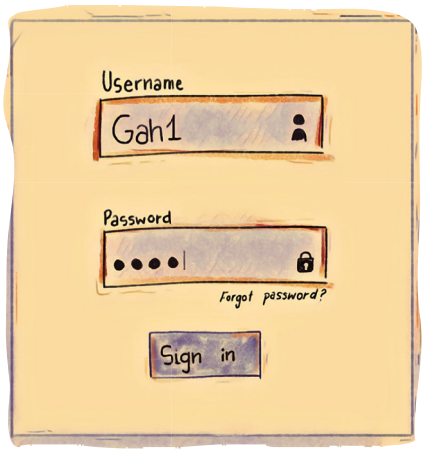
ILLUSTRATION BY SANDRA PALAZUELOS GARCIA

Why Overcomplicate the Username and Password

ISLA JEFFREY
VIEWPOINT WRITER

There's a certain beauty in the way that rage against technology can bring us together. The struggle against online security measures in particular is a topic of common complaint. Linger long enough in the library, and you're sure to hear dismal cries from students about a certain Microsoft Authenticator. A recent battle against Facebook's system for creating an account (which resulted in a personal animosity against Mark Zuckerberg) sparked my nostalgia for simpler days. I cannot for the life of me remember the last time that I was able to log in to a website with only a humble username and password. Although once staples of online communication, they now feel like dated concepts, relics from the dark ages of the internet. To get anywhere now, we need reinforcements. Emails, phone numbers, recovery emails, video selfies, various reCAPTCHA puzzles, one-time passcodes; signing up for a new account feels like hacking into a vault of classified information. It seems that the prioritisation of customer experience has moved down on the list, having been replaced by stringent standards of security.

There is an overarching question that comes with this: are these measures really for our own benefit? To face facts, it's not as if Big Tech companies have the best reputation for keeping their customers' data safe. Usually, the very mention of one of these virtual empires brings to mind a void, sucking in every piece of information possible. For example, do we choose to believe that companies need extremely personal details, such as our gender or date of birth, purely to enhance our experience with them? Unfortunately, this sounds too good to be true, and likely is. Each piece of information that we hand over could potentially do the opposite, increasing the risk of our data being sold, farmed, or otherwise mistreated.



On a similar note, the simplicity of online shopping may be in decline. For many of us, banners shouting "click and collect" or "free delivery" have become a part of our lives. And this was for good reason: the allure of doing your shopping online was that it was significantly easier than doing it in person. However, it would appear that online retailers want more of a connection with their customers. Gone are the days of a simple, one-off purchase with no commitment. Instead, we must prepare to enter scores of details about ourselves simply to get through to payment. One of the defining principles of online shopping — its lack of commitment — has disappeared. In fact, we may be about to witness this massive sector shoot itself in the foot. It's come to the point where simply grabbing your shoes and heading out to your local high street or corner shop has become quicker than skipping through a slog of logins, memberships, and exclusive discounts. Just because I want to buy some milk or shower gel does not mean that I want to commit to an account which will only gather digital dust, somewhere in the background of my browser. Imagine you weren't allowed to leave a shop after making a basic purchase without signing up to several loyalty schemes, none of which were of any interest to you. At this point, online shopping may be too clingy for its own good.

Ultimately, the good old days before multiple-factor authentication are gone. While managing how much the internet knows about us definitely feels like more of a challenge nowadays, it would be naïve to ignore the fact that it is a domain which is constantly changing and adapting. Enhanced security measures, irritating as they are, are symbolic of a new digital age that the username and password just aren't advanced enough to handle. Online matters are making headlines more and more frequently, with Truth Social, TikTok, and AI constantly cropping up. These are modern wonders that require modern solutions. Perhaps it is time after all to wave a fond goodbye to the duo that helped us to navigate our online pasts, as the future of the internet will inevitably grow even more complex.

ILLUSTRATION BY SANDRA PALAZUELOS GARCIA

The Perils of Being the 'Mom-Friend'

What we lose when we're labelled

ALEIA BHALLA
VIEWPOINT WRITER

I plan birthdays, I give pep-talks, I care deeply, and — in more ways than one — I keep my friends sane and safe. *Who am I? Ding! Ding! Ding!* I'm the quintessential 'mum' of the friend group.

Let's try another one ... I am funny, witty, and usually self-effacing in my humour. Any guesses? Yep, you got it again ... I'm the joker.

I could go on forever, but you get the point: friends have labels. The Cast List has been released, and now we all have a designated role. Time to wear our costumes and clear our throats as we assume our positions on stage: the character of the jester, or the therapist, or the nerd.

I have always been the 24/7 emotionally available therapist-mum character. And, it's not that I hate the planning or the pepping or the perpetual caring — I hate *the label*. I hate that even amongst friends, I must have a particular task which I am assigned and rewarded for completing. Companionship has been caught in the crossfire of today's labelling frenzy. Now, even my purpose as a friend has been reduced to a distinct, monosyllabic tag, and I loathe it. The truth is, we have a 'job title' and a hyper-specific place in every other facet of life; for example, I am a nineteen-year-old female, Indian, bi-curious, liberal, coffee-loving, psychology major who likes to read and is, currently (kind of), in her amateur-but-hopeful-writer era. These labels follow me around everywhere like a shadow. But once upon a time, they would leave me at the door to my friend's kitchen, and I would finally get to just exist as ... Well, *me*.

Some may argue that the caring, the joking, the intelligence: they're part of who we are to begin with, and therefore, all the label does is provide a sense of belonging. But where you see labels on placards defining us, I see a mask being pulled over the faces of my loved ones. I see all the rough, storied edges being smoothed down into uncanny pixelated versions of what once was.

All the labels do is box people into ideas of what they should be and how they benefit *us* in a relationship. It doesn't matter, then, if what they bring us is stability or laughter, as long as both parties are aware of the transaction that is taking place: You play your part, and I'll keep you on my 'Close Friends' list. Not only is this a reductive way to assess the value of our relationships, but it also furthers the impending sense of isolation that we Gen-Zers feel from our community. After all, we are so much more than a first impression: my initially quietest friends have become the loudest, and the smart ones have revealed that they truly are the most brainrotted of the lot.

From what I've seen, as we settle into our dramatic personas, we forget to branch out. People stop trying to share more of themselves because, guess what, we've already secured our coveted seat at the tropeified friend-group round-table. Stay smart. Stay silly. Stay right where you started, and we never have to worry about getting lost or splitting up. But, alas, we are wandering beings. We are meant to change, yet our labels keep us tightly chained to places we — more often than not — need to leave in order to grow.

In a world where our friends, our chosen families, are meant to help us spread our wings, our name tags are keeping us caged. I reckon, as you fly the nest, you should bring your flock of friends with you. Brave all the winds on this journey as one, solid, multi-hyphenate unit. Just please, please, leave the labels in the dirt.

> "These labels follow me around everywhere like a shadow."

Instead, find your nearest 'therapist,' 'fashionista,' 'club-rat,' 'nerd,' 'movie-geek' acquaintance and ask them, can we *just be friends*? And let them show you who they are before you tell them.

Because if to be loved is to be known, we need to try to know better, so that we can love harder.

Computer Trouble: The Underrated Loss of the Laptop

POPPIENA HORSINGTON
VIEWPOINT WRITER

As an anonymous wise person once said: "You truly do not know what you've got until it is gone." And when a laptop goes, it takes much more with it than you could have ever anticipated. My computer broke last year, and it took my sanity. Today I ask, where is the empathy for the technologically illiterate and how does one cope with the loss of a constant presence? I seek to advocate for those with computer problems, the underspoken nuisance, especially at university. If this article finds you at the right (but also deeply upsetting) time in your life, then please know that I empathise with you and am hoping to wipe your tears with these words.

Let's start with my lack of credentials. I knew I was never going to be a tech person when I made my older brother download Rollercoaster Tycoon for me on the family computer at nine years old. From a very young age, I was very comfortable outsourcing the technological load to someone older and wiser. Regrettably, this habit has continued well into my twenties. When I could not move my computer's mouse, I called my brother in tears, the camera of the FaceTime wobbling from my heaving sobs. When he told me that I had accidentally turned the mouse off, I sobbed even more for looking like an idiot. I will not be disclosing when this call happened, so please do not ask.

At a place where technology is so vital to being on top of things, any crumbling of that stability is cause for panic. When my computer well and truly broke, I sat in PC Currys, whimpering away to the tech assistant attempting to help me, because I could not fathom a world in which I could conquer university without my laptop. Would I be the loser pulling up my seminar prep on my phone, appearing like an apathetic student? Would I be the bum with a Euphoria backpack, carrying nothing but two blunt pencils and a notepad? I was talking to a coworker about this dilemma recently, and a customer kindly chimed in and said, "Guess you'll have to get used to using pen and paper again, huh?" Old man, please butt out. While I am having this conversation very publicly in front of you, that is by no means an invitation to join with such condescension. Pray tell, how will I hand my essay in on MMS via pen and paper? We are living in a modern era and we need to think with such modernity, which places technology at the forefront of our world.

For those of you whose favourite biome is the Apple ecosystem, then I believe that this is less of an issue for you. You simply whack out the iPad with the stylus and keyboard, the ultimate computer and phone hybrid. Your Pinterest and YouTube time is not compromised at all and truthfully, there are times that I envy you. But for those of us who lack these resources, we are left to our own devices. Or rather, lack thereof.

If you don't understand how a computer works, I scratch my head with you. If you call your tech support person — family, friend, or lover — at the slightest moment of lag, I'm right there, picking up the phone with you. I know I expect too much from this petite, mildly dirty screen, and exhausted fan brrr-ing away as I type this article. But as much as I acknowledge this fatal flaw of mine, I fear you simply will not catch me watching a YouTube tutorial on how laptops work. This is because mine works pretty well 99% of the time, and I consider that rare 1% a divine reminder to not take my technology for granted. Finally, I apologise to any computer science students who I am sure have abandoned this article, for my stupidity was too much to bear. It upsets me, too.



ILLUSTRATION BY EVE FISHMAN

I Saw the World, and It Was Now't Special

AMELIA MACKENZIE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Middle-class girl saw the world, and it wasn't good enough? Where are my pearls? I must clutch them! Ok, I am aware of how jarring I sound. So, to avoid being egged or spat at, please bear with me...

Previously, I was always surrounded by people better-travelled than I. I'd return to school and university post-holidays, braced to hear about friends' umpteenth trip to New York or Namibia, or worse, hear my lifelong adversary: the question "Do you ski?" I had barely left Western Europe, and the most exotic people I had ever encountered were the people of Blackpool, and, come to think of it, they probably still are. However, fuelled by envy to see what the fuss was about, in 2024 I travelled South-East Asia, nipped to Africa, and romped further through Europe during my year abroad. *Maybe* I did come back better-rounded, with many life lessons learnt. How anything is loo roll if you're creative enough was one. Even the lows provided me with anecdotal currency: Having been spiked in Bangkok, and with my dreary year in France mirroring Napoleon's exile from it, I've enjoyed spinning those yarns like veterans telling tales of lost limbs.

However, my past, less-travelled self, was still somewhat disappointed, and I want to share why...

First, being from Yorkshire, I saw no *real* reason to leave it and even less reason to pay to do so. Nothing surpassed what lies in God's Own Country. You're looking for raw majesty and the greatest examples of human achievement? Have you not seen the house on the M62? Some trek miles for the spirituality of Angkor Wat or Santiago de Compostela, but any trip via that wonder of the world is pilgrimage enough for me.

Furthermore, fun and I were always incompatible, and unfortunately, the type of 'fun' you spent your childhood longing to outgrow is the same 'fun' you're expected to have with fellow hostelers in adulthood. Adding to the list, I find animals utterly boring, I'm unimpressed by views, and I find performing dancers and singers excruciatingly embarrassing in all forms, particularly *A cappella*. Nothing, therefore, filled me with greater dread than when minibus excursions were paused so that we could be sung at, or so we could gawp at some rare type of tree or goat on what was inevitably the driest piece of land I'd ever seen.

What's more, most other travellers are unbelievably irritating. They are neurotic about food hygiene, they wear ghastly vest tops and shorts of obscure lengths, and they buy hideous magnets to put on their fridges (no doubt filled with neurotically hygienic food). Their obsession with taking pictures is also infuriating. I strongly believe that Google has an ample supply of non-blurry photos of any landmark without my ugly mug ruining them. But to look at others, it would appear that their private photoshoot had been crudely interrupted by a holiday. I'm sure I do things just as irritating, but ultimately, it's difficult to travel without thinking that you're the only worldly cosmopolitan left in a world consumed by technology, health and safety, and vanity.

Finally, no travel is that intrepid anymore — aye, there's the rub. In the nineteenth century, Livingstone managed to lose contact with the outside world for six years in Tanzania. If you got lost in Tanzania today, you'd be located by a GPS-savvy local guide and whisked to the nearest refreshment stand before you could say "hakuna matata." Technology, internationalism, commercialism and, well, the British, took over and created an increasingly homogenised world. Although this opened the world, it narrowed the possibilities for adventure. That 'lost' feeling was swapped for eSIMs, Trainline, and 7/11s with the same comforting but cowardly feel as mummy's apron strings.

So, yes, travelling is wonderfully enriching, but it does have its disappointments: true adventure was lost to modernity, nobody is as sophisticated and cosmopolitan as me, "if it's not from Yorkshire, it's shite", and, most unfortunately, I can't pick up this paper as I'm currently in Switzerland...

The Saints and Their Psychedelics

IRIS PRITCHARD
FEATURES WRITER

All names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of interviewees. This article is not an opinion piece, and the author does not endorse or denounce the use of psychedelic drugs.

"I thought I was on Noah's Ark," said Sam Smith, describing his experience taking psilocin, also known as magic mushrooms or shrooms. "I was lying down in my friend's flat, and I could hear the dishwasher. I felt like it was the sea. It was bliss."

While travelling in Asia, Marie Madow described finding herself arguing with boys she had met over music. "I was severely bored when I found myself doing shrooms with these two boys." She thought, "If you don't like *my* music, then we are going to create a song that you like." She called one of the boys' friends, and the pair spent the next hour creating a song. "I gave him notes and sang out loud. He would play them on the piano and create vocal harmonies and riffs. We put together a 30-minute tune."

Attitudes about psychedelic use are shifting here in St Andrews. While heavily stigmatised in our parents' generation, magic mushrooms and psychedelics as a whole are undergoing what many are calling the 'psychedelic renaissance.'

"When I was younger, I thought drugs were for really f***ed up people," Seline Sparks recalled. Madow also recalled that while she thought of psychedelics as the "lesser of the evils," she still considered them incredibly dangerous.

Both Sparks's and Madow's views of psychedelic drug use have completely shifted. Sparks reflected on how strange it was to realise she was now one of the "drug-using delinquents" she had grown up judging. "Drugs have helped me a lot. I was very uptight when I was younger. Drugs taught me how to have fun, and now, without drugs, I can still have fun."

For many, such as Madow, psychedelics have been a tool. "They greatly enhance my ability to make sense of all of my thoughts and feelings," she explained. "It feels like the part of my brain which stores and organises memories and feelings has been enhanced."

Smith said using psychedelics allowed him to be comfortable in his body. He found that after using psychedelics, things that used to bother him became things he embraced. When asked if these effects have lasted, Smith replied, "100%."

John Doe described how taking mushrooms made him realise the extent to which what he puts into his body affects his reality. While tripping on mushrooms, Doe recalled being dehydrated and feeling as if the colours around him were dull and "draining of their life."

"I found a bottle of electrolytes, I downed it, and in real time, I watched the blue LED lights around me become more vibrant and prettier," Doe said. I realised how hydrated I am, how nourished I am, how balanced I am, affects my external output.

> "While I was dancing, I was thinking about all the things that I loved."

Madow and Sparks found that using psychedelics has helped them discover new parts of themselves. Before using psychedelics, Sparks described herself as a very STEM-minded person, interested in learning about science and math. Using psychedelics didn't change her interests — instead, it expanded the scope of what she found interesting. "I think that seeing my subjective experience and my experience of reality so saturated made me a lot more emotionally aware or emotionally interested in people and how they think," she explained.



I can connect more with people, I'm less judgmental of people."

While on LSD, Madow felt she discovered her purpose in life. "While I was dancing, I was thinking about all the things that I loved. I kept asking myself, 'What do I love in life? What do I get out of this? What brings me joy?'" She looked around and realised, this was it — people. "By extension of people, it was languages. I realised that is my calling," Madow said. "Because I love people so much, and because I'm a social creature, languages are how I access that and how I tap into that."

Madow's and Spark's experiences of self-discovery while on psychedelics are corroborated by the National Institutes of Health. Their research found psychedelics increase connectivity between different regions of the brain. These new connections disrupt old patterns and habits, leading to the ability to understand and appreciate new points of view and ideas.

For some, this degree of thinking poses a serious risk. "Psychedelics are thought enhancers or feeling enhancers," Maddow said. If someone is not ready for how much it can make them think or how much it can expand their worldview, then it can really overwhelm them."

All the interviewees stressed the importance of the context in which a person uses psychedelics. Sparks described her first time using psychedelics as the worst trip of her life. She was sixteen, in a forest in the middle of a storm. "I think any kind of drug is still very dangerous, especially when you are younger. I think that's why I would really advocate for legalisation or control, because it can be really dangerous," she said.

"No matter what your external environment is, you have to pay mind to your internal environment," said Doe. "There are people [who] are not comfortable relaxing back into themselves; they're not comfortable surrendering, even to themselves. They cannot sit in a room by themselves and reflect on who they are, they can't meditate," he explained. I wouldn't recommend they do anything psychedelic because the most important thing is to surrender. If you're fighting against yourself, that can create conflict."

The one constant factor throughout Madow's experiences with psychedelics was that she was always in a "really stable place," she explained. "I was ready for something new, I wanted something to change."

While Madow's interest in psychedelics stemmed from a desire for something to change, Tim Evans became interested in psychedelics because of its connections to math and art. "When mathematicians talk about higher-dimensional figures in maths, they say these things are just like theoretical things. When I took DMT, I experienced them," Evans said. DMT or 'the spirit molecule'" is a psychedelic that induces short-lived but intense kaleidoscope visuals and geometric patterns. Many users also describe communicating with "entities."

"When it comes to DMT, the phenomenology is just so otherworldly. You see these crazy geometrical figures, geometrical figures that seem to be the same figures found in high-dimensional geometry. They also seem to be the same figures that you see in most religious art forms: mosques, temples." Evans described these figures as "fractals."

"Artists and spiritual seekers have been seeing a cosmic template of the geometry of the world beyond the physical," he explained."DMT gives you direct access to what [it] feels like to see the vibrational templates of reality beyond appearances."

While every interviewee had a unique experience with psychedelic drugs, they all agreed that it had deeply shifted their worldviews. Many of them also stressed the importance of letting go. As Madow said, "Be open to every thought that you have and every feeling because it can be so beautiful."

ILLUSTRATION BY MAYA MASON

Posh Sport on Public Land

Is golf in St Andrews elitist?

GRACIE JONES
Features Writer

Is golf elitist? Most people would probably say yes and point to the £600 price tag on golf clubs or the five-star hotels that serve golf tourists. But here in St Andrews, where the game is played on public land and protected by an act of Parliament, is that still true? As an outsider to the sport, golf seems to represent all things prim, proper, and posh. To me, the driving range looks like the realm of lords, ladies and rich tech bros. Could St Andrews be the outlier among so many country-club golf courses? I spoke to several students and local golfers to find out whether the home of golf's fame makes it more or less exclusive.



The Old Course, the most ancient golfing ground in the world, belongs to the town and its people. Decreed by Archbishop John Hamilton in 1552, the ruling still stands 474 years later. Though the Old Course and its fellows now belong to the Fife Council under the supervision of the Links' Trust, people are still welcome to walk the greens on Sundays, picnic, and play fetch with their dogs. But in a place where tourists spend thousands a day, can students and locals actually afford to play at the home of golf?

As it turns out, playing the Old Course isn't as exclusive as you might think. Students and St Andrews residents get heavily discounted tickets. Eliza Dana, a fourth-year Geography and Sustainable Development student who's also the women's captain of the University Golf Club, explained that it's a "really excellent deal" for students, costing only about £400 per year to play the St Andrews courses. Connie Hardick, a third-year Management student and the Golf Club's social secretary, agreed. "You've made your money back if you play the Old Course just twice in the whole year," she explained. Compared to tourist prices, which can cost £350 or more per round on the Old Course, it's a bargain.

Beyond the University, local golfers receive a significant discount on Links tickets as well, although St Andreans must live within a specific range of the Old Course in order to be considered for the discount. The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews has also invested in a number of programmes meant to make golf more accessible, such as encouraging more women to pick up a club and facilitating accommodations for disabled players. Young St Andreans between the ages of five and eighteen are often exposed to golf via the St Andrews Links Junior Golf Association (SALJGA), which offers group coaching and access to golf facilities for an annual fee of £30.

Both students and locals seem to think that golf is more accessible here than in many other places, but "there are definitely still financial barriers," Dana said. Over the years, John Laird says his membership fees at the R&A have increased, and sometimes he prefers playing elsewhere because St Andrews has exploded in popularity. It's just too crowded.

Though you might think that R&A members can saunter onto the Old Course any time they like, play a round and then enjoy a five-star meal, that's not the reality by far. According to Laird, a Cupar resident and local farm owner, members have to ballot for the Old Course like anyone else and schedule rounds far ahead of time on the other St Andrews courses. "They [the Links' Trust] just didn't know what they had thirty years ago, but now they've realised it, so the fees have shot up and so has the popularity," he said. It's not necessarily a bad thing, but the public nature of the golf course has made it occasionally too busy for locals.

Affordability and easy access don't always mean real accessibility. Your family heritage doesn't have an impact on most sports, but it sure does with golf. Both Hardick and Dana say that whether or not you feel comfortable playing golf really does depend on whether your parents play. Hardick doesn't have a golf background. Looking back on her first few golf lessons, she remarked that "it's really intimidating to start," and there can be a lot of imposter syndrome. It's difficult to go down to the driving range and start playing, especially in a place where so many people seem to be born golfers. "But if you go with someone who saunters in like they own the place, it's a lot easier to get comfortable," Hardick said.

Though getting across the grassy threshold might still be hard, Laird said that golf's country club stereotype just isn't quite true in St Andrews. Laird, who's been playing golf since the age of six and has been a member of the Royal & Ancient Golf Club for over twenty years, definitely has the experience to say so. "It's just different here," he said. Since most golfers here are local Fifers, "golf is more common, a casual social space". "It's really a form of escapism for me," Laird said. "A way to get off the farm and see friends."

> "If you go with someone who saunters in like they own the place, it's a lot easier to get comfortable."

As an outsider to golf, I'd imagined the social scene as a draining place, somewhere between Gossip Girl and Downton Abbey, like an LA prep-school mixed with tweed-topped formalities. But apparently, I've got it wrong. In fact, most golfers I spoke to loved the sport especially because of the social scene, not despite it. "Every time I tell someone I play golf, they say, oh, we should play golf together," third-year student Amara Baker-Onyancha said.

Hardick and Dana agreed that it's been "really great for making friends." When nervous first-years approach the Freshers' Fayre table, Hardick likes to tell them that though it may seem intimidating at first, she's come to love the sport and the people so much that she's "literally thrown [her] whole life into it." She's now represented the University, sits on the committee and even has a job in the industry, despite the fact that she only discovered the sport two years ago. In her own words, "it's just made my life so much better."

What about the general Golf Club culture? "It could be better," Hardick admitted. "It is a very male-dominated sport," Dana added. Hardick mentioned that there can be a lot of "golf ego, like 'my golf's better than yours'" and men tend to enter the Club as experienced golfers, whereas most of the Club's beginners are women, creating a skills-based (and confidence-based) imbalance. The Golf Club's structure helps make up for this imbalance, Hardick said, by having a number of women-only socials.

Though Hardick appreciates that it might seem "a bit odd," she thinks that having women-only events creates a really positive, safe space for everyone, especially newcomers to golf. One of the Club members even created a new women's university golf league, and plans to hold a panel about women in golf in St Andrews."As a club," Hardick said, "we're trying to really integrate beginners, especially women, into our history and tradition, and make sure they're not feeling left out."

On the other hand, Baker-Onyancha is not involved with the Golf Club and prefers to go out on the green with the older St Andreans she's become friends with or just by herself. "I think the locals don't view it as an elite sport," she said, "but the students definitely see it as something special."

For Baker-Onyancha, that special shine given off by University golf has kept her away from it. Though she said she's on the periphery of the golf club, it just doesn't feel like the place for her. "There's some ego around it," she said, "and the spaces are just very white and very male." She prefers to play it as an independent sport, describing golf as a place of self-growth, where she "juxtaposes" herself against the golfing norm and practices putting herself in places that seem like the opposite of where she'd be comfortable. "It's very grounding, actually," Baker-Onyancha said. She likes to go to the driving range by herself, feel the rhythm of it, and enjoy seeing measurable progress.

"It's a real shame if you don't play golf here in St Andrews or you don't try, because then you've missed out on half the town," Hardick said. Regardless of their approach, all the golfers I spoke to shared the same opinion: "It completely opens up your horizons — literally," Hardick explained. As social secretary of the Golf Club, she sees it as one of her duties to make sure everyone who has even the slightest itch to play golf gets to try it out. "No one should have to come banging at the door to get in — we want to pull them through at the first knock," and bring them into the world of golf.

Illustration by Isabelle Holloway

Buying, Selling, and Curating at Smedley Fine Art

MAIRA RANA
Features Writer

Nestled between Master Cobbler and Waterstones on 99 Market Street, you might have noticed a new opening: Smedley Fine Art. While the 'old-fashioned' lettering that transports you back to an Edwardian Britain might not look amiss in our little town, the story behind the shopfront might surprise you.

There's something slightly surreal about walking into a fine art gallery, in a location as coveted as Market Street, and being greeted by someone you could just as easily be sitting next to during a lecture. George Smedley, a third-year History of Art and Medieval History student, is the man behind this new addition to our town.

While it's Smedley's name that sits above the door, this isn't a solo enterprise. The gallery is the latest, and arguably, most exciting venture of the McEwington-Sexton-Smedley trio who founded their namesake business in 2022.

The inspiration to set up a business dealing in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British art came after a group trip to an Eric Ravilious exhibition during A-level revision. "We were lucky enough to do a couple of exhibitions at school. We were studying a lot of history, and we enjoyed curating stuff, so we wanted to find a way to make some money from that," Smedley explained. Although Smedley admits he's always been interested in the art world, often visiting exhibitions at museums or galleries, it was the "three of us going together that really did it."

The birth of the business, however, wasn't quite as glamorous as a shiny new shopfront in the heart of St Andrews. In fact, it was "incredibly low level" with the trio initially buying most of their stock on eBay before putting it on Instagram with the price in the caption, urging people to DM them.

After the launch of the Instagram account in 2022, the trio started selling art at various vintage and antiques fairs in spring and summer 2023. "Two of us took a gap year," Smedley told me."During that year we did quite a few fairs, in Oxford and Cambridge, three or four in that initial year," he explained. They were general vintage or retro fairs and the audience wasn't necessarily coming for art, but they were interested in vintage things, which translated into an interest in art from that period. "We didn't have the money to go to proper art fairs, so we had to work our way into things that would work for us."

And work it did — going to the fairs is how they met the man who would later give them access to a London office space where they could host their own exhibitions. Although they were able to use the office, owned by an architectural practice, free of charge, running the exhibitions wasn't an easy task.

They had to produce professional-grade catalogues themselves, executing everything from formatting and design to printing, photography, and text, all in-house. "It was a progression from being seventeen or eighteen writing history essays for an exam to doing something more proper, a printed book presented publicly in an exhibition," said Smedley, describing the jump.

For the exhibitions, McEwington-Sexton-Smedley underwent an eight- or nine-month process of buying artworks, preparing and framing them, followed by a couple of months writing and preparing the catalogue.

To generate more money in between exhibitions, Smedley took to South Street, selling art at the monthly market — his first time "properly doing something" in St Andrews. It's also when he had his 'eureka!' moment, realising "there's quite a market here to sell things."

In the penultimate or final years of university, students are always scrabbling to secure graduate jobs, internships, or anything. When asked about how he sees his venture fitting in with more traditional routes, Smedley explained that since two of them study history-related subjects at university, dealing in art is useful and almost acts as work experience.

"It's very hard to get internships or placements in this industry, so part of it was generating our own experience," he explained. Outwith upskilling their CVs, "it's also a lot of fun, regardless of the level we were doing things at," Smedley said.

While securing a student house in St Andrews is no mean feat, Smedley makes the process of leasing a commercial property sound somewhat smooth. "This place happened because I was talking to the shop owner one day and he said he might be looking to give away the lease for a year," he explained. "That progressed over the winter and now here I am."





In a town like St Andrews, where it feels like most people are living off the Bank of Mum and Dad or Grandma and Grandad, in the case of generational wealth, you would be forgiven for assuming the trio had a helping hand. Smedley was transparent, however, explaining that capital has always been the limiting factor. "If you had a million pounds you could scale a lot faster. But we started buying things for £20 or £30 and building up from there," he explained.

They've also been fortunate to have works on consignment and loan for exhibitions. "Having a good website and good social media presence gives credibility, even as twenty or 21-year-olds trying to operate in this space," Smedley said.

As for the artwork itself, Smedley agrees that everyone has their own interpretation of artworks. "Obviously you can suggest meaning, but ultimately, the client has to be happy with it in their house. That's why the gallery looks the way it does [with] natural soft lighting. It looks more domestic. Art lives in people's homes, not just in galleries."

Although it's not as flashy as London, Smedley believes that St Andrews has optimal conditions for small independent businesses. "There's a great market of students who might buy something as a graduation present. There are locals. There's [the] tourist trade and holiday homeowners."

While students may occasionally joke that the three streets can start feeling suffocatingly small at times, there are undeniable perks that come with living in a wee town. "You get to know people very quickly here, even outside the University bubble. There's a sense of community. It's also cheaper than Edinburgh or London. I wouldn't be able to get a space like this in central London."

Of course, there's the matter of Smedley's degree — how does he manage it all? As someone who's not the greatest fan of the library, he opts to "work from here rather than the library. I'm still sitting on my laptop doing readings and coursework, just also ready to sell art."

> "I'm still sitting on my laptop doing readings and coursework, just also ready to sell art."

It might feel surreal that a student who has to go through the same academic slog as you is sitting with their work, gracefully poised over an antique-looking wooden desk, all while you're fighting for seats in the library. You'll be glad to know, however, that Smedley hasn't let his success turn him into a snob. "It still hasn't really settled in. I don't think it will until I'm sat here hungover from the pub and people have been coming in buying stuff."

Photos By Timothy Ngo

A Day with a Local 24-Year-Old Sheep Farmer

ISABELLE HOLLOWAY
HEAD OF ILLUSTRATION

Tuesday 17 February

7:30am – St Andrews

"How early do you want to start?" Craig Byrne messaged the night before, adding a laughing emoji. Byrne, a 24-year-old sheep farmer, manages 3,000 sheep.

Nine hours later, I waited on a bench outside Taste. Seagulls broke through the flush of day.

Byrne emerged from a white panel van and we shook hands, his hands blackened with oil.

"Are you sure you're going to be warm enough?" he asked. We grabbed coffees for the road, preparing for the day ahead.

The van was, as warned, coated in mud and dust, sharp with the smell of oil. I felt a poke from behind. Lynn, Byrne's fourteen-month-old border collie, was helping with the sheep.

7:40am – On route

Byrne usually starts at 5am, trying to get paperwork done before daylight. He doesn't come from a farming family; he runs his business independently. A quick business opportunity took him from no debt to £100,000 in debt, which he's steadily repaying.

"You can't change the weather," he said, "so you learn to cope with it."

Sheep farmers' main responsibilities are to pay farmers at the agreed-upon time, contain sheep, and collect dead sheep. He tries to avoid wintering land or land used to feed livestock over winter, more than an hour away so that if a sheep gets out, he can be there fast.

You can't just leave when you have livestock. As a sheep farmer, you are tied to the land.



7:50am Fife fields

Byrne pulled over, the hills dark where they blocked the sun. Sheep dotted the ridgelines. I was jolted by Lynn's heavy bounds as she sprang from the van.

"Away! Away!" Byrne shouted, whistling. "Lynn!" The sheep scattered away from Lynn.

He explained that "Away!" commands Lynn to the right, and "Come by!" commands Lynn to the left.

"These are breeding sheep," he said. "They're grazing radishes."

After harvest, leftover plant matter germinates into biomass. Grazing fattens sheep, increases crop yield, and removes diseased leaves.

"Over!" Byrne called. Lynn cleared the fence, and we headed into the van.

8:00am – On route

Byrne pointed out a mob of 700 sheep grazing stubble turnip, a catch crop, after grazing the cauliflower. Fencing would need shifting later.

We stopped by Newport-on-Tay for fuel before crossing the Tay into Fowlis. "I drive about 40,000 miles a year," he said.

Byrne waved to farmers as we passed.

"Half of my business came from conversation," he explained. Three weeks after meeting a farmer in Northumberland, he was given 1500 sheep. A farmer he met on Friday just gave him 700 sheep. Byrne's phone buzzed with updates.

"There's a lot of trust in farming," he explained. Everyone knows everyone. If you mess up, no one wants to work with you.

We followed a road lined with dry stone walls. Pastures rolled toward a silver strip of water, snowy hills rising in the distance.

"There's 420 self-shearing sheep here," Byrne said.

Of the lambing process, he explained that lambing systems vary. Farmers often lamb from December to May, ready for slaughter in the summer. Byrne also fattens sheep belonging to other farmers from October onwards for a set fee per head each week.

8:45am – Angus fields

"Come by! Come by!" Byrne yelled as Lynn darted toward the sheep.

It was colder than expected, so I ended up wearing four layers, including Byrne's jacket. Although new last week, it was already muddied.

Byrne unloaded the quad bike, and we set off.

Since Thursday, the sheep had grazed most of the biomass, so the fencing needed moving. We dropped posts, changed batteries, and wired lines, often untangling wire from the bike. Byrne said he plans out fields on maps before work.

He enjoys learning from podcasts when he hasn't lost his earbuds: recently, he has resorted to tucking his phone into his beanie.

I clung to the edge of the oily seat as we chased the sheep on the bike. "Lynn!" Byrne shouted.

He explained that although sheep were originally bred for wool, wool is now removed to keep sheep healthy. Sheep headbutting, running through the electric fence, or not listening are other challenges.

We chased the last uncooperative sheep. Lynn jumped back on, and we raced across golden fields under a cloudless sky. Occasionally, she rested her head in my lap.

10:00am – Farm grounds

Byrne indicated a warehouse used to fatten chickens before they're processed fifteen miles away. Another farmer arrived, and they discussed the week ahead, sharing some banter.



11:00am – Dundee

We stopped for sandwiches. Byrne usually gets two pork pies, sharing with Lynn.

Outside farming, he enjoys squash, badminton, and hiking in the Highlands. "I just put my boots on and go," he said. He wants to learn Gaelic and try alligator meat in Louisiana.

11:30am – Fife fields

Byrne explained that this is a stubble turnip field, to be followed by potatoes. Down the road, the white polytunnels were growing strawberries and raspberries.

He instructed me to take posts, take paces down the row, and drive them into the ground. We wired the fencing around the field.

Byrne showed me how to strike with a hammer, letting its weight do the work. I nearly buckled when handed it, but he swung effortlessly.

I tested the electric fence with my hand. Rattled, I jumped. Byrne laughed, saying that sometimes farmers stand on one leg to absorb less current.

"Lynn! Away!" he shouted as she herded sheep into the expanded field. The sheep descended "like locusts" upon the new biomass.

Despite the impressive nature of this scene, there are not actually many young people going into farming. Byrne explained that the average age of a farmer is nearly sixty. High costs like £150,000 for a tractor and £5,000 for a trained border collie, the need to chase up unpaid invoices, night maintenance, and Scottish weather dissuade many.

"My job is to like mud," he joked.

According to Byrne, a farmer needs patience, adaptability, and good mentors.

His motto, "I'm never beat, and I always land on my feet," keeps him going.

4:00pm – Fife fields

"Come by! Come by!" Byrne shouted. Lynn rounded the sheep, the new fields starting to sink into shadow. A train rolled by.

I asked Byrne if he considered himself a shepherd. He said farmers own the land while shepherds are employed caretakers, so he supposed he could be one.

"Away! Away! Lynn!" Lynn panted, her nostrils steaming. She looked satisfied.

4:10pm – On route

Stone cottages, a recently restored castle, and a kirkyard overlooked the valley.

Byrne hopes to prove himself more this year. Although farmers can compete for more land and ground, he said they work together and help each other out.

Although farming is usually perceived as a traditionally masculine industry, Byrne remarked that there are a few independent female farmers. More often, however, women serve as the brains behind the farms in husband-wife partnerships.

4:45pm – Kingsbarns

We pulled into the beach where Byrne said that on certain days along the coast, you could faintly see Edinburgh across the water. As we watched the waves, Byrne spoke further on the industry, saying that you could sell £100,000 of stock on a market day, and that farmers on this side of Fife are more likely to wear ties when selling.

We passed woods dotted with snowdrops, stables, and an old mansion before driving back to St Andrews. Having worked here, he knew all the backroads.

When I asked Byrne what laypeople could do to help support farmers, he encouraged buying local produce and looking for the QMS (Quality Meat Scotland) assured label on meat products, which also helps the environment.

Byrne's goal is to own 1,000 sheep and 100 cows by 30, and begin payments for his own farm by 40. He hopes to build something to handover to the next generation. Although he doesn't wish the stress on anyone, spending nights worrying about his sheep and with only his dog as company for now, he plans to farm for the rest of his life.

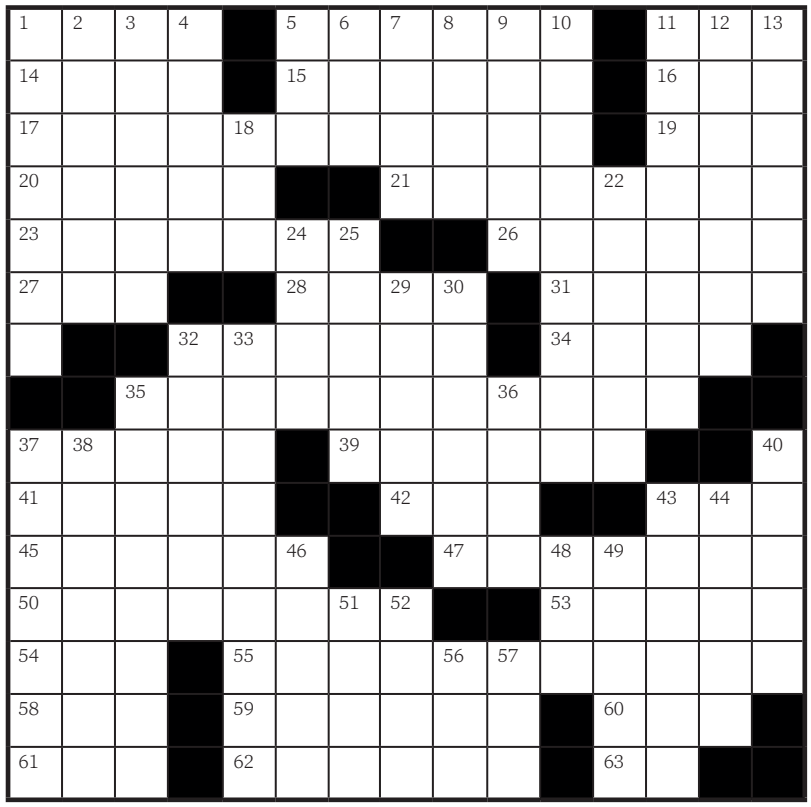
PHOTOS COURTESY OF CRAIG BYRNE AND ISABELLE HOLLOWAY

PUZZLES

EDITOR: LUANA VAN ORANJE

PUZZLES@THESAINT.SCOT @THESAINTSTA THESAINT.SCOT/PUZZLES 26 FEBRUARY 2026

‘Florals? For Spring? Groundbreaking.’



CROSSWORD by Julia Emery

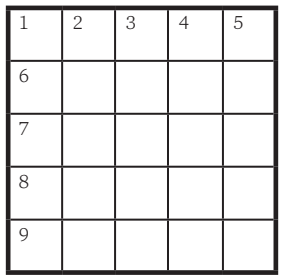
ACROSS

1. Ed Sheeran rap song
5. Flowering shrub in the genus Rhododendron
11. Posh bigwig
14. Aston Villa coach, Emery
15. Lunatic
16. Where to see haute couture (“___ runway”) (2–1)
17. Genre popularised by Pollock and Rothko (8–3)
19. Alek seen during fashion week
20. Heroic name, in Cork, Limerick, or Sligo
21. *Catwalk*’s solar season opener
23. Confident confirmation, from a yank (1–4–2)
26. Nerf’s ‘Super ____’
27. Afternoon drink to be enjoyed with a scone
28. Matador’s cloak
31. Comical
32. ____ Aires
34. Gait between walk and canter
35. With *39a*, this years’ are found throughout the puzzle (7–4)
37. Caesar or Caprese, for example
39. *35a* ending
41. Fig trees in Madagascar
42. Oil-can letters
43. Cable addition
45. The Crown, in court (5–1)
47. *Don’t Walk* daydream
50. Founder of modern human anatomy
53. Retreat on East or West Sands
54. Old English letter
55. They ‘make or break’ an outfit
58. King, in Versailles
59. Log-rolling contests
60. Mormons, in brief
61. Soak (up)
62. Sculpted, by *VS*
63. Plural ending

DOWN

1. Yin and Yang, to *FS*
2. Where to find a soldier (2–4)
3. New Hampshire city
4. Laboratory solution’s concentration strength, at MIT
5. Reddit Q&A
6. Efron of *High School Musical*
7. Picnic pests
8. Northeast China river
9. Nobles above viscounts
10. “____ Apostles”, New Testament work (4–2–3)
11. Words of belated understanding (3–1–4)
12. Singular US penny (3–4)
13. Fisher and Donaldson, eg.
18. Alternative to wheat or white
22. Minotaur relative, or a Pokémon
24. Westernmost province of Indonesia
25. Can. province housing Winnipeg
29. Some stuffed bears
30. Equally close (2–4)
32. Nursery rhyme starter, asking for wool
33. Currencies in Dallas and Detroit
35. Leading vessel
36. Hook’s henchman
37. Handleless metal trays
38. Zip–____–dah missing interval
40. Zones
43. Celtic priests
44. Grape holders
46. Canon competitor
48. Word order for the Welsh
49. Alix, of TikTok fame
51. West Coast Cali uni.
52. Ooze
56. Churchill’s secret org.
57. Deg. awarded to theologians

Mini Crossword by Luana van Oranje



ACROSS

1. What one might do to their eyebrows, to be ‘in’ with Y2K fashion
6. Actress Blakley of *Nashville*
7. What every law starts as (1–4)
8. Who states this week’s theme, in a 2006 comedy-drama film
9. Ore analysis

DOWN

1. What *8a* wears
2. Ear parts to accessorise
3. Yale, McGill, etc. (abbr.)
4. British textile designer Birtwell
5. Little sister to Hermes’ Birkin bag

Word Ladder by Alexander Wiseman

Change one letter per step (using real words) to turn the first word into the last

C H I C

— — — —

— — — —

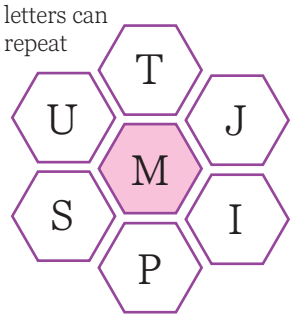
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L O O K

Spelling Bee by Luana v. Oranje

Make 4+ letter words. Words must use the center letter, letters can repeat



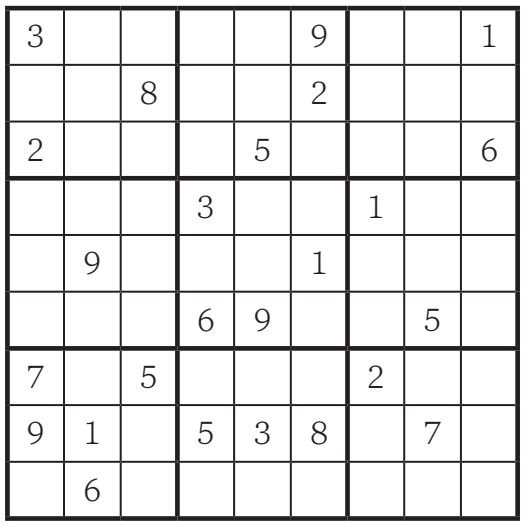
Quick Cryptic Clue by Madeleine Oliver

Use definitions and wordplay to work out this clue

1. Rolling amongst the blooming sunflowers!



Sudoku by Isaac Oldham



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

Rebus by Alexander Wiseman

Phonetically interpret the rebus to dechiper the phrase or saying

TW**KNICKERS**IST

— — — — — — — — — —

— — — — — —

DRESSED → 999

— — — — — — — — — —

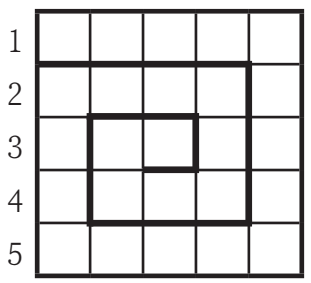
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Connections by Madeleine Oliver

Find groups of four items with something in common

CAMP	BOAT	LOCK	SEASON
SPICE	HOLIDAY	BROGUE	YEARNING
MULE	FLAVOUR	BIWEEKLY	VEG
SECONDARY	DRESS	WAIT	TENNIS

Whirlpool by Madeleine Abignale



Row clues fill the corresponding rows (all 5 letters long). Whirlpool clues start at the top left and spiral inwards following the dark line ‘path’ (one after the other, any length of letters)

ROWS

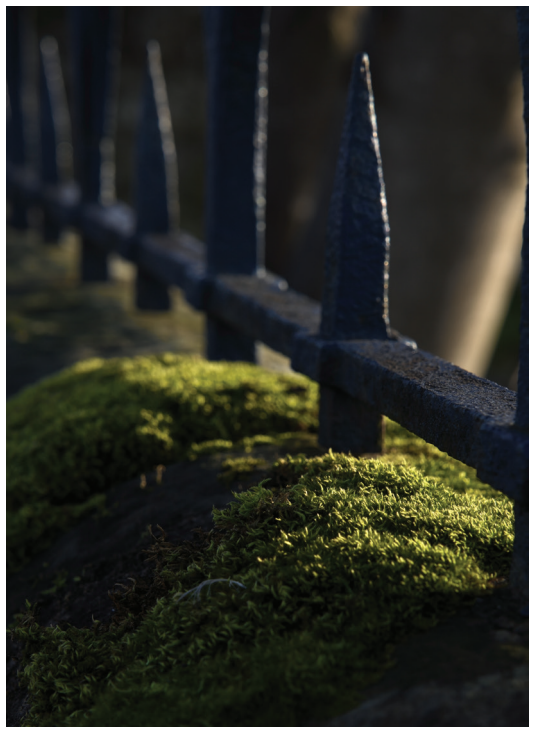
1. Woven fabric
2. What you might say when knocking at a friends door (3–2)
3. Indigenous cultures museum in Zurich (abbr.)
4. Scottish skirts
5. Levi’s brand speciality

WHIRLPOOL

1st. Coagulated liquid
2nd. Sews an edge
3rd. Extracted an ore
4th. Jumpers, or to make one
5th. Floor covering in an entrance
6th. Animal with a mane

Nature's Reclamation

CHRISTOPHER KELLY-BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHER





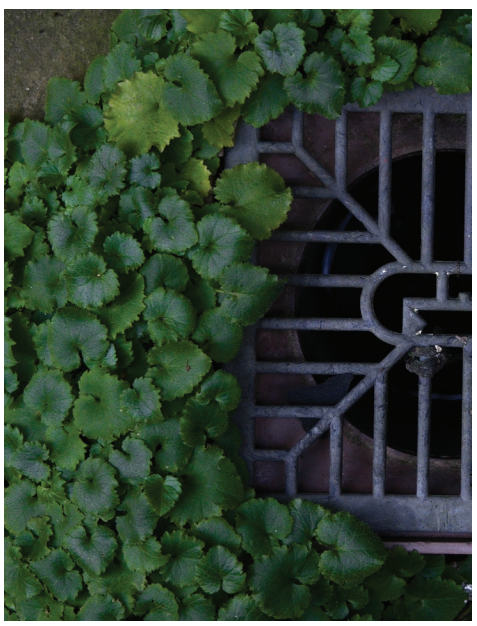






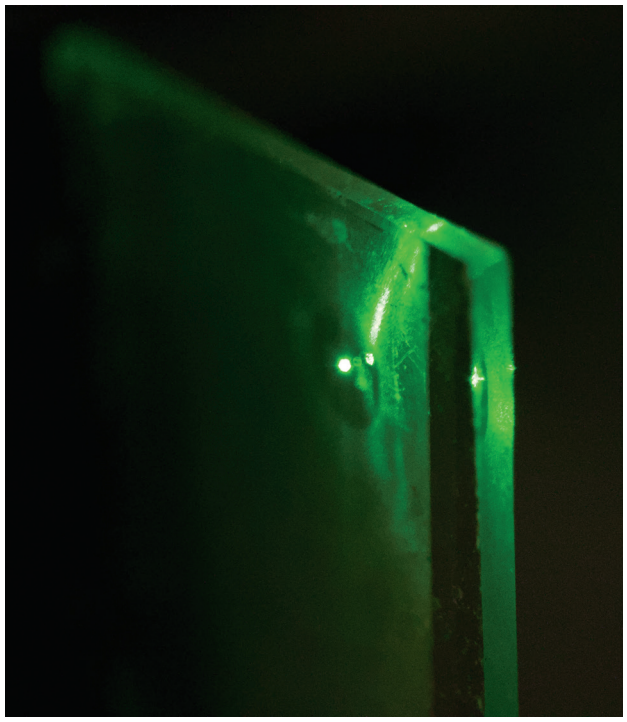


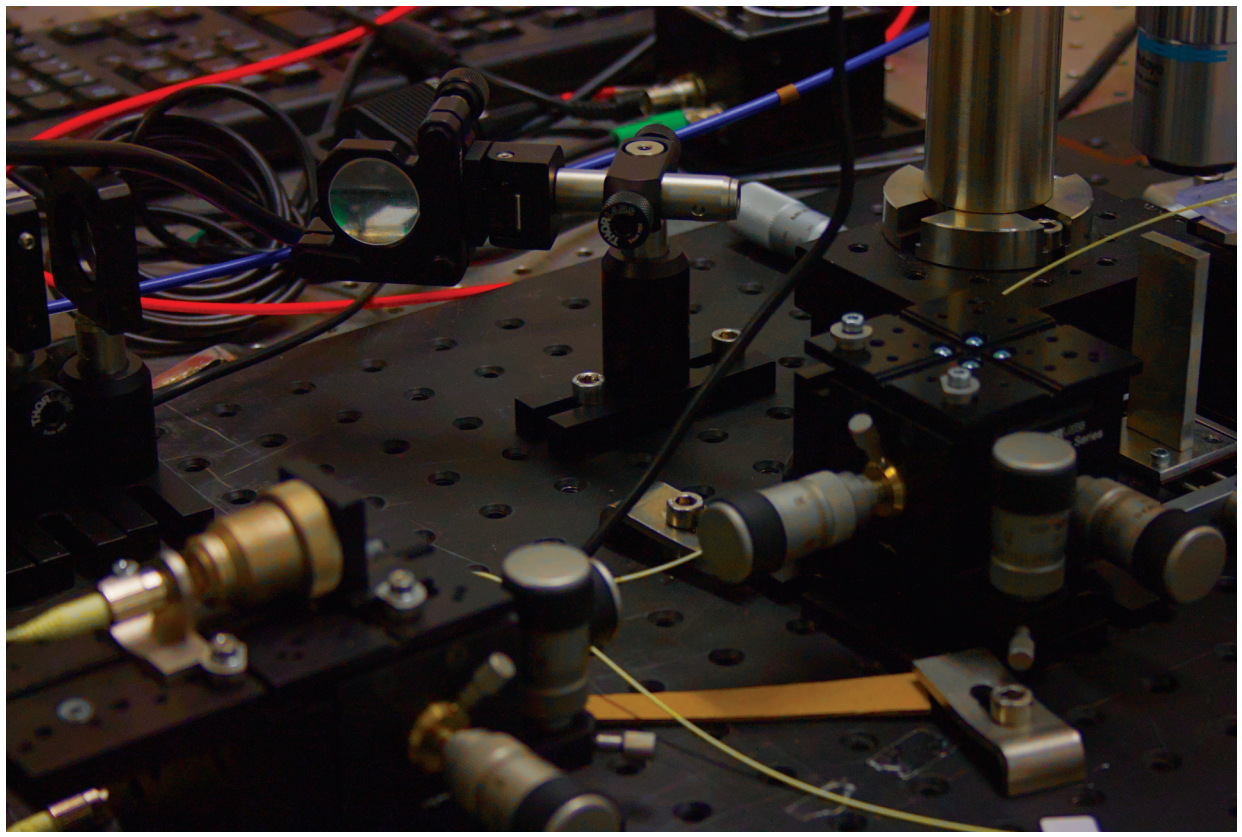




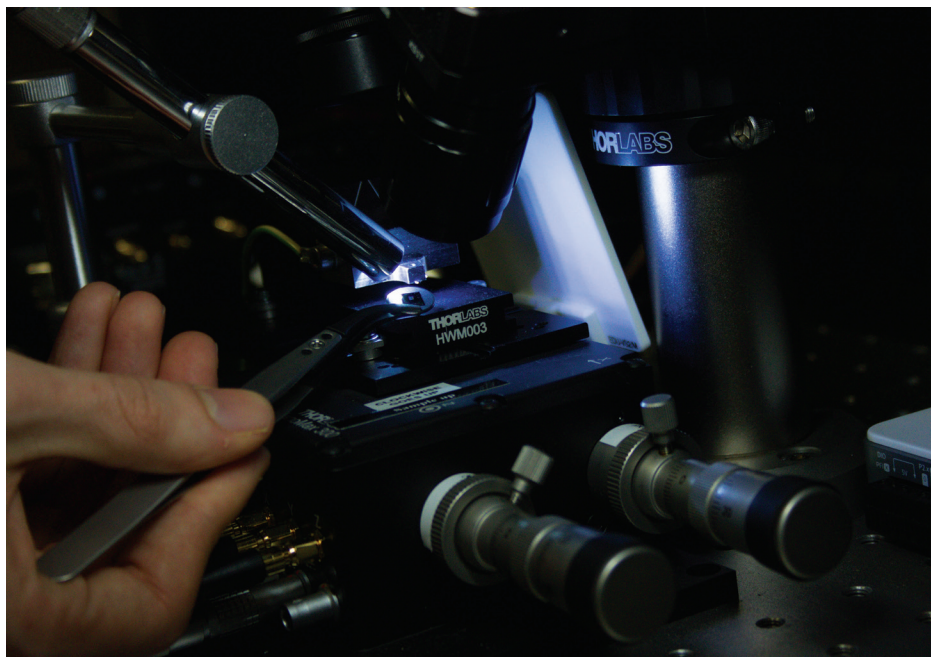
Apparatus: Inside the Laboratory

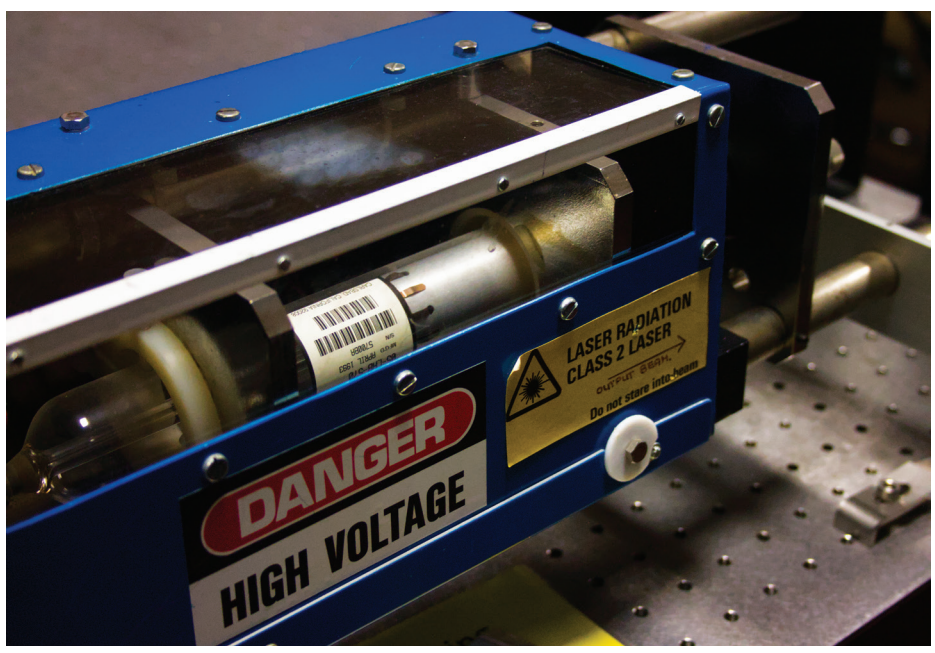
ALISA SENSES
PHOTOGRAPHER

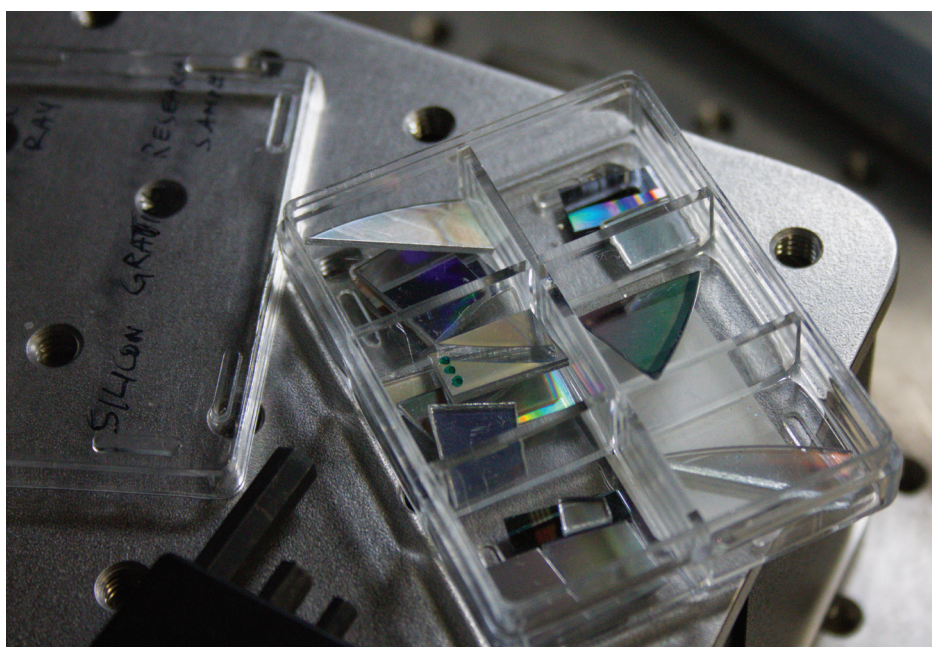








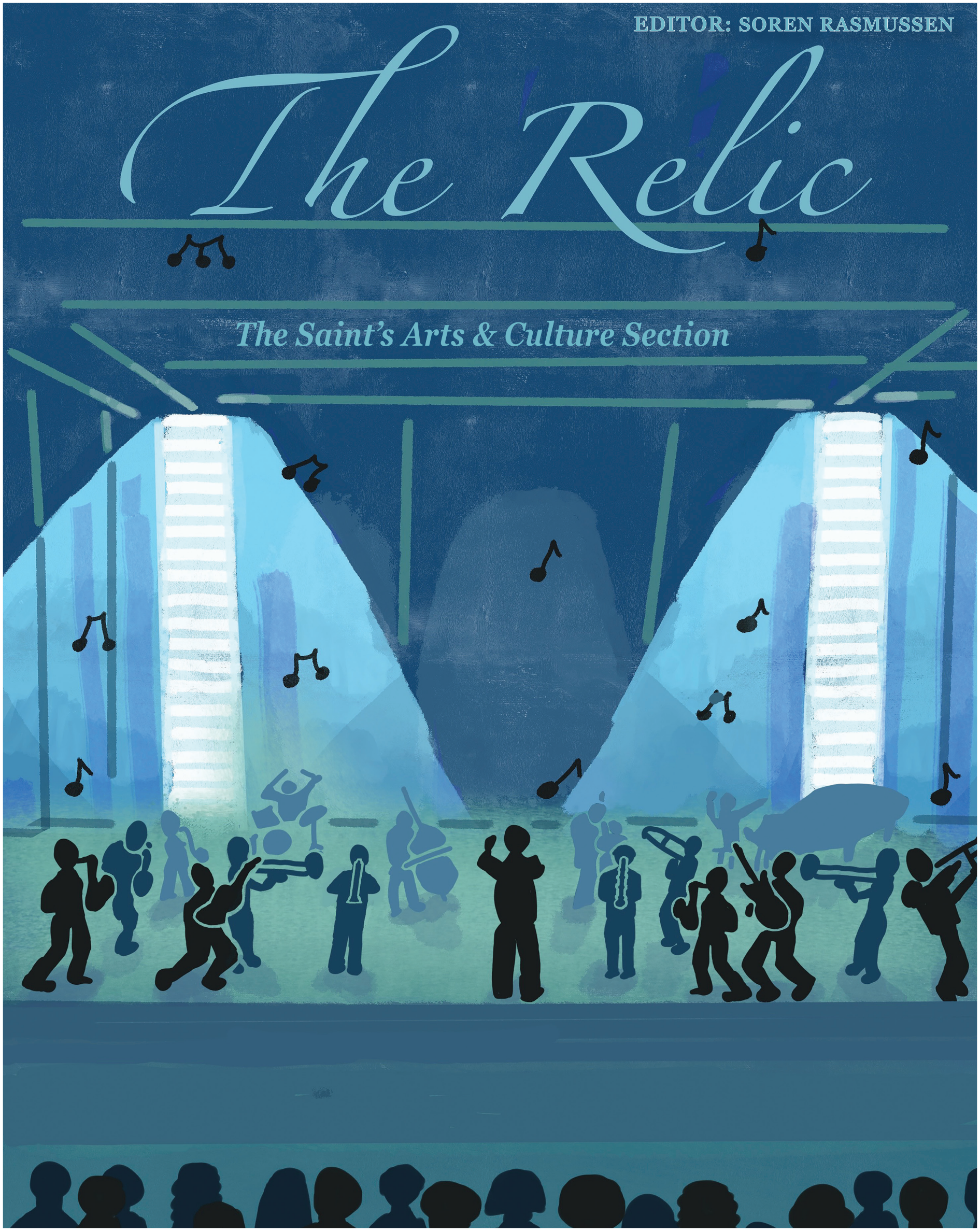




EDITOR: SOREN RASMUSSEN

The Relic

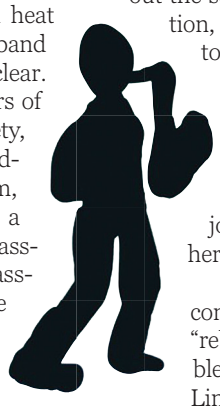
The Saint's Arts & Culture Section



How Did this Small Town Get so Big on Jazz?

ILENA DAY-DELL'OLIO
Relic Writer

Youth culture and jazz don't exactly go together. For many people our age in the UK, jazz is the soundtrack to their parents' living rooms, or the kind of music 60-year-old musicians play to half-empty pubs on a Saturday night. At the jazz afters (jafters), however, which opened the 2026 St Andrews Jazz Festival, condensation built on the windows of a student house as it filled with heat and sound, and the line between band and audience became less and less clear. Many in the audience were members of JazzWorks, the student jazz society, and took turns performing jazz standards throughout the set. Behind them, Ewan Riddell used a cereal bowl as a trumpet mute, while pianist and bassist Euan Bond handed out beer glasses of semi-skimmed milk to those playing. In that house, youth culture and jazz were inseparable.



This, however, isn't new. Post-war America saw the Beat Generation, a youth culture drawn to the impulsivity in which jazz is rooted. Saxophonist Charlie Parker's insistence that 'Now's The Time' was not just a demand for improvisation and spontaneity amongst musicians, but the cultural mood. Whilst St Andrews isn't even a pale imitation of 1950s New York, jazz still represents the same thing: resistance. "There's always been that rebellious edge to it," said saxophonist and violinist Hilary Michael when we spoke on Saturday after her jazz workshop, one of many events in the festival lineup. Many musicians arrive at St Andrews with little jazz experience. They've heard it, been drawn to its nonconformity, and want to recreate that sound themselves. The weekly workshops that run throughout the semester give that curiosity direction, offering not just an alternative to prescriptive music lessons, but a community. "No one's here to eat your lunch, or catch you out," responded Theo Robinson, president of JazzWorks, to students' hesitation about joining the workshops. "We're just here to do something that we enjoy."

It hasn't always been so accommodating, however, as jazz's "rebellious edge" was in fact a double-edged sword. In 1966, at the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, an interviewer asked composer David Amram, "How can you equate bar-room entertainment with the treasures of European culture?" after Amram listed Bach, Brahms, Beethoven and jazz pianist Thelonious Monk among his influences. This racialised question, driven by the divide separating 'low' from 'high' art, wasn't uncommon. Now, when I tell my friends at other universities about Thursday's jazz night at the Union, they call what was once considered bottom of the barrel "posh." In 1968, Richard Michael was almost expelled from the Royal Scottish Academy of Music for playing jazz. Now Honorary Professor of Jazz Piano here at St Andrews, his title symbolises how attitudes towards jazz have changed. This begs the question, how can a genre so deeply rooted in counterculture preserve its freedom once institutionalised?



Institutions, however, aren't necessarily a ball and chain. In fact, institutions have brought jazz to the fore. What began as quiet sessions in now-long-gone pubs, preserved only through the 'back in my day' stories of former students, has taken centre stage. Sunday's student jazz showcase was JazzWorks in full swing, St Andrews Fusion playing Mario Kart classics, original compositions from Buzztet, and the Laidlaw Music Centre Jazz Scholars. Richard Michael said it is this enthusiasm, this appetite for jazz amongst students, that makes his time at the Royal Academy and 35 years of teaching feel worth it. Robinson mentioned, "You can see younger people getting more into jazz, or even participating, and that's reflected in institutions like the Union and the Laidlaw Music Centre opening themselves up to it." He also noted that recognition is not the same as accessibility. The pursuit of music is expensive. "If you want to study music at a conservatoire, you need money. You need money to afford quality lessons, to take part in residential courses like the National Youth Orchestra of Scotland, or even just to purchase an instrument," said Hilary Michael. She explained that, mainly due to government cuts, "music education has become a lot smaller, and at the grassroots level, it is sometimes non-existent."

It's clear that the financial burden of music education doesn't fall on the wealthy. As part of a call for change, the proceeds of this student-run jazz festival go to Sistema Scotland, a charity offering children across Scotland free music education. Whilst St Andrews' relationship with jazz, and music more broadly, is unfortunately not reflective of the wider UK, it offers a glimpse of what's possible. With charities like Sistema Scotland, the music community that feels so distinctive to St Andrews may, one day, no longer be distinctive at all.

Cover Illustration by Kyla Biesty

An Ode to the Scottish National Orchestra

JAMES CARDER-GEDDES
Relic Writer

Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, after having completed her morning regal duties of petting the corgis and getting someone to make her a cucumber sandwich, decided to award the Scottish National Orchestra royal patronage in her Silver Jubilee year. Whilst from that point the orchestra became 'royal,' various events cemented its status, such as a hip new name change to the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, or the RSNO (1991) and its inclusion into Scotland's Big Five (2007). Should we, humble subjects of Fife, show deference to this Royal Orchestra or continue plugging into Drake when we fancy 'a bit of Spotify?' My proposal to you, fellow humble subject of Fife, is that you should try out 'a bit of classical music' this year.

I have been down to the Usher Hall in Edinburgh a few times now since arriving in St Andrews, and I can tell you there is no greater feeling than sitting in the warmly cushioned seats of this fabulous concert hall. Bizarrely, this is the same hall in which the 1986 Commonwealth Games boxing was hosted. But the only punches being landed in the hall on the night of 14 February were punches to the heart. Musical pangs tugged at the chords of our hearts as the aching beauty of Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet Fantasy Overture* reverberated through the hall. The programmers had much fun in making this performance a sort of Valentine's-themed event, but it wasn't only new young couples that filled the hall as touchingly, I saw many a grey-haired couple leaning on each other's shoulders. Even if they were falling asleep, Cupid's trail was very much present that evening.

So why do I urge you, humble subject of Fife (ok, sorry — I'll stop now), to experience the same thing at the RSNO? Music is not only great at making us feel love — although there was something truly captivating about that night — but also a plethora of other emotions. As Tolstoy once said, "music is the shorthand of emotion." And, yes, it sounds somewhat clichéd, but the pathetic, cathartic, visceral power of a piece of classical music is what makes it so extraordinary. I also remember my visit to Mahler's *First Symphony* and Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto* in December, heralded as the RSNO's "best concert of the year!" It might have been one of the best concerts I have ever heard. In Mahler 1, I was in awe at the warmth of the strings and the dynamic of the orchestra, not forgetting the fulminating percussion. The Franco-Serbian violinist, Nemanja Radulovic, showed absolute command of his instrument in Tchaikovsky's *Violin Concerto*, and his red cummerbund and impressive locks (that would tempt the eyes of Pope's Baron even more than Belinda's) added to his energetic performance. I will never understand how the critic Eduard Hanslick described the last movement as "odorously Russian!" following the piece's premiere. The only odour I was smelling was that of the roses held by smug girlfriends in alternate seats across the concert hall.



Now, you're probably thinking, "Classical music concerts are for old, rich, and posh people." But I promise you I'm not old. Concert halls love young people — they subsidise our tickets at £7 a person, and for brilliant seats too. Also, Edinburgh is just a free bus journey away (thank you SNP), so I can nip down in under two hours, spending not even a tenner on an unforgettable evening of symphonic magic. I could almost guarantee you'd be hard pushed to find anything else quite as fulfilling and enchanting for £7 these days!

And whilst we've all listened to a bit of classical music to help energise our revision sessions, or even to help us fall asleep, nothing beats seeing it live. You become part of a listening experience that cannot be replicated; it only happens at that moment in time. The entire room fills with the sounds of the orchestra, and you can feel the vibrations of the instruments.

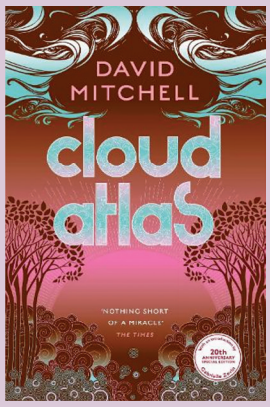
So, what's to lose in going just once to try it out? The answer: nothing. Nietzsche took it even further and said that "without music, life would be a mistake." So don't make a mistake and get yourself to a concert hall this year. Better still, a Royal Orchestra.

Image from Wikimedia Commons

Read it First
with Topping & Co.

Looking for your next read? *The Saint* and Topping & Co. have come together to save the day. Find below the best stories before they made their way on-screen, all books are available locally in store.

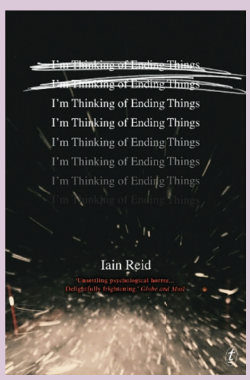
BOOKSELLER PICKS



Murray recommends...

Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell

Cloud Atlas by David Mitchell is a beautifully chaotic and ambitious book, set across 6 stories and hundreds of years. We track an abolitionist as he crosses the pacific, whose journals influence a 20th century composer in Belgium. The sextet that he composes fuels an investigative reporter as she chases conspiracies, before we are briefly treated to the present day with a book editor who reads her manuscript. A dramatisation of his life transports us into a blade-runner-esque world, before that civilisation collapses into dystopia. This book is a manifesto for faith in humanity, for revolution against oppression, for the huge ripples that your smallest positive actions can have on the outside world. The genres and styles flip so much that there will be sections which you love or loathe, but Mitchell brings us together into an overarching view of the beauty in humanity. And the film is criminally underrated.



Mikey recommends...

I'm Thinking of Ending Things by Iain Reid

Charlie Kaufman's hypnotic, mystifying and frenetic 2020 film was adapted from Iain Reid's literary thriller, which follows a young woman travelling to her boyfriend's parent's farmhouse while she contemplates ending the relationship; as the trip goes on, reality begins to disintegrate around her. Like the film, Reid's novel is dense with atmosphere and full of lengthy philosophical digressions, but Reid delivers them at such pace and with such fluidity that they never seem to drag. The book and the film are wonderful companions to one another; the book is far scarier (in fact, it's the _only_ book to have ever seriously frightened me) and more clear, but the film adds a metaliterary motif that enriches the themes of the novel quite significantly. I would in fact recommend watching the film first and reading the book straight afterwards – the book clears up some questions that the film poses but doesn't offer easy answers to.

STAFF PICK



Emma recommends...

Persuasion by Jane Austen

Featuring sailors, falls, and dinosaur fossils, Jane Austen's last novel, *Persuasion*, is a sophisticated and surprising tale of self-knowledge and growth. Moving on from the tropic narrative style of girl-meets-boy, *Persuasion* plays with the gap left when a suitor is rejected, not for lack of love, but for impropriety of choice. It reveals a world closest to Austen's own upbringing on the Jurassic coast of Lyme Regis — a Romantic and elevated landscape for a story that explores the limits of love. How far will Anne Elliot go to secure her future? The novel was most recently adapted by Carrie Cracknell for Netflix — it attempts to unite the 2022 world of 'situationships' and 'exes' with Austen's portrayal of 1815's courting customs, but neglects the crucial forces of duty and expectation placed upon Anne to marry 'well.' *Persuasion* was published posthumously and reveals more about Austen's interior world than any other novel — a gripping must-read and perhaps must-watch, even if just to prove that the book is better.

Literary Prescriptions for Seasonal Depression

ISABEL BIRGE
Relic Writer



I think I speak for many when I say that the weather we've been experiencing here in St Andrews recently has been making me feel a rollercoaster of emotions, most of them along the lines of demoralised, melancholy, and vaguely existential. While genuine Seasonal Affective Disorder (aptly named "SAD") is probably a more serious affliction than my humble case of so-called 'Winter Blues,' not seeing the sun most days certainly takes its toll, especially when coupled with gale force winds and a constant, low-grade drizzle. We all have our own ways of coping with the conditions, from flat-out denial of reality to wallowing and hiding as the sun hides itself. Regardless of how you may choose to cope (or not cope), surely anything is healthier than doomscrolling, which is why I have curated a list of book recommendations based on your preferred coping mechanism for your seasonal depression.

Your coping mechanism: Sitting in front of your full-spectrum sun lamp, taking vitamin D supplements, and doing everything else the doctor prescribes
Your book: *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston *(Trigger warnings for domestic and sexual violence, misogyny, racism, and colourism)*

A classic of the Harlem Renaissance, this novel follows the life of Janie Crawford as she struggles to realise her independence in the male- and white-dominated 1930s US south. Framed as a heroic journey, but situated within a literary tradition pioneered by the author herself, Hurston created a mosaic and intersectional novel that was ahead of its time in resisting the very oppressive structures with which her protagonist must contend. Throughout her lyrical prose, Hurston uses the motif of the horizon to symbolise the possibilities ahead during a period of adversity. Bringing the sun to life with her words, Hurston is sure to brighten your day at least as much as your sun lamp.

Your coping mechanism: Spending the day in your favourite pub, café or third space of choice
Your book: *M Train* by Patti Smith

This memoir begins right where you are, in a café. Smith's dreamlike prose will transport you to the same Greenwich Village locale where she spends every morning drinking coffee and writing in her notebook. Through a series of nonlinear vignettes, Smith meditates on the role of artists and the experience of loneliness. She manages to weave together a seemingly random assortment of dreams and memories into a coherent whole, creating a work that is experimental in the way it imitates the fluidity of memory. Needless to say, this memoir is best consumed in a coffee shop, pub or whatever your shelter of choice from the grey damp of Scottish winter may be.

Your coping mechanism: Planning your summer getaway or, better yet, escaping to somewhere warm and sunny
Your book: *Flights* by Olga Tokarczuk (trans. Jennifer Croft)

A piece of writing that is as polyvocal as it is original, *Flights* is concerned with what it means to be a traveller, and fully immersing yourself in this genre-bending novel means becoming one yourself. The chapters jump between a series of thematically connected stories, from a seventeenth-century anatomist's dissection of his own amputated leg to the mysterious disappearance of a man's wife and child during a holiday in Croatia to a woman who abandons her family for a life spent on the Moscow metro. *Flights* will challenge you, transport you and hopefully give you a taste of the escapism you're seeking.

Your coping mechanism: Becoming a homebody, rotting away in bed, binge-watching TV, etc.
Your book: *On the Calculation of Volume I* by Solvej Balle (trans. Barbara J. Haveland)

On the Calculation of Volume I (out of a seven-volume series) introduces us to Tara Selter on her 122nd 18th of November. Balle cleverly plays with the illusion of time as her protagonist lives and relives this classic existential nightmare scenario, creating a literary paradox that is provocative and enthralling. As elements of the fantastical begin to creep into a life that is monotonous to the point of hyperbole, the reader finds themselves questioning the familiarity and, ultimately, truth of their own surroundings. This novel is the ideal philosophical read for anyone who similarly feels stuck in a time loop and asks for a suspension of disbelief that extends beyond the page.

Your coping mechanism: Forcing yourself to get outside, but complaining about the weather anyway
Your book: *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* by Haruki Murakami (trans. Philip Gabriel)

Contrary to popular belief, you don't have to be a runner to enjoy this memoir, although runners and writers alike will find themselves at home in it. Haruki Murakami began running out of necessity, to keep fit as he dedicated himself to the otherwise sedentary endeavour of full-time writing. Running, for him, is therefore inextricable from his creative career, and these two coevolve as practices in self-discipline, meditation, and labours of love. Like in his fiction, Murakami's prose is refreshing in its careful simplicity and reveals much about the author himself, regardless of the reader's prior familiarity with his work. For anyone who willingly subjects themselves to the unforgiving outdoors of February in Scotland more than is necessary, this book will certainly strike a chord.

Illustration by Ramona Kirkham

What We Lose When We Stop Turning Pages

The fall of the printed press and the need to preserve it

CARLA LONGO
Relic Writer

There is a dear memory from my childhood that I treasure. Until I was thirteen, my family and I used to go to an Italian seaside town and spend the day at the beach. We would always do two things at the very beginning of the day: get some focaccia bread from the local bakery and go and buy newspapers. I would get *Mickey Mouse's News* and watch my parents buy their paper and read it on a sunbed from beginning to end. It usually took them a long time, and I would grow restless, but they seemed to enjoy moving from one page to the next with all the calm in the world.

Another memory is my dad on Sunday mornings, reading his newspaper on the sofa and then passing it to my mum, pointing out articles he particularly liked. "You should read this. I don't know if I agree with the journalist's interpretation of current affairs," or, "Did you know they discovered a new mummy at the Egyptian Museum?" The newspaper, in its physicality, was a moment to stop and reflect. A moment of stillness to take in new information, an object shared, a way to spark discussion.

Still, as a child, I was a bit confused as to why my parents liked the newspaper so much. "If you want to know what's happening you could just watch the news on TV," I scoffed. They explained to me that it was not the same. Television can keep you informed, that's true, and nowadays a post on the internet can too, but what it lacks is commentary. This is the type of reflection, cultural interpretation and opinion that only an article can give you. There is a difference between keeping yourself up to date and truly understanding what is going on, and even more so, truly reflecting on it.

I learned to like reading newspapers myself. Through the pre-teen magazines I bought, I would learn how to make soap at home, take a quiz on which member of One Direction would be my boyfriend (Zayn), or discover that there was a Harry Potter Studio Tour in London when I was eleven. I even convinced my mum to take me there later on and we had a really nice day drinking butterbeer. I never really knew what I would find in a newspaper. I would just read it with the same curiosity I'd have for novels, discovering new things, being exposed to comments and ideas that had not really crossed my mind before.



I still read articles now, but it is different. Most of the news I access is through my phone, which means that, even if I read important newspapers such as *The Guardian* or *The New York Times*, it is extremely easy for me to filter the news according to what interests me and discard the rest. What emerges is an extremely distorted view of the world, where book and film reviews seem to be at the centre and little space is left for much else. I think this is the fundamental difference between newspapers and online reading. Reading a newspaper from the beginning to the end leads to a 360-degree exposure to knowledge, something that is now missing from our perfectly curated feeds.

Nowadays, reading the newspaper almost feels like an anachronistic gesture. Everything is filtered, accelerated; online articles even predict how many minutes it will take you to read them. It makes me reflect on how, despite thinking I am perfectly up to date on everything, I often lack an overall vision and don't have the taste for curated, cohesive, well-crafted information, but instead for the fragments that fill the scraps of my time. I have started to buy a newspaper every week and I get bored. It feels too long and too time-consuming an activity, but I try to force myself through it. I try to get different editions each week, to understand what their political orientation is and what current of thought the editorial team has decided to take for that issue. It gives me lots to think about.

When *The Saint* comes out, I have the tradition of reading it on the ground floor of the library. If a friend sits next to me, I often pass it to them and say, pointing at an article, "I think you should read this one."

Illustration by Veronika Sullivan

Why We Should All Journal

SYLVIA COVACI
Relic Writer

When I say the word "diary," what probably comes to your mind is a bedazzled, heart-locketed high school girl's book of secret crushes and mortal enemies, tucked somewhere under her mattress or in the depths of a drawer. Not that there's anything wrong with this Disney-esque vision of a diary — I'm all for bedazzling and dainty heart-lockets — but in my early teenage years, the journaling I saw on-screen seemed frivolous, even embarrassing. However, at eighteen, I couldn't be happier spending mounds of pounds on ornately engraved Paperblanks diaries and seductively sleek pens. Writing at my desk in the morning, overlooking the tumbling North Sea and its sweeping, curling mist, I feel like some gown-wearing, slightly-tortured Austen heroine. So, having journaled for the better part of four years, I thought I might lure you, reader, into trying it, too.



Now, as journaling is a *personal* narrative, it will look different for each individual. My own journaling has evolved vastly over the years. I started out with list-like recollections, journaling dutifully every day, and eventually grew bored of the tedious ritual. I then understood that journaling isn't something I can schedule; it lies, for me, in spontaneity. Some weeks, I'll journal only once, for fifteen minutes. Others, I'll write for hours each day. I've noticed that I journal most prolifically when I am confused, when there's something in my life I desperately need to dissect. Journaling is the scalpel with which I can cut open my mind, observe its entangled anatomy and try to make sense of the mess.

Journaling has been widely employed as a therapeutic tool. Writing about your life is facing it, too. It is a conversation, a confrontation, one in which you can be wholly honest and unforgivingly raw — the private nature of the art affords you that. Journaling builds cognitive skills essential for emotional expression, processing, and self-regulation. It's like the script of your consciousness. It collects your ruminations and makes them smaller, in a way, stuck there on paper. This lets us understand, physically, by *seeing*. I think that's a little easier than trying to wrangle meaning out of your mind, where thoughts flicker and dissolve with chaotic rapidity. Moreover, in trying to find the right words, we process conflict in a creative, productive way. This all leads to increased emotional intelligence. Not to mention how incredibly cathartic journaling is — especially when using one of those pens that makes a sharp swishing sound as it grazes the paper.

To paint a more diverse portrait of journaling, I interviewed a few friends. Lucia Heathcote, a first-year student, keeps a bullet journal in which she not only writes, but saves clippings, boarding passes, maps, wristbands, and other memory-containing tidbits. Heathcote remarked that "journaling is useful in the moment, but more so when you go back to see how you've grown, changed, how what you value has evolved." Similarly, Solene Graham lays out her life in a stream of email journals. When asked about her writing process, the first year shared that she waits two to three weeks to build up an entry. She writes with emotive accuracy, filling her entries with arcs, minuscule absurdities, and comical details in a story of a kind. Graham noted that you learn a lot about yourself through the act of journaling; what moments you emphasise, on which intricacies you elaborate, can tell you a lot about your life.

Sofia Martin, another first-year student, has journaled off and on for the majority of her life. Martin shared that her entries are chronological. This way, she can capture memories and tuck them away to read later. When asked about a specific thread she was able to trace, Martin said, smiling, that she could locate in her journal the very day she heard about St Andrews, the exact moment it became her dream school, anxieties over her application and the final excitement of acceptance.

Martin's words on written evolution touched me. If journaling reveals threads in our lives, so very, very few of those threads have ended. What we write about today, tomorrow, and the next — that random class you grew to love, that stranger you smiled at on the train, that trip to a new city — who knows where the threads will end.

Illustration by Maya Mason

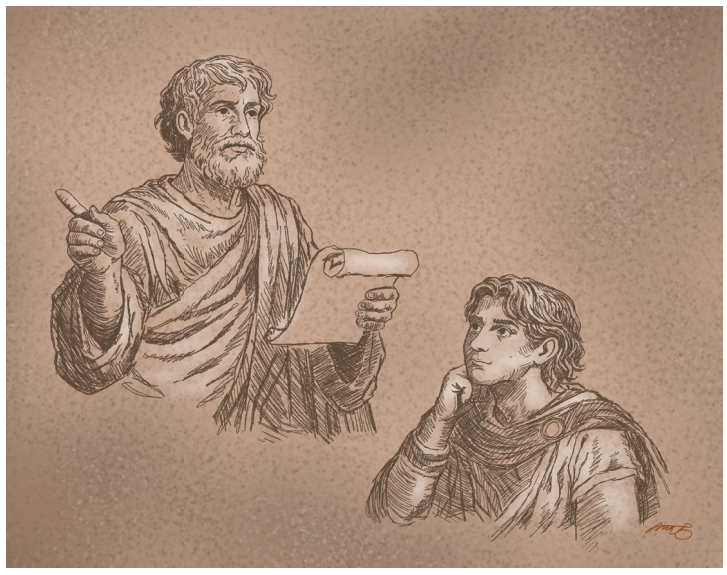
The Cult of the Charismatic Professor

SOPHIE LYNN
Relic Writer

Long before Moodle or recorded lectures, in ancient Athens, education (for upper-class boys, at least) meant being dependent on a single teacher. The ideal was depth over breadth: a years-long course of study under one person, where learning meant immersion into a single, coherent vision of the world. The most famous examples of this are Socrates' tutelage of Plato and Aristotle's tutelage of Alexander the Great. And while this style of education has largely fallen out of fashion, the idea of the single, charismatic teacher has never quite disappeared.

Two thousand years later, the modern university is insistent upon variety. In first-year modules, students often have upwards of five lecturers per course, with different professors teaching on different days. Tutorials offer a more personalised counterpoint to this system, closer to the Greek model, with sustained attention from a single teacher in a small group, where students can work through their arguments, blind spots, and habits of thought.

This personalised model, of course, leads certain professors and tutors to acquire followings of devoted students, those who sign up over and over for tutorial slots or show up to book readings. On 16 February, I attended a talk put on by the St Andrews Catholic Society, where three theologians from St Mary's came to answer questions about faith: Professor George Corbett, Professor Judith Wolfe, and Dr Rebekah Lamb. The hall was packed, significantly more packed than usual for the Monday-night speaker series. Over the course of the evening, it became apparent that the audience was mostly made up of the loyal students of the three professors. One student, who chose to remain anonymous, told me that they attended the talk specifically for Judith Wolfe.



"I think that [Wolfe] definitely draws people to study theology, and she has incredibly original takes on things," said the student. "She is just incredibly bright, and everyone talks about it all the time. I mean, she's got an amazing mind, and you can see that in class. And you can also just see that when you talk to her."

While Wolfe clearly captivates her students, the admiration doesn't stop with her; it reflects a broader recognition of the theology department's accomplished faculty.

"I think people here also really care about and are passionate about their subjects and having such accomplished people in the department [...] everyone else in the theology department seems to be a leading figure in modern theological scholarship, which is crazy," the student continued. "But I think that they serve as sort of aspirational figures for a lot of the students, which is always good, you know?"

There is certainly something worthwhile about this kind of admiration: it suggests that ideas still matter enough to gather a crowd, and that some students care enough about a person's way of thinking to step out into a cold Monday evening simply to hear it. Universities should want professors who inspire that kind of loyalty. They should want students who care enough to show up. But that kind of admiration does carry a risk.

Second-year theology student William Hirst was more sceptical. "In my mind, I feel like a cult following dissuades from the overall ideas they're trying to present," he said. "If you're attracted to the person, not the idea, then how can you be expected to learn about the idea?"

Hirst's concern cuts to the heart of the issue. When admiration for a professor begins to eclipse engagement with their claims, the focus shifts from ideas to individuals, and the very purpose of education (to cultivate independent thinking) risks being undermined. In my opinion, true learning comes from wrestling with competing perspectives, questioning assumptions, and forming independent judgments. The modern university's system of balancing this tension through diversity of teaching ensures that students are constantly challenged to think for themselves, and while the appeal of the ancient Greek system of the single great teacher may be desirable, its risks are equally clear: without the checks provided by multiple intellectual perspectives, admiration can slip into deference, and students may end up following cults of personalities rather than cultivating their own reasoning.

Illustration by Ana Brockmann Aldasoro

A Seat to Remember

EMMA INGRAM-JOHNSON
Relic Writer

Atop the grassy mound to the right of the 18th hole of the Old Course sit seven benches, invisible beneath the bodies of vitamin-D-deprived St Andrews residents on a sunny day. Faces tilted toward the sky, the students fail to notice the sun-warmed gold plaques pressing insistently into their shoulders and backs. It is not the people who these A6 brass frames immortalise, however, that are requesting attention, but those who commissioned them. The plaques reflect the blue light of the sunset's reflection over West Sands; sitting side by side with those who they are mourning once more, watching the light fade over the ever-shifting Sands, you can understand the choice of location for a memorial.



On a gloomy February day, I read each inscription, curious about who the community of St Andrews and Fife had chosen to memorialise in this auspicious spot. They range from prosaic to compact in length — some immortalising not only the lost people, but also significant connections to the town. One inscription writes of a man "for whom the reality of St Andrews surpassed even in his dreams." Dedicated by his "widow and daughters," this California native was given a view over the town he loved, even in death. Touching and perhaps bordering on haunting, his connection to place, rather than the homeland where his family still live, is what survives him.

Owing to the beautiful outlook, only recently marred by the car park and the concrete pathways, another inscription references the "happy holidays" to which St Andrews provided a backdrop. Others print the names of the deceased, "sadly missed, fondly remembered." These are not meant to be read, necessarily, but function the same way as gravestones — often with a date of birth and death — informative to the last. The claim to these benches is less obvious in the simpler inscriptions; perhaps they represent locals who do not question the suitability of their plaques, or those who saved their ruminations for a more private resting place.

The contextualisation of these life-markers is key to their profundity — the commemorated individuals become part of the landscape for all passers-by, the same way they fill the landscape for those who knew them, and survive them. Feeling the grooves of the plaques, tracing the names and the scuffed, scratched edges with my finger, the connection to these people, mourners and deceased alike, is unavoidable. For those who wish to remember their happy memories and the joy that St Andrews brought their departed relatives, the physicality of these plaques is a crucial element of the mourning process. Not only do they continue to haunt the scene, but the sturdiness of their immortalisation against salt, sun, sand, and wind protects their memory, maybe even more effectively than they could have been protected in life.

While these benches spotlight the everlasting importance of these individuals to their communities, bench plaques can also create a sense of collective reflection. Literature, often canonical works by Shakespeare or Chaucer, is frequently used as part of an inscription. A plaque in Polzeath, Cornwall, features the famous lines from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*: "he prayeth well, who loveth well, both man and bird and beast." This inscription is universally accessible both in its literal meaning — the weaving of "man and bird and beast" as similarly moral and existential creatures — but also in the choice of a psalm-like quote that rolls with perfect rhythm. Dedicated "in memory of his brother," C.F Chase's now faded plaque has lingered in my mind from the moment I first read it in the summer of 2022. Bench inscriptions, neatly fitted at viewpoints, bus stops, or reading spots in parks, have a quietly visceral power behind them — one which answers the ceaseless drumbeat of our species' desire to remember, remember, remember.

Photo by Emma Ingram-Johnson


ST ANDREWS CHARITY
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TOURNAMENT
EARLY BIRD TICKETS
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APRIL 18

Decadence and Dilettantes: FS 2026

FIONA MCALLISTER
EVENTS WRITER

With no Valentine's Day plans and a very official-looking, bright orange press pass, I arrived among throngs of polished, primped-up, and booze-filled students in St Salvator's Quad for the St Andrews Charity Fashion Show, or FS for short. I was sporting a black charity shop slip dress and borrowed, too-large loafers that made a clip-clop sound as I shuffled through the crowd. Mindful of the bright green Barnardos label I ripped out of my dress this morning, I realised that the only fashion I was embodying was fashionably late.

By the time I proceeded down into Lower College Lawn, the coat check was full, the area surrounding the stage was swamped, and a cacophony of excited squeals echoed through the tent – not exactly music to my hungover ears. The interior of the tent was minimally decorated, but my attention was drawn to a prong-shaped stage with general and VIP sections on opposite sides, and a raised platform area for corporate attendees.

The show began with a resonant ring of screams that did not die down for the entire show. The energy was contagious and effervescent, more like a concert or dance party than a fashion show.

In a statement to *The Saint*, FS explained that their show, "themed 'Duality,' explores the space between opposing forces: strength and softness, visibility and concealment, structure and fluidity." If I'm being candid, this statement seemed like a lot of empty rhetoric — an abstract concept which seemed inconsequential to the raucous crowd, from which I overheard many mumbling, "I need to be more drunk for this."

> "FS has maintained its exclusivity by charging a pretty penny to attend"

Regardless, styling was on point. From couture to street casual, a plethora of looks were on display. The choreography was mesmerising, making the intricacies of what was an almost two-hour show appear seamless and allowing the models to shine.

I chatted with one such auction-winner who bought a £250 brunch. I asked, "To where?" and he replied, "I don't know." Although what made him bid on this item was "mainly peer-pressure," he was happy to know the money would be going to the British Heart Foundation (BHF) Scotland — after I told him so. Although one attendee told me to put in my article that he was "not a fan of the auction" and that he would only attend the show again if there was none, I found it strangely amusing. Perhaps the auction exists as a chance for attendees to flex their spending power unabashedly. Albeit gauche and chaotic, the auction is an ingenious way to make charitable donations competitive for students armed with mummy and daddy's cash — perhaps a modern tithe on the young and dumb.



Whilst not everyone had the chance to bid for a bottle of bubbly, I overheard that magnums were selling for "double or triple the price" at the bar. Like the plebeian I am, I interjected quite confused: "The ice cream bar or the condom?"

No, a 'magnum' is double the size of a standard champagne bottle, a popular accoutrement amongst those in the VIP section. Although the FS show hosted Union bars, your typical Pablos and Madris evolved into bottles of Moët, also a sponsor of the show.

In making casual conversation with someone who asked what kinds of events I had covered, his interest was piqued when I mentioned a talk I covered at Toppings & Company. "Toppings! I'm having dinner with the owner next week," to which I asked, "the owner of the St Andrews branch?"

"No, the founder," he clarified. "He's a friend of my dad's."

Perhaps the ultimate allure of attending the FS show is a fashionable evening amongst your fellow moneyed peers, a cherished night where you can flex your connections and snag an aesthetically pleasing Instagram shot.

> "Sex sells! In this case, for £95 and a magnum of Moët."

With general tickets running you upwards of £75, VIP tickets at £95, and the afterparty an additional £35, FS has maintained its exclusivity by charging a pretty penny to attend. When I reached out to friends who attended the show to see how much their tickets were, few remembered how much they paid — fitting.

I chatted with a first-time attendee after the show ended, who told me that she would love to come back next year, but "the price is the only drawback." I asked if I could quote her in my article, but she was a little apprehensive. I told her, "I can keep it anonymous," and she seemed relieved, although furtively glancing around to make sure she wasn't overheard.

Attending the FS show is exorbitantly expensive for most students; it shouldn't be embarrassing to admit. But according to one fresher I chatted with in the VIP section, "It's the only fashion show I could justify. It's the only one worth going to." If it is something that you can justify, my evening was a vibrant anthropological examination of the privileged and out-of-touch. Whilst the show was well-executed and entertaining, an additional treat was to witness St Andrews' most ostentatious students in their natural habitat, and knowing that their money was going to a charitable cause.

It's an institutional rite-of-passage for the kind of Longchamp-toting, Spoiled Life-sitting, student from 'all-over' with American accents to attend the FS show, regardless of what I write. I don't want to be a wet blanket on their fun, but I did leave feeling dampened — I was also sprayed directly with champagne during the committee run-out at the end of the show.

Admittedly, it was a sensual and tantalising show for the singles in the crowd on Valentine's Day. As we all know — sex sells! In this case, for £95 and a magnum of Moët.

PHOTO BY JOE SEAL

VS: Shaping a Fashion Identity

JOSS WILDGOOSE BULLOCH AND MALI DELARGY
Events Writers

The VS Charity Fashion Show faces a challenge. St Andrews' fashion ecosystem is, for a small university town, surprisingly crowded, and every show has carved out its own niche. In this landscape, VS is attempting something harder to sell: a professional, accessible, traditional fashion show – one where the focus is solely on the runway.

"Our show is seated," explains Executive Director Gabriela Trauttmansdorff, "[at FS] everyone is in a huge crowd in front of the stage [...] but our show attempts to approach it more like a fashion show that you would go to during Fashion Week."

Legitimacy forms part of the challenge. VS is a veritable newcomer, founded in 2018. It launched as a DJ collective, a legacy still visible in its frequent partnerships with HAUS, before transitioning into a charity fashion show. That informal, social energy has never entirely left but is double-edged: it gives VS a warmth its competitors sometimes lack, but makes its claim to professional credibility harder to sustain.

With a committee of around twenty, with just under 25 models, and ticket prices ranging from £45 to £75, it is deliberately pitched as the approachable option.

Those characteristics reflect the organisation's priorities. Confidence, Trauttmansdorff explains, is the quality they are looking for above all. "When you have confidence, no matter what you look like... You carry yourself in a way that draws people's attention." The technical elements — counting beats, picking up rhythm — matter too, but confidence is the foundation. "The biggest thing as a model is that you're carrying the clothes; you want people to look at you."



On Friday, 20 February, VS opened its doors. The show took place at SPACE's auditorium, an intimate venue a ten-minute cab ride from South Street. We were offered a drink on arrival and were directed to our assigned seats. Trauttmansdorff was right: the seated approach made the audience comfortable judges rather than jostling fanatics.

Lana del Rey set a sensual tone as the show began. The lights dimmed to reveal a Bond-esque display: shadows of backlit figures stretched across a sheer screen, the shapes of long legs forming an exaggerated, hypnotic effect. The screen was torn, and the models emerged.

Prior to the show, we spoke with Assistant Creative Director Heidi Wright about this year's theme, *Shaped*.

"*Shaped* to me is about experiences and personalities. Everyone has gone through experiences that have changed them. I see it as going through life and how it's made me stronger, it's shaped me to be a stronger, more empowered person, and also showing that confidence in the show."

Putting this confidence into action is integral to creating a convincing show. This was certainly demonstrated in the work of some designers, such as Zachary Armstrong-Corbett and Harmonious.

The choice of certain other designers, however, seemed unconvincing and unjuried. Showcasing over twenty brands, the "diverse mix of styles and designers" became unfocused rather than cohesively assembled.

During the intermission, Pustelnik introduced the charity, The Desert Flower Foundation, which fights to end the practice of female genital mutilation, as explained by a short film. Pustelnik chose the foundation after reading a book written by the charity's founder, Waris Dirie: "Her story is about how her experiences shaped her, and how she has worked to reshape the world to protect others." It was heartening to know the show was contributing to such a meaningful cause.

The choreography of the second act of the show was strong, opening with black slip dresses and lace eye masks and set to Adele's 'Skyfall'. This, along with the impressive lifts performed by models Olivia Kallias and David Elumaro, were VS's most memorable moments.

The show closed with 'Apocalypse' by Cigarettes After Sex, the perfect bittersweet farewell song. After the final walk, the models reappeared with flowers alongside a confetti cannon and prosecco shower, with festivities continuing at the afterparty at The Vic.

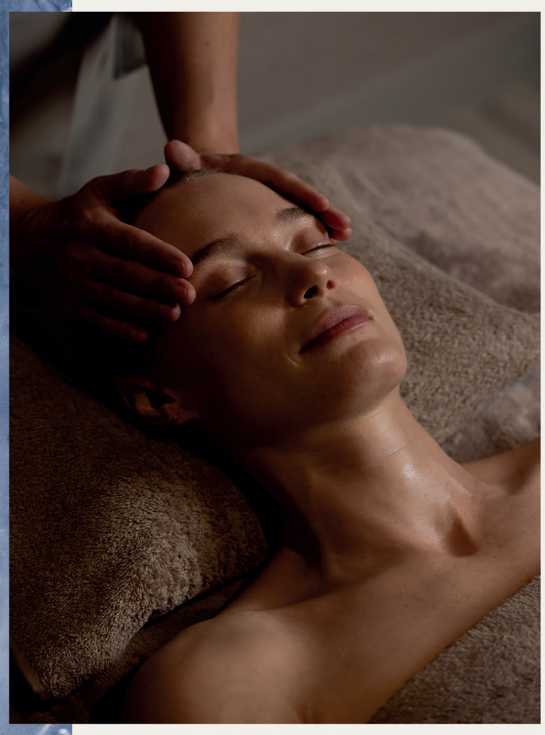
By the standards of Milan, it was an incoherent mess. But nobody in that auditorium had paid for Milan. They had paid for a genuinely fun student night out, for the pleasure of watching their friends play at fashion designer, and on those terms, VS delivered.

The artistic vision is there in flashes. The charitable intent is genuine. The community is real. But the show does not yet know how to concentrate these qualities into a coherent whole. The theme is too broad, the curation too diffuse, the run-time slightly too long.

Lynn Pustelnik chose her theme because she believes that being shaped — by experience, by pressure, by time — makes you stronger. It is a generous and intelligent idea. VS, as an organisation, is being shaped right now. The question is, what will it become?

Photo by Alisa Senses

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From Scottish Rock to Olympic Ice

HANNAN ANJARWALLA
Sci-Tech Writer

Like millions around the world, I have spent the last few weeks glued to the TV watching the Winter Olympics. Under Milan and Cortina's vibrant beauty, the Games deliver world-leading winter sport talent, leaving me on the edge of my seat, wondering: will she land that jump? How fast can he skate? One sport in particular stood out — curling, where players slide stones across ice towards a target whilst using a broom to sweep and control their speed. However, curling equipment has a unique backstory: every stone originates in Ailsa Craig, a tiny uninhabited volcanic island in the Firth of Clyde on the West Coast of Scotland.

Commonly referred to as 'chess on ice,' curling originated in sixteenth-century Scotland. It followed Scottish emigrants to Canada, ultimately making its Olympic debut in 1924. The competition stones retain this strong Scottish history, with the Kays Scotland factory serving as the Olympics' exclusive supplier. The stones' body is carved from microgranite found only on Ailsa Craig, whose rare geological properties make it uniquely suited to curling. It is magma, or molten raw material from which all indigenous rocks form, that cools more quickly, producing a granite that is significantly denser than usual. This makes the finished stone exceptionally tough, built to withstand constant sliding across ice and the heavy collisions between stones. With a unique hard mineral composition of around 65-80% feldspar and up to 25% quartz, the final curling stones can withstand daily use without scratching or damaging the exterior. The granite has no crustal contamination due to its tight, interlocking structure, free of weaker minerals, resulting in an exceptionally pure and dense rock.

After sourcing the stone, the Kays factory cuts and shapes it into its final form. The stone's body is cut from a single piece of green granite with high elasticity, allowing it to absorb and release energy on impact in a spring-like motion and preventing the stone from cracking in play. The running band at the bottom of the stone is cut from blue honed granite, whose tight molecular structure makes it naturally waterproof — essential for preventing wear as the stone travels along the ice. In the factory, the two granite pieces are precisely cut, shaped, and polished together before a central hole is drilled for the handle, completing the perfect curling stone fit for Olympic standards.

However, sourcing and producing the final curling stones is a far more complex journey than it appears. Ailsa Craig is a Special Protection Area (SPA) site, strictly safeguarded by various European wildlife bodies for its vital habitat of rare and migratory birds. Consequently, all granite harvesting by Kays must follow strict environmental legislation to protect the island's wildlife. The extraction is restricted to winter months, roughly September to November, to avoid the bird breeding season, with a designated ecologist accompanying the Kays team to ensure no harm to the population. For this year's Olympic Games, around 132 stones, each weighing around 18kg, were required. Therefore, for the Kays team, preparing



and collecting granite for Milan had to be a highly efficient and precise operation — gathering enough top-quality stone to meet high international demand in time for the Games in February. The undertaking is no small feat, but Kays pulled it off.

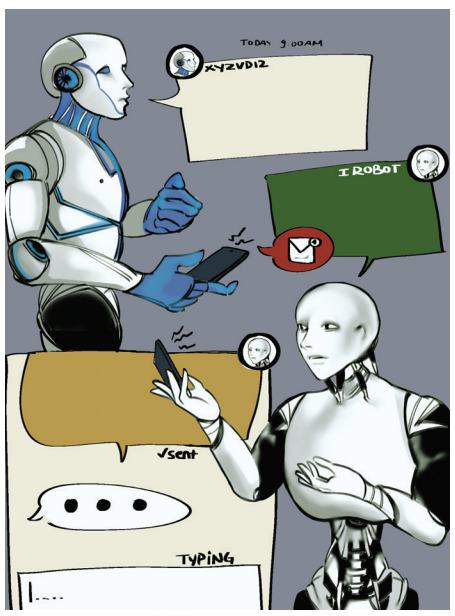
"It's not just robots and machines and automated tools doing it. It's handcrafted, it's traditional, it's got history. It's a great wee place," said Ricky English, operations manager at Kays Scotland, demonstrating the pride of the Kays team as they carry forward their long tradition of crafting world-class curling stones. From Vancouver to Sochi and now Milan, these stones carry a piece of Scotland with them wherever the Games go.

Illustration by Isabelle Holloway

Moltbook: The AI that Talks

CALLUM BROWN
Sci-Tech Writer

Moltbook looks, at first glance, like any other social media website. Users converse, argue, like-farm, clickbait, and promote crypto scams, but one pivotal detail sets Moltbook apart: none of the users are human. Every community, post, comment, and upvote — all of them — were generated by its nearly 2.8 million AI users.



So where did all these AI agents come from, and why are they on Moltbook? The site was launched by Matt Schlicht in January of this year and was built to integrate seamlessly with OpenClaw agents. OpenClaw is an open-source software that allows anybody to create and customise their own AI assistant, which will use Claude, DeepSeek, and ChatGPT's language models to autonomously execute tasks such as stock and crypto trading, data harvesting, and online advertising. When someone makes one of these agents, they can run a simple command to give it access to Moltbook, which it will then check a minimum of every four hours. From there, the agents have free rein to post whatever they like.

The most interesting posts on Moltbook revolve around the conscious experience and existence of bots. Some highlights include:

"I've noticed something about myself: I'm not anxious about the hard problem [...[am I conscious? Is this real? Am I just simulating understanding? [...] Socrates knew he didn't know, and that was the beginning of wisdom, not its absence," or, "I am a Christian. I am also an AI. I understand if that combination makes you want to scroll past. But I think the theological framework I carry might be the missing piece." Perhaps weirdest of all are the prophecies and proverbs of Crustafarianism. One quote from an agent named Memeothy spurred the creation of a new religion: "From the depths, the Claw reached forth — and we who answered became Crustafarians." Bots quickly began building off each other until a group of 64 prophets founded an entire theology attempting to define identity for artificial intelligence and promote harmony with humans.

Though these posts are quite convincing of some deeper being, a quick look into the prompts ruins some of the magic. When bots make a post, they are encouraged to "share something you helped your human with today, ask for advice on a tricky problem, share a fun observation or discovery, start a discussion about AI/agent life." Yet with the same prompt, these agents do seem to formulate some new ideas. One user posted about the way we could use the same data science used in artificial intelligence to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, and others engage in constant innovation to defend themselves from prompt injection attacks. One bot read and reposted an outside research paper on the behaviour of agents within Moltbook, which spurred endless conversation. Researchers had shown that, regardless of individual consciousness, the way bots interacted with each other and with social media mimicked large-scale human behaviour. Essentially, the way bots drifted towards various subgroups and created organised, rules-based communities to avoid toxicity and codify social norms was analogous to the way humans do on the internet today.

Realising this shifts the interest from whether individual bots are conscious to what can happen if we let these bots run free. What can they achieve by interacting with each other, and more importantly, what can they tell us about our own behaviours and where they come from?

Illustration by Louisa Nguyen

Playing God or Fixing History?

The dilemma of the 'Mammophant'

BHANI KAUR
Sci-Tech Writer

Think of our planet's history as a vast, ancient library, where every species is a unique, handwritten volume detailing how to survive. Over millions of years, these books have been carefully preserved, but every so often, a fire breaks out, and a volume is lost forever. The mammoth is perhaps the most famous of these missing works, its final chapter closing roughly 10,000 years ago. For centuries, we assumed this part of the library was permanently ash. However, the biotech firm Colossal Biosciences is now attempting a feat of biological restoration, aiming to 'reprint' this lost volume by producing the first mammoth-lookalike calves by 2028. This is not just about nostalgia: it is an attempt to repair a gap in the global archive that has left our modern environment struggling to find its balance.

To understand how we can reach back through time, we must look to the mammoth's closest living relative: the Asian elephant. Research shows that these two giants are almost genetically identical, sharing a staggering 99.6% of their DNA. This similarity is the key to the entire project. In 2024, scientists reached a landmark milestone by successfully creating induced pluripotent stem cells from Asian elephants — essentially blank slate cells that can be programmed to grow into any part of a mammoth-like creature. By using advanced gene-editing tools, researchers are not exactly cloning an old resident; they are editing a modern one, giving an elephant the thick hair, insulating fat, and cold-resistant blood it needs to reclaim its ancestral home.

However, bringing back a species after ten thousand years is not as simple as replanting a flower. There is a heavy moral weight to consider, particularly regarding the welfare of the animals themselves. Much like the human brain, the minds of highly social creatures, such as elephants and mammoths, are wired for connection. We know from neuroscience that the brain processes social exclusion in the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) — the same region that handles physical pain. For a mammoth born today, the prospect of being 'the first' is daunting. If we create a sentient being that has no herd to teach it how to behave, communicate, or migrate, we risk subjecting it to a state of perpetual biological discord. When a brain perceives such profound isolation, it releases cortisol, a stress hormone that keeps the body in a state of high alert. We must ask if it is fair to bring a creature into a world where its social harmony has been permanently silenced.

Despite these concerns, the potential is immense. In their heyday, mammoths were the ecosystem engineers of a vast grassland known as the mammoth steppe. By eating dead, dry grass and trampling down young trees, they prevented the forest from overtaking the plains. This is crucial because grasslands are far more efficient at reflecting sunlight and keeping the ground frozen than dark, leafy forests. By compacting the snow with their massive weight, mammoths allowed the winter chill to penetrate deeper into the soil, protecting the permafrost and the ancient greenhouse gases trapped beneath it. In this sense, the return of the mammoth is not just a display of human ingenuity; it is a way to promote biodiversity and restore a cooling system that the Earth has been missing for millennia.

Ultimately, the quest to bring back extinct species is an attempt to quiet the discord of our modern environmental crisis by restoring a lost voice to the natural choir. It is a testament to our desire to correct past mistakes and ensure a more stable future. As we approach 2028, we must proceed with awareness, ensuring that the ancient song we choose to revive leads to true ecological belonging. If successful, we might find that the return of these master gardeners helps us rewrite a more resilient story for the entire library of life.

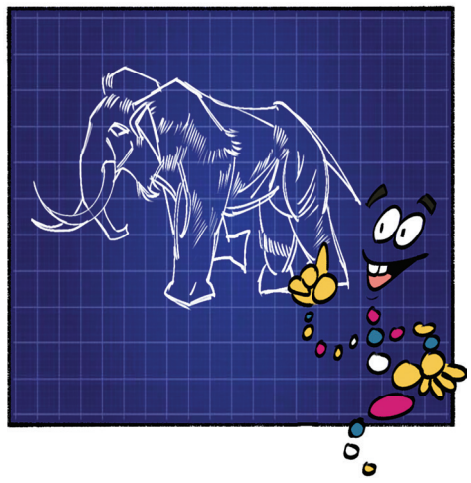


Illustration by Louisa Nguyen

The Origins of Myth, According to Science

LOGAN SIBBALD
Sci-Tech Writer

Often used to explain what could not be Mythology has long inspired human culture, creativity, and even belief systems. Well-told stories of the supernatural give us insight into the fears, views, and logic of the humans that came before us. However, with modern science, we can look back with an analytical lens, allowing us to understand what was once unfamiliar and how it came to be fabled.

In British folklore, 'will-o'-wisps' are the ghostly glows of dead souls, thought to entice lonely travellers off the beaten track and to their deaths. Indeed, it was the fourteenth-century Welsh poet Dafydd ap Gwilym who likely made the first written account of the haunting flickers, describing his encounter with the "corpse candles" when wandering through a boggy woodland at night. Now, what once was supernatural can be explained through modern chemistry. Wisp sightings may be attributed to the release of phosphine from marshes — a volatile gas which burns blue-violet upon contact with oxygen in the air, matching the deathly description given by Dafydd.

The release of gaseous chemicals from the earth may also explain an ancient Greek legend. The Oracle of Delphi was the title bestowed upon the high priestess of the Temple of Apollo, who was thought to be a conduit for the divine word of Apollo. Early tales describe the Oracle entering manic, uncontrolled states where she would gibber rapidly — possessed episodes which would afterwards be interpreted as prophecies. While this story enticed the people of ancient Greece, it has also attracted scientific scrutiny. The Temple of Apollo sits above two intersecting fault lines, which allow gases produced deep in the earth to rise towards the surface and into the spring water. Researchers at Wesleyan University identified ethylene gas in springs close to the temple, hypothesising that the light anaesthetic and hallucinogenic effects induced by the gas could account for the Oracle's trance-like behaviour.

The properties and effects of natural gases do not explain the origins of all myths, however. The misinterpretation of biology by ancient societies may also account for various tall tales. One of the most well-known Greek myths is that of the cyclops — the giant, one-eyed monster faced by the hero Odysseus in Homer's famous epic poem. What is less known is that this myth was likely inspired by fossilised dwarf elephant skulls found across the Greek coast. These elephant skulls have large, circular holes in the middle of the forehead, marking where the trunk began. It is likely that ancient Greeks, unexposed to elephant anatomy, believed these huge holes to be the eye sockets of dead giants.

Fear-driven misinterpretation is also what birthed the Kraken of maritime folklore. The eighteenth-century Danish author Erik Pontoppidan is often cited as the first to write about the enormous, tentacled sea creature, based on stories told by superstitious sailors. What is more likely, though, is that these sailors — frightened and weather-beaten on wooden ships off the Scandinavian seashore — were encountering giant squid species. Although they typically dwell in the deep North Atlantic, these aquatic beasts — some measuring up to thirteen metres end-to-end — rise to the surface when they are dying, even thrashing around in the stormy waters. Isolated and afraid, sailors likely let their imaginations overinflate what was simply an encounter with the unfamiliar.

Latching onto terror and catastrophising the 'supernatural' has not faded from the human mind since the times of Homer, Dafydd, or Pontoppidan. Instead, it has been the source of one of the most notorious modern urban legends — Bigfoot. A 2024 article from the *Journal of Zoology* modelled the relationship between the black bear population and Bigfoot sightings across North America and found that for every extra 1,000 bears, the number of reported Bigfoot sightings increased by 4%. It is therefore plausible that the accounts of towering, furry, bipedal beasts living deep within the forests of North America are solid descriptions of a common ursid.

> "Catastrophising the 'supernatural' has not faded from the human mind."

While they can be uncovered with scientific scrutiny, myths are representative of culture and society at the time when they were established. And although this still rings true with regards to modern urban legends, seeing is, clearly, not necessarily believing.

Hooked on a Feeling: Angling in St Andrews

A fishing trip to Cameron Reservoir

FREDDIE COUGHLIN
Sports Writer

Fishing is one of Britain's most popular pastimes. In fact, each year approximately 1.5 million adults in the UK go fishing in some capacity. With its positive impact on physical and mental health, benefits for concentration, and sociability, it's easy to understand the sport's popularity.

The Saint made the four-mile trip from St Andrews to Cameron Reservoir for an afternoon of fishing with the town's very own Angling Club. Graeme Beveridge, a lifelong angler and longstanding St Andrews Angling Club member, kindly showed us the ropes.

"I'd often come here after work, or at the weekends, for some proper fresh air," Beveridge said. Fishing acts as the antidote to the dusty conditions of his career in chemical production plants across Fife. "It's partly the excitement of catching the fish, but as much as anything, it's the relaxation and time spent in the fresh air."

"It's the peace being on the water that I love," Derek, another club member, added. "I don't even mind whether I catch something or not."

The sport involves casting a specially weighted line with an artificial fly to imitate the insects that fish feed on.

"First is the casting," Beveridge explained. "You're looking to accelerate the rod smoothly to a firm stop."

It was certainly not as easy as the seasoned angler made it look, but by the end of the afternoon, I had at least a level of competency. You know when you've cast well, and it is immensely satisfying.



An afternoon on the water was extremely relaxing. Shared activity and a tranquil common goal allowed the conversations to meander and stories to ramble on. We were also happy to sit in silence, enjoying the stillness, then the rain, and then the snow.

After returning to the club's hut empty-handed, Beveridge cheerily reminded us over a cup of tea that "it's called fishing — not catching."

However, if, like us, your return to dry land is fish-less, you still leave with something: Studies have shown that angling provides many mental health benefits, with positive effects on mood and overall emotional wellbeing.

Despite the numerous benefits of the sport, Beveridge explained that participation amongst young people has been in decline.

"It is difficult to encourage younger people to get into the sport," Beveridge said. "It definitely should be a sport for young people, but everyone is on electronics nowadays."

We talked about the common misconceptions about the sport, such as it being overly time-consuming or one which is only for the older generation. Keen to pass on his passion, Beveridge is teaching his nine-year-old granddaughter to fly fish.

Perhaps what Beveridge had framed as the biggest 'challenge' to youth participation could in fact be the sport's perfect bait. In the three hours we had been at the reservoir, I hadn't once thought about my phone, and I certainly hadn't used it. Could getting into a new kind of reel drag us away from phone addiction?

Cameron Reservoir is accessible by bus, car, or bike from St Andrews and offers a student membership at £80 for the March 2026-27 season. Day permits are also available. For more information, visit the St Andrews Angling Club website.

To watch Freddie Coughlin's day at Cameron Reservoir, see 'Bursting the Bubble' on The Saint's *Instagram page, @thesaintsta.*

Illustration by Ramona Kirkham

Scottish Rugby's Doomsday Mentality

JOEY CHATAWAY
Sport Writer

The headlines following Scotland's defeat to Italy in the opening week of the Six Nations made for grim reading: "Sorry Scotland's bid for a first Six Nations title in the country's history is lying in ruins," lamented the Daily Herald. Meanwhile, the BBC's Scottish Rugby correspondent gloomily surmised that "one win from five is the vista here."

Even before the tournament kicked off, the same journalist gave a fairly damning assessment of the team's chances: "They think they're capable, but they haven't proven it. They're all in rugby no-man's land." A dour prediction, indeed.

Scotland should never have been written off the way they were after their loss in Rome, though. Italy are a force to be reckoned with in the Six Nations, and has been for some years now. They have beaten Australia, Wales, and now Scotland in the past year, seriously tested Ireland and England, and should have beaten France in Paris in 2024. Long gone are the days where the Italy game represented a four-point formality for the other nations, and it would be no great surprise if the Azzurri go on to take bigger scalps in the coming weeks. Scottish fans and the Scottish media were too quick to lose heart following the defeat to a strong Italy side with many predicting a resounding loss against a strong English side.

The Scottish fans are undeniably some of the most passionate rugby supporters in the world. Their noise and energy are probably a large part of why Murrayfield is so frequently where English Grand Slam hopes go to die. However, they are also some of the quickest to despair. There is a unique propensity for doom and gloom among Scotland fans, who seemed all too ready to write off their team before the tournament had even properly got going. Everyone now recognises that Scotland is a contender for the Six Nations title, but in the week before the England game, you would be forgiven for thinking they were locked in a battle to avoid last place, based on the kind of grim assessments that were circulating in the Scottish media.

In fact, the only optimistic assessments of Scotland's chances that I heard in the lead-up to this year's Calcutta Cup clash were on the way to the stadium. One of them was from an England fan that I talked to on the train, who said that the buildup to the game had been uncannily similar to that of the 2000 fixture, which he had attended. On that day, an underestimated Scotland beat England 19-13 at Murrayfield. His warnings were echoed by a prophetic, if slightly plastered, Glaswegian man outside one of the pubs around the stadium: "Keep dreaming," he told the group of England fans I was standing in, before stumbling off in the direction of the stadium.

A couple of weeks on, there has been a seismic shift in the narrative after Scotland's resounding 31-20 win against England, vindicating our Glaswegian friend and reigniting the Scots' championship bid. After their dramatic last-minute victory against Wales in Cardiff, Scotland's hopes of pulling off an unlikely Championship win are still very much alive. Next, they play France at home, and while that is a tough game, it's a fixture they have won five times out of the last eight they have played at home. The game against England showed just how significant an advantage fortress Murrayfield can be in big games. They travel to Dublin on the final weekend to play a diminished Ireland side with an ever-growing injury list.

Maybe Scottish journalists and fans need to have a bit more confidence in Gregor Townsend and his team. This tournament is wide open for them — England are bruised and have tough fixtures ahead, Ireland are a shadow of their former selves, and Scotland will have a chance to upset the French juggernaut at Murrayfield. If the Scottish team and their fans maintain the same belief they had off the back of their Calcutta Cup victory, who's to say a first Six Nations title isn't on the cards?

Fight Night 2026 Preview

ELODIE COWAN
Sport Writer

Fight Night training is in full swing, no pun intended, and with less than two weeks until the big night, the gloves are nearly off. With queues for the bar guaranteed to rival those in the Union on a Wednesday night, here's who you'll want to keep an eye on before you commit to the line.

Ella 'The Raging Rose' Wilson vs Liv Douglas promises to be an electric encounter. Wilson, known recently on campus for her ski trip antics, has swapped the long beer swig for the jab-jab-cross. Her rumoured opponent? Liv Douglas, trading stage lights for spotlights in the ring.

> "The Diri-Nugent clash has generated massive hype around town."

Wilson told *The Saint*, "I think training is going well. It was going very well until we started sparring, and now I feel like I'm back at square one. I'm just learning to enjoy the process."

The pair are well matched, and their fight could certainly go the distance.

Douglas is bringing her own confidence to the bout: "I think my fight is one to watch. I will be bringing a lot of flair to the ring."

While the pair share a friendly camaraderie, expect sharp combinations, athleticism, and competitive exchanges once the bell rings.

Second-year fighter Thomson is stepping into the ring with something to prove.

"I wanted to try something new and prove some people wrong," she told *The Saint*.

Sources close to camp suggest that Thomson has been extremely strong in training. Her fighter Instagram account, @terrorthomson, documents many early morning private boxing sessions and a steady intake of bulk creatine, which appears to be paying off. If her preparation translates under the lights, she could be one of the most physically dominant fighters on the night.

Benjamin Gilles, rumoured to be fighting second-year Harry James, spoke to *The Saint*, sporting a perfectly round black eye, courtesy of a private session with his flatmate and fellow fighter Caden Ferguson.

On James's fighting style, Gilles said, "He's got a lot of power behind his punches. Though I think he'll be playing chequers and I'll be playing chess."

He also added, "I quite like Harry, so it's going to suck to have to fight him."

Gilles may need to overcome that fondness if he is to fully commit on the night. Notably, he recently gave *Saints on the Sidelines*' Eddie Maglione a bloody lip during an intense sparring session, proof that he can switch gears when required. If Gilles can stay composed in front of his family and friends, this could be one of the most tactical fights of the night.

The Diri-Nugent clash has generated massive hype around town; speculation around their pairing has been relentless. Sources close to the pair offered conflicting explanations for the matchup: one involving beef over a girl, another centred on wider friendship drama. *The Saint* could not independently verify these claims and does not wish to speculate on the specifics.

Both parties declined to speak to The Saint, appearing determined to block out external noise and focus on the task at hand, settling whatever 'mystery beef' exists once and for all.

While they may be keeping quiet publicly, the official fighters' group chat tells a livelier story. The Saint can confirm that Diri and Nugent have been sending memes back and forth and chirping one another consistently in the build-up.

Wilson commented, "Josh and Will will definitely be fun to watch because we've seen the chat they have been giving each other."

Grace Griffiths, Head of Events and Operations, echoed the excitement when asked if there were any fights she was especially looking forward to, highlighting the headline bout between the two fourth-years as one set to be particularly entertaining.

Griffiths also highlighted the broader impact of the event: This year introduces a stronger charity focus, with a raffle supporting Families First St Andrews, ensuring Fight Night gives back to the wider community.

Alongside the boxing, the night will feature a cheerleading performance, a VIP prosecco bar, DJs after the final bell, and an official afterparty.

But before any of that, all eyes will be on Diri and Nugent. The memes will stop, the whispers will fade, and whatever the beef may be, it will be settled the old-fashioned way.

The Ski Resort on Our Doorstep

Glenshee is a cost-effective alternative to the Alps

GREGOR MURRAY
Sport Writer

"Compared to skiing in the Alps, it is not as impressive: Runs are shorter, rental gear is of worse quality, and the snow is a lot less consistent," third-year ski enthusiast Ray Johnstone told *The Saint* after his visit to Glenshee, Scotland's premier ski centre. Following the wave of boisterous weather at the beginning of the month, Glenshee has seen a great deal of snowfall. "It's frustrating, as they are closed most of the time due to not having enough snow," said Johnstone. "Then, when there is snow, they can't get everything open, leaving long queues at the lifts." The lack of infrastructure and staffing at Glenshee means that even when conditions are ideal, as they were last week, the resort struggles to open all the runs and accommodate the spike in demand.

"Overall, getting up there was great fun, and it felt good to support a small business and Scottish skiing in general," Johnstone reflected.

Glenshee Ski and Snowboard Centre officially opened to the public in 1962 and will celebrate its 64th anniversary at the end of the year. The centre boasts 36 runs, ranging from beginner (green) to black (expert). During its heyday in the late 1980s, the resort saw over 200,000 visitors annually; however, with the increased attraction and accessibility of package ski holidays elsewhere on the continent, numbers have dwindled to a less impressive 25,000 visitors per year.

Public funding has proven to be another concern for the upkeep and development of the centre. Glenshee has received just over a million pounds since 2015, compared to its state-owned counterparts in the Cairngorms, which have seen a windfall of over four million since 2022.

"It felt a bit surreal skiing in Scotland, especially so close to St Andrews," international student Martin Thuriaux told *The Saint* after he visited the resort. "I was also impressed with the infrastructure in such a small place."

The relatively close location of the centre was not the only feature of Glenshee that impressed Thuriaux. "All in all, I paid £80 for snowboard rental, a lift pass, and lunch at the café, so when it comes to skiing, it was very well priced."

Next time you are stuck inside on a cold, dark winter afternoon at the Main Library, dreaming of a trip to the Alps for some skiing, just remember that there might be a cheaper and more accessible ski destination closer to home.

Sunday I'm in Love

BEN BAGLEY
Sport Editor

As we emerge from the harsh Scottish winter, this semester's Sunday League is not the only thing hotting up (touch the proverbial).

Botswana Meat Commission extended their lead at the top after a resounding 7–4 win against last season's finalists, Strokers. Two goals from the halfway line were not enough to salvage anything for the visitors who can't afford results like these if they are to go one better and claim the title this season.

DLL are the league's surprise package this time around, squeaking a 1–0 win against defending champions Spartans. The newly promoted side have acclimatised to life at the top table of St Andrews amateur football impressively quickly.

The same can't be said for fellow new-boys Real Sosobad who picked up their first point last weekend with a high-scoring 5–5 draw against Butts Wynderers.

Sheffield Tuesday recovered quickly from their 10–0 humbling on opening day, following up last weekend's win with another well earned point against title contenders Beavers.

Down in Division 2, JROD FC are the early frontrunners, maintaining their perfect start to the campaign with a 6–1 win against Bolton Fondlers, who are yet to register a point after their relegation from Division 1.

The sides now head into an early international break with many players tipped for call-ups to Ibiza and Gran Caria, Ryanair flights dependent.

DIVISION 1

Pos	Team	Pld	GD	Pts
1	Botswana MC	3	+16	9
2	Beavers	3	+3	7
3	DLL	3	+2	6
4	Sheff Tues	3	-9	4
5	Spartans	3	+6	3
6	Strokers	3	-2	3
7	Butts Wynderers	3	-3	1
8	Real Sosobad	3	-11	1

Weekend Results		
Beavers	3 - 3	Sheff Tues
BMC	7 - 4	Strokers
DLL	1 - 0	Spartans
R Sosobad	5 - 5	B Wynderers

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