THE SAINT

THURSDAY 27 NOVEMBER 2025 | WWW.THESAINT.SCOT | ISSUE 295

‘Curtain Call’: Glitterball to Be Discontinued After 2026



EDEN LEAVEY
News Writer

Glitterball — the annual student-run formal ball known as the first fully LGBTQ+ inclusive event of its kind in the UK — will be discontinued after its 2026 iteration.

Hosted by SaintsLGBT+, a subcommittee of the University of St Andrews Students’ Association, this academic year’s Glitterball will take place at the Spanish Gardens on 21 March, 2026, with the theme ‘Curtain Call,’ reflecting the event’s finality.

@Glitterball.sta publicised a statement about the news of the event’s termination on 12 November: “You may have noticed our theme this year is ‘Curtain Call,’ and that’s unfortunately what this is for us — our final hoorah. Over the past several years, the cost of putting on this event, as well as the cost-of-living crisis for students, has meant that we’re not in a position where this event can feasibly continue after 2026.”

They went on to thank the St Andrews community for its support over the past fourteen years, which helped to make Glitterball “into the largest and most successful queer event in St Andrews.”

“While Glitterball as you know it may be ending, we’re working closely with the University, the Principal’s Office, and the Students’ Association to fill the void this event will leave behind,” the statement continued. “We want to ensure the space created by Glitterball is maintained, even if the event itself is changed.”

In response to a request for comment from *The Saint*, the Glitterball committee expanded on the challenges it has been facing with funding the event: “Those who have been here longer may recall the ticket price increases over the past few years. Prices of event essentials have risen since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis has made more expensive tickets inaccessible to our attendees.”

The Glitterball committee is currently raising money on JustGiving, with a target goal of £4,500 to help fund the final ball in 2026.

“Glitterball is a self-funded event; our tickets pay for all our

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“Just Bodies to Be Thrown Around”: On Working for the Scotsman Group Monopoly

By Tao Yazaki

“The Scotsman venues themselves are one of the most mismanaged,” said one student who works for the Scotsman Group. “[They] treat the staff so poorly, and there’s no value for staff.”
Read on Page 15.

Last-Minute Thanksgiving Recipes

By Ilaria Freccia

The large American population of St Andrews means that Thanksgiving (or, more often, Friendsgiving) has added itself to the list of local traditions. But if you’ve found yourself with a last-minute invite, so caught up in deadlines that it *completely slipped your mind*, or just wanted to try out some traditional food to see what the hype is all about, no fear. Here are a few quick, easy, and (mostly) *traditional* Thanksgiving dishes you can throw together for a swoon-worthy contribution.
Read on Page 23.

Port, Policy, and Provocations: An Insight into STAUCA

By Alex Barnard

The number of times I’ve written, “I entered with a sense of trepidation,” to introduce an Events review for *The Saint* is countless. Clichéd, I know, but this time I truly did have a bit of a pit in my stomach.
Read on Page 26.



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EDITORIAL

Merry End-of-Semester to All, and to All a Good Break

For the first time this semester, we have actually started writing our editorial before 10pm on the day of layout! Consider that an early Christmas miracle. With insurmountable hope and a constant agenda, we have reached the last issue of the semester. We won't beat a dead horse (you've heard this before), but it's hard to believe we've made it here. A cumulative two and a half days spent crammed in the Union every other Monday later, and all four of us Execs have managed to successfully copyedit, lay out, and send to the press five dazzling issues of which we are immensely proud. Despite what you may think, however (and despite our previous statement regarding the timeline of writing this editorial), *The Saint* is a well-oiled machine, of which everyone's role is essential. Sure, we see through the final cut — but *The Saint* is so much bigger than all of us. And, as our last issue of the year, we thought it time to give you a proper peek into the process.

Firstly, we have our writers (or reporters, or journalists — however you choose to see yourselves), without whom *The Saint* would cease to be what it is: the product of students, for students. It is no easy feat to sign up for the additional workload of writing 600-700 (or, in some cases, 1,000-1,200 words) every other week on top of your already hefty academic workloads and required readings. You do it because you love it, and that is something truly worth admiring. Equally important is our team of copyeditors who sift through each article in search of any and all typos. Not all heroes wear capes; sometimes they're just as well equipped with a laptop and a style guide open in the next tab over.

The Saint also wouldn't look as beautiful as it does without our fantastic team of illustrators and photographers. Getting to feature the artistic talent of our own team — whether it be an article's accompanying photo or the showstopping cover of The Relic — is an aspect of our paper that we hold very dear. Your attention to detail (and ability to crank out our illustrations so rapidly) does not go unnoticed. They warrant all of the collective oohing and ahhing, or, at the very least, a well-deserved spot tacked up on your wall.

We are also so proud of the sides of *The Saint* beyond that reach beyond what you see in print, specifically that of the business and digital. This paper would not exist without the advertisements within it each issue that our Business Team works tirelessly to secure. This is the price we pay to stand on our own, as an independent publication — and it's well worth it. I'm sure you've also noticed some of the ads as seen on our newly rebranded Instagram (@thesaintsta, if you don't follow us already), courtesy of our web and social media team, led by Zainab Haji. Thanks to her, you can keep up with our breaking stories, watch the latest 'Saint on the Street,' or maybe even find the love of your life (stay tuned for Saint Dates).

So from both of us, thank you all sincerely for your wonderful work. Having just been re-elected as your Editors-in–Chief, we can't wait to see what's in store for next semester. And thanks to all of you who continue to read *The Saint*. We've said it before, we'll say it again: We do it for you and couldn't do it without you. Enjoy your break — spend time with your family, watch the movies and read the books you didn't have time to during the semester, sleep, catch up with old friends, maybe sleep some more. We'll see you next year.

Hannah and Ilaria

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The Saint Student Newspaper Ltd
c/o St Andrews Students' Association
St Mary's Place
St Andrews, Fife
KY16 9UX

Printed by
Discovery Print
80 Kingsway East, Dundee
DD4 8SL
Tel: 01382 575999

Advertise with The Saint
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Front Page Image: Charlotte Davies
Relic Cover: Abigail Svaasand

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Corrections
Fascism was misspelled in 'Vocab Against Fascism'
A photo of the Tennis team was used in 'Rugby Club United'

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Hamish Foundation to Restore Castle Sands

ANNABELLE MACKEY
NEWS WRITER

The Hamish Foundation, in coordination with the Bob and Blether women's swimming group, has launched the 'Castle Sands Forever' campaign to restore the tidal pool at Castle Sands beach.

Initial efforts for tidal pool restoration were spearheaded by community leader Linda Anne Beaulier, who passed away just days before the launch of restoration fundraising. Now, Debbie MacCallum — Beaulier's best friend, co-founder of the Hamish Foundation and chairperson of BID St Andrews — is continuing her legacy.

"Linda Anne was a driving force behind the Castle Sands Tidal pool project, but her loss has been met by an overwhelming desire to carry on the project in her memory," MacCallum told *The Saint*. "The aim is to restore, enhance, and preserve the tidal pool for generations to come and has already been supported by businesses, visitors, and the local community."

The restoration project, according to MacCallum, involves four stages: clearing "sand and overgrown vegetation from the steps leading to the tidal pool," installing a safety handrail, repairing and restoring the pool, and "construction of a hard landscape area, which can be used for changing." The restoration component involves "refurbishment of the sluice valve, constructing coping stones to the damaged area at the end of the pool, plugging vulnerable voids on the sea side wall face to prevent water loss, and finally removing excess sand, stones, and rubbish from the pool," MacCallum said.



The first stage of the restoration was completed by the Clean and Green sector of BID St Andrews, and completion of the restoration project can be expected between late 2026 to early 2027. Castle Sands Forever is also collaborating with Fife Coast and Countryside Trust, Fife Council, Marine Scotland, and Historic Environment Scotland to ensure compliance with community standards across all stages of the process.

The Bob and Blether swimming group, who regularly use the tidal pool, has played a major role in the fundraising and marketing aspects of the campaign in efforts to raise £65,000 to cover construction fees. Beyond a donation page, Bob and Blether members have created calendars with proceeds being redirected to support the campaign's fundraising goal.

"Members have created the logo, and the excellent Castle Sands Forever 2026 calendar, featuring old and new photographs of the tidal pool, which was built in the 1900s," said MacCallum. "They have also formed a sales and marketing team to publicise, distribute, and sell these."

The tidal pool has major historical significance. Built in 1900 by Thomas S Dick of Broughty Ferry, it originally served as a ladies' bathing pond. Over time, the pool became weathered by storms, calling for repair and maintenance.

"By the 1930s, the papers were already calling for repairs," Amy Pickles of Bob and Blether told *The Courier*. "It had some work in the 1970s but never a full restoration."

In addition to Bob and Blether, the University's 400-person Wild Saints swimming society, as well as individual swimmers, use the pool. Such attraction to the pool has drawn support throughout the community for the Hamish Foundation's initiative.

"We have been overwhelmed by the support and generosity of the community, including University of St Andrews staff and students, businesses, organisations, and individuals," said MacCallum. He added: "A restored pool would attract more visitors to this historic site, which in turn will help local business[es] and put St Andrews on the map as a destination for health and wellbeing."

The Saint sought comment from Bob and Blether, but received no response before this article's publication.

PHOTO BY ADA NEWTON

Crail Navy Air Base Plans Stir Controversy

NATHALIE HANZLIK-MEECH
NEWS WRITER

Fife Council approved plans on 10 November to convert the derelict cinema and gymnasium at the former Crail Royal Navy air base into an events venue and "wet weather hall." The development, proposed by West Lothian-based Ground Developments, will allow Crail's Sunday markets to move indoors during bad weather and includes offices, a cafe, and a children's play area inside the hall, along with 70 car parking spaces and 48 outdoor bicycle spaces.

Access to the Crail Airbase is limited to the Denburn Narrows woodland, a single-lane road described by members of the community as a "dangerous bottleneck" disrupting traffic. Concerns about additional traffic through this street impacting the town have been repeatedly raised by Crail residents, according to Danyel VanReenen of *The National*.

Ground Developments has responded that, with their new development design, the building will be used for existing events which already take place at Crail Airbase and that there will therefore be no additional traffic. Additionally, Fife Council planning officer Scott Simpson has pointed out that the site has already been used for both a music festival and a University of St Andrews Ball. As reported by Claire Warrender, Simpson claims it would "be unreasonable to refuse the application on the grounds of traffic."

Previous opposition to the development of this site has also stemmed from the nature of the development. SNP councillor David MacDiarmid voiced concerns over "turning Fife into a holiday park" and ignoring the need for more houses in Crail. MacDiarmid added: "It's not tourism we need, we need houses for people to live in."

In response to the development approval, Crail Community Council Chairman Gerry O'Neill said: "One definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." He added that "Ground Developments have been turned down by the Scottish Government, but they keep coming back with the same impractical approach. It is dangerous and it doesn't deliver any real benefit to Crail."

Ground Developments claimed that, in addition to providing a necessary community events space, their development plan would help preserve the historical and cultural significance of this building.

According to Historic Environment Scotland, the Crail Airbase is the best-preserved example of a Second World War Naval Airfield in Scotland. More specifically, Historic Environment Scotland has claimed that it is "remarkable for its survival, completeness and the rarity of some of the individual buildings." Built in 1918 but utilised most thoroughly during World War II, the buildings at Crail Airfield are listed under the Group A category of national importance, and the four extant runways have been designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

After 1960, the site was sold, and the majority of the buildings were adapted for pig farming. The current structure intended to be developed is the former cinema/gym hall. The hall still includes an art deco-style ticket booth, a sprung timber floor, timber beams, and climbing ropes.

Despite the historical significance of this structure, a condition survey has shown that "more than 90% of it is in very bad or poor condition," according to Claire Warrender.

> "It is dangerous and it doesn't deliver any real benefit to Crail."

While formally approved by Fife Council, no date has been made publicly available for when construction may start.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

expenses. With everything being more expensive, this has become difficult, and so this is why we have reached out to the student population to ask for help through donations," the committee wrote. "We have previously been able to secure sponsorships, but this has become difficult in recent years, and because Glitterball is technically a profit-making venture, we are ineligible for most grants."

Echoing the sentiment about Glitterball's financial pressures, the Union provided a statement on the event's future, noting its ongoing dialogue with the committee: "Across the UK, rising costs are affecting everyone, and unfortunately, this also impacts student events. We are currently in discussions with the Glitterball organisers and are committed to exploring how we can keep this event running in some form. Glitterball is one of our favourite events and reflects our values as a Students' Union."

A University spokesperson also emphasised the University's involvement in supporting the event's planning process: "Since 2018, colleagues in Accommodation, Conferences and Events (ACE) have supported the Glitterball organising committee by providing guidance on key aspects of the event, including safety, site requirements, and contractor management. While ACE offers this support, Glitterball remains a student-led event, with the organising team retaining full autonomy over all other decisions."

Furthermore, ACE has played a central role in navigating the recent logistical and financial hurdles surrounding Glitterball, while ensuring that decision-making remains firmly in the hands of students.

The University spokesperson added that "this year, ACE colleagues have worked closely with the Glitterball Committee to outline event planning and cost-saving initiatives to ensure its continued success. The University has also proposed considering whether a revised version of the event could be held in 601, which may provide both financial and operational benefits. However, there is an understanding that any shift in the event's character would require careful reflection, and the committee has been entrusted with that judgment."

Beyond donating, @glitterball.sta has encouraged students to support Glitterball 2026 by following updates on social media, attending pre-ball events such as the launch party, and getting involved when auditions and volunteer opportunities open.

While 2026 marks the end of Glitterball in its current form, the University maintains that its legacy — and the community built around it — will preserve the values that have defined the event since its inception.

"Glitterball has long been a highlight of the St Andrews events calendar, recognised as one of the most inclusive and safe spaces for self-expression," a University spokesperson said. "Our engagement reflects the importance of maintaining these values. Additionally, student groups can apply for various support funds via the Students' Association and the University. By working together, we are confident Glitterball can thrive and continue to be an event the LGBTQ+ community at St Andrews can be proud of."

The Glitterball committee reiterated that even though there will not be another Glitterball next academic year, the presence of LGBTQ+ events and SaintsLGBT+ will not decline.

A committee spokesperson said: "The LGBT students and staff at this University need to understand that while the event is no longer financially viable, we are not going away. We still want to give you brilliant events that celebrate LGBT people and culture. This event has presented us with an amazing opportunity to do this in a large capacity, but we are full of ideas for how this can become something different and perhaps better."

Plans for St Andrews Care Home to Become £18 Million Deluxe Hotel

REESE COLBERT
NEWS WRITER

Last week, Historic Environment Scotland (HES) registered a complaint against The Scotsman Group's proposal to turn the former Gibson Care Home into an £18 million deluxe hotel.

The Gibson Care Home, located on Argyle Street, was initially built in 1882 and founded by William Gibson of Duloch as an "eventide home" — as the building's outdoor plaque reads.

The site has served as an assisted living facility in St Andrews since 1906.

The Glasgow-based Scotsman Group's plans for the building take the form of a two-part development, phase one of which saw the residents of the former care home being moved to a new location on Wyntoun Road in July. The new care home claims to offer "enhanced levels of comfort, accessibility, and wellbeing for its residents," according to The Scotsman Group's website.



The new building has 40 en-suite bedrooms, compared with 33 rooms at the original location. The Scotsman Group claims that each room is designed to "provide privacy, dignity, and ease of access."

Following the relocation of residents to the Wyntoun Road location, The Scotsman Group now looks to move into phase two of the renovation, stating that this next phase includes "a meticulous refurbishment of the iconic B-listed Gibson House listed building, the replacement of an existing extension and the addition of modern facilities and landscaped grounds to create a deluxe hotel and secure this building's future."

A spokesperson for The Scotsman Group told *The Courier* that this phase will involve "substantial private investment over the coming years and is aimed at breathing new life into the historic property," adding that, "upon completion, the site will be transformed into a deluxe destination hotel, complete with landscaped gardens and premium hospitality amenities."

The company applied for planning permission for 85 bedrooms, along with two bars and restaurants. However, this development would require the removal of several internal walls and the original main staircase.

Despite these significant changes to the original building, The Scotsman Group claims that their project is "not just about preserving a building; it's about reinvigorating a piece of St Andrews' heritage for generations to come."

"Our vision is to honour the legacy of Gibson House while unlocking its potential as a world-class hospitality venue," the spokesperson continued.

HES has since lodged a complaint against The Scotsman Group's plans for the building, warning that "it may not be possible to achieve the number of rooms suggested on this site," and further stating that "the proposals are unsympathetic to the listed building."

"The near-wholesale removal of internal walls and an intact interior scheme would significantly impact upon the special interest of Gibson House, and the proposed down-takings result in a significant loss of historic fabric, including the decorative main stair," the organisation wrote in their objection statement.

HES therefore recommends that, if The Scotsman Group is unwilling to consider creating a hotel with fewer rooms, a residential development may be "more appropriate" for the site.

Despite their concern for the integrity of the original building, HES had no objection to the proposed demolition of the building's 1980s extensions, but specified that "the proposed replacement extension to the rear is not subservient to the listed building and should be reduced in scale."

HES were not the first to voice a complaint against The Scotsman Group's proposed developments. After stating that the development company was "keen to liaise with the community," amid its upcoming project, The Scotsman Group faced backlash from both the town's residents and the St Andrews Community Council.

The complaints stemmed from the fact that, despite the proposed 85 bedrooms, the hotel will only have six parking spaces.

The Scotsman Group have defended this decision, saying that the hotel's central location means that guests will have no need to bring a car, adding that it could become "the most sustainably-located luxury hotel in town."

The St Andrews Community Council has lodged its own formal complaint against the planning application. The objection reads, "This business should not seek to evade the rules [...] but should bite the bullet and provide an underground car park."

The local council has stated that if The Scotsman Group does not comply, "it should be made to do with [fewer] bedrooms."

It is unclear how The Scotsman Group plans to proceed at this time, though they have expressed a desire to carry out a site visit and continue conversation with Fife Council in order to "attempt to achieve an acceptable scheme that could be recommended for approval."

PHOTO BY MANRAJ GILL

University Posthumously Dedicates Room to Veteran Alumnus Dr John Forfar

AVA GOODMAN
News Writer

The University of St Andrews honoured the late alumnus Dr John Forfar on Wednesday 12 November through the dedication of a multipurpose study room in the School of Medicine, officially named the Dr John Forfar Clinical Study Room.

The dedication precedes the future Doctor John Forfar medal, which the University will begin to award to Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery (MBChB) students starting at the 2028 summer graduation.

Dr Forfar, born in 1916 in Glasgow, was an accomplished member of the St Andrews community. He graduated in 1941 from the St Andrews MBChB programme and worked as a house surgeon in Perth soon after.

In 1942, Dr Forfar was commissioned into the Royal Army Medical Corps, later joining the No. 47 Commando as their medical officer and serving his battalion on D-Day in Normandy.

Dr Forfar received the Military Cross award in 1945 for his exceptional bravery in treating fellow wounded soldiers in 1944 following the D-Day Allied invasion. A painting of Dr Forfar depicting this feat, by the wartime artist Leslie Cole, hangs in the Imperial War Museum.

After his military service, he returned to his civilian medical career, where he pioneered research in and advocated for British paediatric health. Dr Forfar returned to St Andrews as a Senior Lecturer in Child Health from 1948 until 1950, when he moved to Edinburgh to continue his career as a doctor, lecturer, researcher, and advocate in paediatrics and children's health. St Andrews awarded Dr Forfar a Doctor of Medicine (MD) with commendation in 1958.



The School Manager for the School of Medicine, Clive Masson, told *The Saint*: "His accomplishments were so substantial and multi-dimensional, it's just impossible to say this one rather than that one. You've got to see the totality of his life."

Dr Forfar had a successful personal life alongside his career until his death in 2013. He was married to Isobel Fernback from 1942 until her death in 2012, and together they had three children: David, Colin, and Joan. Both David Forfar and Dr Colin Forfar attended the dedication ceremony on Wednesday, alongside his daughter-in-law Alison Forfar, as well as Principal Dame Sally Mapstone and the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Deborah Williamson.

At the dedication, Dame Mapstone said: "As we open the doors to the Dr John Forfar Clinical Study Room, we do more than dedicate a space. We affirm the values that Dr Forfar embodied: courage in adversity, compassion in practice, and commitment to the betterment of others."

Masson told *The Saint* that Dr Forfar's family described him as a "humble and modest and unassuming" man, adding, "He treated fifteen people and kept them alive in one night without any supervision in the cellar. He just never talked about it."

His obituary in *The Scotsman* reads that "he had a great sense of humour, was a loyal friend to many, supportive of colleagues and staff at all levels."

The University hopes to impart the lessons of Dr Forfar's life to current and future Medicine students through the dedication of this study room and the future Dr John Forfar medal. The official description for the award in the School of Medicine Handbook states it will be "awarded to the St Andrews MBChB student who demonstrates the most outstanding leadership and achievements in the field of community engagement." The award will be subject to application, determined by a panel, and distributed at graduation following the fifth year of study, with winners receiving a cash prize, a physical medal, and a transcript entry.

The award is intended to remind students of Dr Forfar's "resilience and fortitude" in the face of incredibly difficult circumstances, according to Masson.

He emphasised that Dr Forfar "isn't some sepia-toned [...] back in the mist of time" role model. "His granddaughter is a junior doctor in Northern Ireland who was one of our students. He was not too far away."

Photo By The University of St Andrews

Cancer Support Agreement for University Staff Recognised in Scottish Parliament

ELSPETH SCHOONOVER
News Writer

The Scottish Parliament has formally recognised a new agreement reached between the Public Service Union (UNISON) and the University of St Andrews to strengthen support for staff recovering from cancer.

The policy package extends the period of full-pay phased returns to work from eight to twelve weeks, and establishes a closer partnership with cancer charity Maggie's Centre in Kirkcaldy. The agreement is considered to be one of the most generous cancer-aftercare employment support packages in UK higher education.

It also introduces a dedicated cancer-support webpage, improved HR communication for affected employees, clearer arrangements for staff and line managers to agree on contact schedules during absence, and new seminars focused on cancer in the workplace. UNISON representative Alex Duncan and North East Fife MSP Willie Rennie were closely involved in shaping the agreement, with Rennie lodging a motion in the Scottish Parliament to formally recognise the deal

When asked what prompted him to lodge the motion, Rennie said: "I lodged the motion primarily because I wanted to congratulate the University and the UNISON branch for agreeing on this strong set of measures to improve support for staff affected by cancer and to bring it to wider attention."

He continued: "The agreement is significant, not least because of the inclusion of a twelve-week phased return on full pay, which will help those recovering from cancer with aftercare needs, but it is also significant for the message it sends to employees suffering [from] cancer — that the University understands their situation and will support them."

Rennie added, "The agreement represents a significant commitment to staff wellbeing and reflects the considerable efforts of Alex Duncan and the UNISON branch. I believe that the University has set a very positive example, which I hope other employers will follow."

UNISON, Scotland's biggest public service trade union that represents workers across the country, was one of the key figures in negotiating the deal. In a statement to *The Saint*, Union representative Duncan, who played a central role in negotiating the new package, said the agreement was developed in response to a noticeable rise in cancer diagnoses among University employees.

Duncan explained that discussions with the University's Occupational Health advisor highlighted the significant challenges staff face while undergoing treatment, as well as the often-overlooked fatigue and recovery issues that can persist for months afterwards. He said that many employees felt financially pressured to return to work before they were ready, prompting the Union to push for stronger protections.

"The length of treatment and post-recovery fatigue is a real issue for many," he said. "Return to work is often driven by financial reasons, and we sought ways to support these pressures."

Duncan emphasised that extending full-pay phased returns to twelve weeks would make a "real difference," giving employees the financial security and time needed to properly adjust to being back at work. He said staff feedback on the improved aftercare measures had been "very supportive — and occasionally emotional" and that the extended phased-return period had been "the most significant improvement for staff recovering from cancer."

InFocus

Students **Victor Trinel** *&* **Alexis de La Chapelle** *on the launch of their self-made student housing app Seek*

CECILY TODD
News Writer

On 16 November 2025, Seek — a student-built platform designed to centralise the housing market in St Andrews — officially launched its website, with the mobile app set to debut in January 2026 ahead of the incoming Candlemas semester.

The founders describe the launch as the first step in creating a more transparent and accessible student housing process, something they believe has been missing from the town for years.

Co-founded by second-year French students Victor Trinel and Alexis de La Chapelle, the project is supported by three additional student developers: Matthew Pancer, Kshitij Verma, and Graham Heathcote.

Together, the team hopes to streamline what many students describe as an increasingly stressful and competitive housing process.

Trinel told *The Saint* that "the idea for Seek emerged not from a classroom project, but from lived experience — late-night group chats, frantic messages in Facebook groups, and repeated warnings about scams that had become almost routine for St Andrews students."

De La Chapelle recalled struggling to secure accommodation for the 2025-26 academic year: "I was unable to find accommodation until late April or early May. And this is not a singular problem I experienced. Almost everyone I know has struggled to find housing here, whether it be through word of mouth, landlords owing favours to other students, or scams on Facebook. I've also heard first-years already ask[ing] questions about being able to find accommodation for [...] second year as early as October. There shouldn't be so much stress around this topic; every student should feel safe in regards to knowing where they will live for their university tenure."

The co-founders' frustrations led them to survey 50 students: 45% described the search as "frustrating and stressful," and more than a third reported that the process took over a month. Data found by the duo aligns with a broader trend: Since 2020, St Andrews has lost seventeen HMO licences — equivalent to roughly 125 student beds — while its student population has grown by 13.4%.

Seek hopes to improve and change this process. The app uses a scroll-based interface inspired by familiar platforms like TikTok and Instagram — "a Tinder for housing," as Trinel described it. Students can browse listings, filter by rent, amenities, or location, or browse available properties via an interactive map designed to mirror the geography of St Andrews.

Landlords, meanwhile, can access a dedicated web dashboard to upload photos, documents, and property details. Students can apply individually or as a group, and once accepted, the app automatically creates a group chat linking tenants and landlords. While Seek does not organise formal contracts and payments, it ensures that students know what documents are required and the expectations in place before they apply, allowing for as much ease as possible during this process.



The platform has also secured early support from Fife's largest property company, Balcarres Real Estate, which is contributing listings and investing in the project. The Seek website states: "Balcarres Estate is a distinguished, family-run estate rooted in centuries of history in the East Neuk of Fife, just a short distance from St Andrews. Renowned for its commitment to sustainable stewardship, elegant living, and professional property management, Balcarres represents the gold standard of quality accommodation."

Through their financial assistance and expertise in the housing market, Balcarres has allowed Seek to gain credibility and refine its approach. All new listings submitted to the platform are reviewed by Seek's team to prevent the possibility of scams.

The co-founders emphasise three core principles behind the product: simplicity, reliability, and practicality. They aim to deliver a frictionless process for both students and landlords, ensure safety through University email verification and landlord licensing checks, and tailor the app experience specifically to students to reduce their stress levels.

Trinel and de La Chapelle believe two features will distinguish Seek from existing platforms. "First of all, we will be the first to centralise all housing opportunities on the market into one app," they explained. "Second, we will be the first in St Andrews to integrate AI."

Following the launch, Seek plans to introduce an AI toolkit intended to personalise and simplify the housing search. The system will suggest compatible flatmates based on shared preferences and recommend listings based on user behaviour. Students will also be able to chat with an in-app 'SeekBot' to generate tailored property suggestions. "Students simply have to describe their ideal property and let AI instantly produce a shortlist of personalised housing recommendations," said Trinel and de La Chapelle. They believe this technology will help students who may not know where to look — or who feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of accommodation options scattered across different platforms.

The co-founders' ambitions are straightforward: "to reduce the uncertainty and frustration that many — including myself and countless others — encounter every year," de La Chapelle explained.

Trinel added, "The app is free for students, and the team maintains that our goal is to support the St Andrews community rather than profit from it." He went on to cite Seek's slogan: "Housing is the biggest stress students shouldn't have to carry. Our first priority is to lift it. At Seek, we replace luck with choice. One swipe closer to home."

Trinel and de La Chapelle also outlined their aspirations for Seek's long-term development. While acknowledging that the app's initial success will depend on how the St Andrews community responds, the co-founders remain optimistic: "We are hopeful for good results and are open to broadening Seek in the future," they said.

They emphasised that the student housing challenges they aim to address are not unique to St Andrews. Similar issues, ranging from shortages in affordable accommodation to a lack of centralised, transparent listings, affect universities across the UK. In light of this, the founders noted that they would consider expanding Seek to serve additional institutions and organisations, particularly in cities such as Edinburgh and Warwick, should the platform prove successful in its initial rollout.

Students can register now for early access through the Seek website, seekapp.uk, using their University email.

Photo By Charlotte El Hage

Do the Humanities Actually Matter?

TRUMAN CUNNINGHAM
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Not since the foundation of the first universities in the Middle Ages has the fate of the humanities been so uncertain. Subjects like history, theology, and philosophy report some of the lowest enrollment numbers in the history of higher education in both the United States and Britain. In both countries, less than 10% of bachelor's degrees are awarded in traditional humanities fields. At the same time, governments in the United States (and, to a lesser extent, Britain) have accused the humanities and social sciences of 'ideological indoctrination,' giving them *carte blanche* to bludgeon departments with funding cuts and admissions quotas. Faced with this new reality — collapsing student interest, political hostility, and now the rise of AI — the old defences of the humanities are simply not enough. We must either find new ways of keeping these ancient studies alive, or have the strength to face the possibility that the humanities just don't matter anymore.

I want to start with the old defences of the humanities. The *study of man* (*studia humanitatis*) came about in the Renaissance, emerging from the older medieval focus on the study of God. Since the very beginning, Renaissance philosophers, scholars, and pundits advertised the humanities for the skills they could teach. One read Cicero to be a better public speaker, or Aristotle to become a better thinker. Several centuries later, this is still one way humanities programs are advertised today. History isn't merely the study of history for its own sake, according to one university website, but a chance to learn "competitive research and analytic skills" in a "cutting-edge scholarly environment". It's ridiculous to call history "cutting edge", but the argument is still strong in principle; subjects like literature, theology, philosophy, etc. teach skills like critical thinking and deep literacy that STEM subjects cannot teach.

Humanities scholars were very keen to promote this outlook in the 60s, 70s, and 80s, as universities became more commercialised. Until recently, this worked. It was generally believed that whether you wanted to go into law, business, government, and even some STEM fields, you needed to know how to read and write to be successful. It's not so obvious that this is the case now. It seems that the skills that the humanities teach can often be done by AI, or at least substituted by AI. It doesn't matter that AI is a poor facsimile for actual human skill — the important thing is that it is now public belief that AI can read and write as well as any humanities student.

I can write a hell of a lot better than any damn robot. But potential employers may not care. Fortunately, the humanities are valuable for more than just skills like thinking and writing. The humanities, according to another line of argument, are a field of exploration that expands human knowledge rather like the sciences. This line of argument came about in the '90s and early 2000s, with the rise of new paradigms of research like postcolonialism. Fields like history, literature, and philosophy, in dialogue with the social sciences, can 'discover' new things in their research areas, just like lab experiments discover facts about the universe. The humanities are valuable because they too can be dynamic sources of knowledge.



As much as I appreciate postcolonialism, I think this is also a ridiculous argument. No one in their right mind would say that monographs on queer Shakespeare or new narratives of the American Revolution produce knowledge in the same way that laboratory empiricism does. Perhaps some kinds of history uncover new facts about the past, or analytic philosophy settles on broad truths that are very difficult to dispute. But by and large, the humanities are just arguments. As your high school English teacher told you, "There is no 'correct' interpretation of *Moby Dick*." New things in the humanities come about through new arguments based on existing material, or from the application of science to old material (like using lasers to unravel the Herculaneum scrolls). There's nothing wrong with this, either. In fact, I think it would be better if more people in humanities fields tried to be less like the sciences, and recognize that their fields are, in most cases, fundamentally *creative* pursuits.

If the humanities today are not valuable for the skills they teach us, or the knowledge they produce, what value could they have? I think the best answer is unsatisfyingly vague. We study the humanities because there is something universal across time and place in the experience of being human, and studies like history, philosophy, literature, etc. reveal that universality. Even before the invention of writing, our worldviews and systems of meaning were rooted in things like storytelling, word games, and epic poetry. With writing, we have access to traditions of meaning far beyond our own narrow cultural and temporal experience. There are many remarkable things about the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, or *Beowulf*, or the *Shahnameh*, but the most incredible thing is that they are intelligible to us. We can understand ourselves in those ancient characters, even though they seem impossibly distant.

But if you look closely, this isn't an argument in favor of the academic humanities. It's an argument in favor of the things the humanities purport to study. Even the most computer-obsessed tech bro might grant that some old books have value — after all, their companies are named after the *Lord of the Rings* — but still claim that the academic study of those books is a waste of time. In today's day and age, the cultural edifice upon which humanities departments once stood is rapidly eroding. Even if we grant that old books have value (which I think fewer and fewer people are willing to do), it's not so clear anymore that universities are the best places to study them. If declining enrollment numbers tell us anything, it's that fewer young people are willing to study something that will give them so little return for such an expensive degree.

I think this is one reason why defenders of the humanities have turned to practical justifications, like skill-building and knowledge creation. I also think this approach has backfired. Students realize skills like reading and writing aren't important in the same way they used to be, and grow tired of faddish approaches to subjects that claim to reveal new things about ancient texts. But defenders of the humanities repeat these claims *ad nauseam* because the alternative conclusion is that the academic humanities are *useless*. That is, they are no longer relevant in a world of Grok and TikTok, in which the profit incentive of megacorporations is directed against deep thinking and sustained attention.

The ultimate fear is that this 700-year-old project of literature, philology, history, art criticism, philosophy, and theology is a mere blip in the history of humanity. It emerged from the specific cultural conditions of medieval Florence, in which the ability to read, write, and think was paramount, and will disappear as a body of inquiry when we no longer care about those skills. Let me be clear: I do not necessarily believe this is true. But this is the rational conclusion when the humanities are justified by the skills they teach.

Academics and students of the humanities ought to stare this possibility in the face, seriously considering that their disciplines may not exist except as hobbies in a century. The answer to the question, "what are the academic humanities for?" must not be the production of knowledge, or teaching employable skills (those these may be incidental). Instead, we should go back to the source. Why do we read old things? Why do we page through a Graham Greene novel at the *Bouquiniste*? Because they are nice, and they are nice because they connect us with people radically different from ourselves. If humanities departments are to survive in a brainrot future, they must remember this.

ILLUSTRATION BY MOKSHITA NAGANDLA

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Devil's Advocate

Should We Care If Celebrities Cheat?



MILLY SMITH

49% YES

DESDEMONA SMYTH

NO 51%



Celebrities possess a lot of soft power. If the term 'influencer' is anything to go by, those in the public eye certainly have the ability to affect the behaviour of their loyal fan bases. Celebrities continue to encroach on the political sphere — the US President himself is a celebrity, and even actors, singers, and Instagram stars are now expected to speak out on each and every political cause, with silence being taken as a venomous denial of human rights.

In a world where we continue to uphold and enforce this cult of celebrity, we view celebrities almost as if they are elected leaders or gods who are expected to act as moral examples for ordinary people. So, when every aspect of a celebrity's life is under public scrutiny, their romantic life will obviously come under the microscope too.

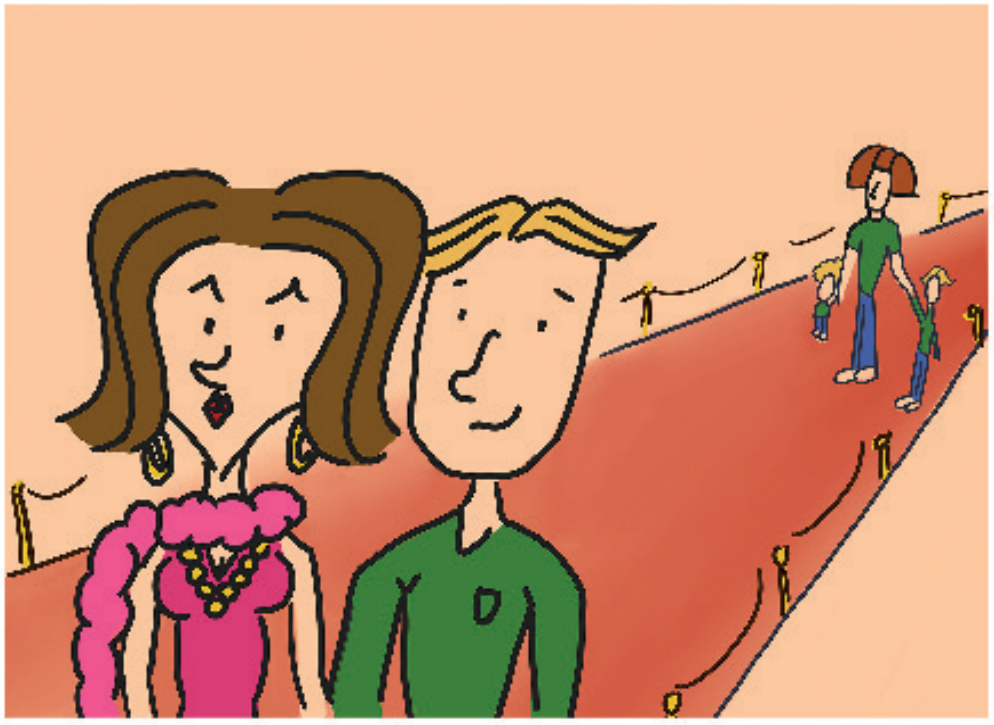
We are forced to care about celebrity infidelity because it is public. Those involved are not just victims in a private sense, able to confide in their friends over a teary glass of wine. Instead, their personal traumas become tabloid headlines and are subject to endless international speculation.

When the married Dominic West was spotted with Lily James, twenty years his junior, on a couple's holiday in Rome in 2020, it prompted a press frenzy. In response to the scandal, West went on to term the furore "absurd" and "deeply stressful" for his family. He admitted no blame, instead laying it at the feet of the press for their intrusion into his private life.

However, for a Hollywood actor, private life is never private. Whether he actually committed adultery or not, in choosing to go out publicly with a fellow Hollywood star in a promiscuous fashion, he cannot have expected to garner zero attention. And, in making this controversial public appearance, *he* caused stress for his family, most pertinently his wife, who will forever be publicly understood as a poor, betrayed spouse.

Celebrity infidelity has prompted the creation of some incredibly catchy, rage-fuelled ballads, from Dolly Parton's 'Jolene,' to Beyonce's 'Sorry,' and, my personal favourite, Stevie Nicks' 'Silver Springs.' Most recently, we got the less covert 'Madeline' by Lily Allen, which gave us the iconic, female-rage-epitomising line: "Who the f*** is Madeline?" These songs were written by victims of infidelity in an attempt to shape the narratives surrounding their relationship's breakdown. As artists, these women attempted to exert some influence over the narratives of the tabloid articles about their husbands' infidelity.

Regardless of whether I think that we *should* care about celebrity infidelity, we invariably do. After the release of the recent Lily Allen album, which already put a lot more personal information into the public domain than is perhaps usual or necessary, there was still an endless amount of speculation. TikToks upon TikToks searched for "the real Madeline," as if the laid-bare song didn't feed them enough personal information about a public star. People will always want to know more about the interior lives of celebrities. And, as they say, with great power comes great responsibility. Those who elect to be in the public eye need to act in such a way that will not put their loved ones under the cruel lens of public scrutiny.



It struck me recently that celebrity cheating scandals have somehow become a favourite guilty pleasure. Every time a famous couple breaks under the weight of infidelity, the internet zooms in on blurry paparazzi photos like archaeologists examining runes. We dissect cryptic Instagram captions the way medieval scholars analyse sacred texts. Suddenly, everyone becomes an expert on a relationship they've never even been in the same room with.

I have some questions: Why do we care at all? Why do we assume celebrities have infallible moral compasses? Why does it matter that they don't?

Cheating is painful. It's messy, human, and heartbreaking. Yet when it happens between two people who happen to be famous, the world reacts as though we've been personally wronged. We clutch our pearls, refresh our feeds, and debate loyalty and betrayal as though the relationship in question includes us. Meanwhile, the people involved — the only people who actually matter — are left to deal with the emotional fallout while millions of strangers turn their personal crisis into content. Somewhere along the way, we started confusing public figures with public property.

There's a seductive idea that celebrities *owe* us something beyond their art, performances, or talent. As if fame comes bundled with a moral contract requiring perfect relationships, perfect choices, perfect fidelity. But perfection is a fantasy, and the expectation that celebrities must embody our highest romantic ideals says less about them and more about us. It reveals our desire to believe that somewhere out there, someone is doing love perfectly, even if we aren't.

Of course, we don't want to admit that. It's much easier to gasp over someone else's scandal than to look at the imperfections in our own relationships — or worse, our own choices. Outrage is entertainment disguised as judgment, morality masquerading as gossip. And clicking through a cheating scandal feels productive in a way that dealing with our own messy humanity never does.

But let's be honest with ourselves: the ferocity with which we latch onto celebrity infidelity has almost nothing to do with principles. It's spectacle; the emotional equivalent of junk food. Instant gratification with zero nutritional value. Like all junk food, it leaves us feeling empty.

This fascination causes real harm. When a celebrity cheats, the internet doesn't just react — it swarms. Suddenly, the betrayed spouse becomes a symbol, the cheater becomes a villain, and any children caught in the headlines become unwilling characters in a drama they didn't audition for. And the audience? They hurl opinions, memes, and think pieces with the intensity of a Greek chorus that's had one too many cocktails.

Every time we treat a celebrity cheating scandal like a must-watch miniseries, we reinforce the idea that romance is a performance, that relationships exist for public interpretation, that love is only real if it's validated by strangers. Is that the world we want to live in? Where intimacy is currency and heartbreak is content?

I'm not here to advocate for cheating. I'm here to advocate that we should not crucify celebrities for cheating, and should pay less attention to other people's relationships and more to our own. We should say, "N.O.B.: Not Our Business," and move on with our days. Isn't that a far more fabulous way to live?

Illustration by Sandra Palazuelos Garcia

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Give a Little, Get a Little: Gift-Giving Isn't Easy

STELLA PAK-GUÉNETTE
Section Editor

This is my official holiday season ode to a very specific, very misunderstood community: the bad gift-givers. To be clear, "bad" does *not* refer to the re-gifters, the ones who pass off free company merch, or the novelty-socks-with-a-bad-pun crowd. I mean the people who take gift-giving seriously, who want to get it right, make a small annual promise to themselves to improve, but somehow still end up in the same position every December.

I mean *us*: the quieter, more tragic subtype. The people who sincerely and desperately want to be thoughtful, but whose brains refuse to store information unless it's literally examinable. And because I'm aware of this flaw, I attempt to compensate by entering what I call "listening season" in mid-to-late October. It's when I suddenly become alert to every passing comment about what people like, so I can gather intelligence for my holiday mission.

So, *Saint*-readers, consider this a pep talk to anyone who has ever tried their absolute best and still ended up giving a present (like a candle or a gift card) that essentially whispered: I really do care about you, I just, for reasons unknown and in this exact moment, remember nothing about you.

The thing is, we're not careless or memory-deficient, just seasonally overwhelmed. If anything, we care *too much*. I think that's the real curse here. We overthink ourselves straight into holiday paralysis because we want so badly for the gift to say "I know you," but the pressure of that sentence makes our entire personality and memory dissolve right away.

What makes all of this worse is that we all know someone who is simply so good at this. They'll hand someone a gift that feels exactly right, and they make it look like the obvious choice. No hesitation and no second-guessing, just naturally talented at gift-giving. A skill I admire and genuinely cannot relate to. Somehow, these people never seem the slightest bit stressed about it. They're not sitting in shops spiralling into self-analysis; they just pick something and move on with their lives.



What actually happens is simple: we panic, and we get emotional stage fright. The second the stakes get high, our entire brains wipe themselves clean and forget everything about our favourite people. We're wandering around shops thinking, *Do they drink tea? Have they ever owned socks? What do they do with their time?*

Part of this panic is the looming fear of getting it embarrassingly wrong. Every so often, we get a burst of confidence and convince ourselves to go beyond the usual candle-and-gift-card routine and buy something radical ... like fancy bath salts. Very off-script. And then, of course, we find out they don't even own a bathtub. Or we pick out a book that turns out to be the exact one they slogged through last summer. This is why, inevitably, we crawl right back to the safety options. Like stationery. Mugs. Lavender soap. The Switzerland of gifts: aggressively neutral.

Being a student only makes it more ridiculous. You spend the end of the semester buried in exams and deadlines, and then suddenly you're going home for the holidays and expected to produce heartfelt, personality-revealing gifts for all the people you love ... all while your bank account is unfortunately hovering somewhere in the double digits...or the singles.

This year, I'm officially putting my foot down and trying a little harder. I've had a "Gift Ideas" Notes app list since the first week of November. As I'm writing this, it's currently empty. But, frankly, that's more infrastructure than I've ever had, so I'm absolutely taking this win. Something will go on there eventually.

Can we overcome this? No one knows. I don't think we're going to wake up one December as the sort of people who effortlessly source the perfect, most thoughtful gift in the room. We probably won't ever give the gift someone brings up years later, and that's okay. Because the intention is real, even if the execution is slightly questionable.

Until this transformation is complete, please understand this: every questionable gift comes from a very sincere place. A disorganised and easily overwhelmed place, but sincere nonetheless. If you unwrap something this year and can't immediately identify what it is or why I thought it was for you, just know: I meant well. And honestly, for the bad gift-giver, that's the closest we ever get to perfection.

Illustration by Eve Fishman

The Revival of Analogue Art

Cassette players, record players, orchestras, oh my!

ADRIAN HANLON
Viewpoint Writer

On a shelf in my bedroom sits a three-inch stone statue of a giggling Buddha. He is perhaps my favourite piece of decor. Yet, if I had bought him online, I would like him a little less. That is to say, the fact that I bought him in a market in Chongqing, rather than by clicking a button, increases my enjoyment of the item. Having bought him where, when, from whom, and with whom I did ties him to an experience that gives the item meaning. The same goes for whatever you buy, consume, make, or do — it matters the context in which you buy, consume, make, or do it. Often, the greater the friction involved, the greater the meaning created.

This may sound counterintuitive. After all, it seems obvious that a more convenient life is a better one. A dishwasher frees up time otherwise spent washing dishes, a radiator frees up time spent chopping wood, and a car frees up time spent walking. This, everyone must agree, is a positive consequence of convenience technologies. Why, then, are so many people returning to cumbersome, difficult-to-use, costly, and altogether inconvenient technologies like record players and analogue cameras, when streaming services play crisper sound and phones take higher resolution photos?

The obvious reason is a desire to disconnect from the digital. When you use a phone camera, you do not merely use the camera; you use the *phone*, with all its associations, its baggage, and the urge to click the notification that just appeared at the top of your screen. When a piece of technology does everything, you can never be present in a single activity.

Yet it goes beyond that. The joy of analogue media extends to the friction itself – the very fact that it is cumbersome, difficult to use, costly, and inconvenient. Just as my going to China and searching through dozens of stalls to find my Buddha created a unique experience, so too investing in a vinyl record, labouring to set up the player, and restricting oneself to a single location creates an experience that feels altogether more personal than the instant gratification of listening to whatever you want, whenever and wherever you want it.

The problem with convenience technologies is that they treat every process as a means to an end, seeking only to accelerate and perfect the end. Yet in art, as in many other things, the process is the purpose. By condensing it, one makes it quicker to create and consume (hooray, more art!), but the creation and consumption become shallower, more fleeting. You can watch a thousand films on Netflix and never connect with one, yet had you watched a small fraction of those films in a cinema, having invested the time and money into a communal experience, you may have found that you engaged with each more deeply. "Work, effort, meaning — these ideas are all interconnected for the users and consumers of analogue technology," says BBC Future.

It is undeniable, however, that modern technologies produce art of superior audiovisual quality. Films shot on digital are crisper, their colours more vibrant, while new music technologies allow artists to artificially eliminate the imperfections of physical instruments and their own voices.

This misses the point. Art is supposed to be imperfect because it reflects the fallibility of the humans who make it. That is why sheet music allows for variation. Two pianists can play the same song, and it will sound completely different, because each infuses it with their own unique style. In comparison, an AI rendition, which hits each note perfectly, would sound flat and lifeless.

Many artists have resisted this. For example, while AI-generated art seeks to eliminate humans from a field whose entire purpose is to connect with other humans, Rosalía's *Lux* album seeks to remind us of this purpose through the use of classical instruments and stunning vocals in songs like 'Berghain'. Her goal, she says, is to create "the sense, the feeling that there's a human in there. There's humans in there."

In this way, analogue art becomes an act of resistance — resistance against the instant gratification and manufactured perfection that characterise our modern world, from short-form content to airbrushed models to the slew of job applications both written and reviewed by AI. It embodies a desire to slow down, a re-embracing of effort, a cultivation of unique and meaningful experience — a yearning for human connection in a disconnected world.

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Board Games Against Humanity: The Ultimate Party Killers

POPPIENA HORSINGTON
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Seeing my friends when I go home means hanging out, laughing, and gossiping about one of the various dramas of our high school experience. I love these people deeply, and I carry them in my heart wherever I go. However, it also means facing one of my immense pet peeves: the board game. My animosity towards most games and their communal love of game nights is a divide that we simply cannot overcome, hard as we may try. Luckily, when I am around them, I can be open about my dislike, and they joke about my response to any game brought out whenever we play. However, the warmth of that safe space is not universal. There comes a time when a game is surprisingly unveiled at a party, and I am caught unawares. So, here and now, I am proclaiming that board games have no place being vivaciously whipped out at random functions — state ahead of time that it is a game night or keep that box of evil to yourself.



The concept of the game is expansive. Drinking or card, board or video, it seems that they are inescapable. As they constantly find new ways to reinvent themselves, I cannot be a hater of all games. My apprehension lies specifically with the board game, due to its excessive rules and clunky format. The card game is sleek and, I'll admit it, sometimes even sexy. If you are adequately skilled, the game can be confined to just one hand. The board game requires more knowledge and paraphernalia than I am comfortable with being responsible for at a party. Moreover, this knowledge is often incredibly detailed and action-specific, and the equipment is often tiny and difficult to keep track of, especially in a crowded space. Any Monopoly piece is in immediate danger when placed in my hands.

However, my main qualm with games being thrust upon you at parties is the conflict between the reveal and the natural flow of conversation. Seemingly, upon its announcement, all dialogue has to cease so that we can gather to nod along to the rules of the game. Listening to someone long-windedly explain the intricacies of this merriment is often not as enlightening as the explainer thinks it is, and most of the time, I leave the monologue with no better understanding of how to play, but rather with a furrowed brow as I shuffle over to pick up some game accessory that I am unqualified to deploy. I could've been having my meet-cute or sowing the seeds of a beautiful friendship at this function, and now I must hush up so I can nod along to a fifteen-minute-long ramble about how to play. And, always, the game introducer tries to satiate my hesitation with the same false lines. "Don't worry, it'll get easier once you start playing!" or "I swear it's not as complicated once you start, haha." What did I do to be condemned to this fate of moving my petite token around a board alongside other confused souls? I was an innocent bystander at a party, and now I am involved in something I did not even consider as a possibility. As Hailee Steinfeld sang, "I was so much younger yesterday", before I had to endure an intense breakdown of a game I had never heard of.

The true trouble with introducing a board game to anyone is that it is an investment. You are coaching this group of people to garner enthusiasm and experience for this game so that you can play it with them later. You teach them the rules, you encourage them when they make a mistake, because you are seeking to build a safe space for your gamer community. Thus, you have to pick your crowd very wisely. Every game requires at least three rounds of playing to familiarise yourself with the rules, and you somehow have to emerge from those rounds still with the energy to keep going. You cannot assume that every Professor Plum with the candlestick or Colonel Mustard in the dining room wants to become part of this world.

I urge you, the next time you are at a party and think about bringing a game out, please consider the ramifications of your actions. Ask yourself if you are prepared to make everyone commit.

ILLUSTRATION BY RAMONA KIRKHAM

On BBC Neutrality, or the Lack Thereof

GAYATRI CHATTERJI
VIEWPOINT WRITER

The resignations of BBC Director General Tim Davie and the CEO of News and Current Affairs, Deborah Turness, followed what may be the most significant recent example of the BBC's progressive fall from grace. They occurred after the most recent scandal in which the BBC admitted to splicing unrelated parts of a speech delivered by Donald Trump in a documentary from 2024 that aired just a week before the presidential election. Allegations of bias in BBC reporting followed, as this edit suggested that Trump had actively incited his supporters to storm the Capitol in January of 2021. The two clips, which were edited as concurrent sentences despite being spoken almost an hour apart in the original speech, pointed to a strong construction of a narrative by the BBC that Trump actively motivated the Capitol riot, an implication of severe political significance. The implications of this, I would argue, warrant the scandal it has brought, and in general, have wider, deeply concerning implications for the media and its credibility overall.

The BBC is big: among (if not) the largest and most consulted broadcasting companies, both locally and globally. It has long prided itself on impartiality, aligning itself with those who lean to both the left and the right, emphasising its commitment to accuracy and trustworthiness as an institution of public service media. However, the BBC's recent inability to escape allegations of bias has increasingly undermined these pre-existing notions of neutrality and trust, which have long been rejected in its wide readership.

The specific criticism that resonated the most with me regards the BBC's coverage of the war in Gaza, an example of their 'neutrality' that I, paradoxically, have found to be far more of an active stance. The Centre for Media Monitoring (CfMM) published a report outlining the data that supports discernible instances of bias, claiming, from the analysis of over 35,000 instances within BBC content, that Israeli deaths have not only been covered with "significantly more emotive language," but have also received, per fatality, 33 times the coverage of Palestinian casualties. The report also concluded that the Israeli perspective was covered eleven times more often by BBC presenters.

Another aspect of the report, which covers at length the BBC's staunch rejection of any notions or labels of the conflict as genocidal, is an issue which has been contentious across the UK, and an issue perceptible in the wider discourse outside of just the media and the BBC. My question is, however, how can the BBC's coverage can be impartial when a conscious stance in discrediting notions of genocidal activity also comes with the aforementioned skewed coverage towards Israeli perspectives? How can an inherently unequal coverage, to this extent, in any capacity, be construed as neutral? This was further contextualised this summer, when the BBC issued a profuse apology for their inability to pull out of a live stream of the Bob Vylan Glastonbury set, which included inflammatory anti-IDF chants — further demonstrating that there is, in fact, a distinct BBC stance.

My concern surrounding overt cases of media bias, especially among some of the biggest, most trusted media companies, is that much more spotlighted by the concurrent decline of media literacy. The awareness of the ubiquity of bias in news, the sway of media echo chambers, and sensationalising headlines, which actively kill the complexity and nuance needed to achieve effective reporting, is disappearing before our eyes. In a world where it is already increasingly rare that people get their news through reading long-form articles and engaging with analytical journalism, this so-called journalism from 'trusted' sources that doesn't actively push a biased narrative is cause for great concern.

The media that the vast majority of us consume continuously nowadays typically consists of videos, no longer than 30 seconds, shown to us by an algorithm actively working to give us what we want to see. This has become a major news source of our generation, shaping our thoughts even if we're not always aware of it.

This lack of accountability that we've developed, in both the production and consumption of media and news, has contributed to a political climate with a rapidly shrinking space for meaningful discourse between those with different views. Now more than ever, the media — and those working in it — must recognise the weight of their responsibility, and we, as consumers, must be more deliberate about what we read and what we believe.

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A Bloody Bother: The Cult of the Rememberance Day Poppy

ALEX MCQUIBBAN
VIEWPOINT WRITER

It's November, and it seems one cannot go a minute without seeing a poppy. No, Britain hasn't just become the world's reddest and most boring garden centre. Instead, the nation is in the throes of a militarist stupor disguised as patriotism. That's right: Britain is celebrating its favourite floral cult – the cult of the poppy — and everyone in even a remotely important public-facing role must participate. News anchors, TV pundits, politicians, even whole football teams — all must wear the poppy, lest they, like *Irish* Footballer James McClean, receive literal death threats for their vestimentary choices.

To be sure, the poppy is meant to be a mostly benign symbol of remembrance, originally a reminder of the British soldiers who fought in WWI. Of course, Allied victory could not have been achieved without the help of French, American, Italian, Russian, and Japanese soldiers who also laid down their lives. And it shouldn't be forgotten that among the many 'British' soldiers were countless citizens of colonies the British Empire still held on to, many of which they continued to brutally repress till well after WWII.

Unfortunately, like with many of the country's other favourite cults — football, the NHS, and Princess Diana — behind a polished and much beloved image lies an ugly truth that perhaps just isn't worth celebrating. It's not just the truth that the British state and its soldiers have been complicit in the slave trade — as much as racists love to remind us that Britain 'ended it' — and that they have been engaged in numerous acts of genocide in Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, India, and Kenya, and that they have waged brutal colonial campaigns all over Asia, Africa, the Americas, and the Pacific. Nor is it simply that, in the last 30 years alone, British soldiers have brutally repressed Catholics in the North of Ireland and tortured innocent civilians, including children, in Iraq and Afghanistan. After all, this is par for the course when it comes to British 'military' action abroad.

But it's also because, even at home, the oppressive force of the poppy has left its rotten mark. Multiple people have been arrested across the UK for burning poppies, and others, whether they be public figures or regular members of the public, continue to feel pressured to wear the poppy in social and work settings lest they be branded unfeeling traitors. One campaign in 2014 even urged Muslim women to wear "poppy hijabs," truly showing how far poppy-worshipping madness had gone. The poppy became a literal article of faith, one intended to provide a visible proof of how British a person *really* was. But even those whose outlook on the British military is far more positive have come out against the poppy. British veterans have, for example, lodged collective complaints about the garish and performative nature of the poppy as well as its function as a propaganda tool used to drum up support for many of Britain's more regrettable military interventions.

Moreover, the poppy-pin making industry is a truly sordid business. In 2018, it was reported that both the Royal British Legion and Lady Haig's Poppy Factory held contracts with the British government, which involved exploitative use of prison labour. Under this contract, inmates at HM Prison Ford were earning just £10 a week making poppies. At a different prison, one former member of *The Independent* Monitoring Board, a body which scrutinises inmates' welfare, described the work as "mind numbing" and "akin to mental torture."

> "[T]he poppy-pin making industry is a truly sordid business."

So, even if your motivations are entirely benign and your only aim is to support the armed forces, you can do a lot better than wearing the symbol of a death cult to which Britain has already sacrificed many of its own people and countless others. Consider, perhaps, donating directly to local veterans' associations. Or you can also take a crack at campaigning against the many wars and very culture of militarism which has duped so many young Brits into handing over their lives for what have often — though, granted, not always — been unjust causes.

And, if you really are that keen on pinning a flower to your shirt, may I recommend an Easter lily to remind others not just of the poppy-red blood that British soldiers once shed on the emerald fields of Ireland, but of the many other injustices that Britain and its 'brave' soldiers have been, are, and will likely be complicit in, whether it's their often less-than-tacit support of Israel's ongoing genocide in Gaza or their own ongoing occupation of Six Counties.

What's With All the Scaffolding, St Andrews?

GEORGES TOULOUSE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

It would appear that Dame-Principal Sally Mapstone has decided to renovate the entire town of St Andrews this year on a whim. She seems to have greenlighted the cleaning of about half of all University buildings — and, not to be conspiratorial, but I have a sinking feeling she isn't a stranger to the removal of the fountain on Market Street either.

Did the University suddenly discover coffers of cash, stashed away in the attic of the Bute building? Was the need for cleaning Reg's façade that much greater than — just spitballing here — building more student accommodation, lowering its price, or even clearing out the corpses in the Main Library's air vents, which have stunk up the place for the past two years?

Seeing the town clad in scaffolding has made me think that we might be getting our priorities muddled, both in St Andrews and at large. Since World War II, there has been such emphasis on preserving the buildings which we have inherited from the past. We spend so much money sand-blasting old stones to make them look a bit less depressing — honestly, a lost cause up here — and so little on making our world reflect who we are and what we need today.

Our cities have become museums of glories past, gigantic period sets peppered with the odd '80s wart-of-a-building. It's like there has been a collective admission that whatever we could build will inevitably be less valuable than what was built 500 years ago. Yet we need to be able to live in our cities and have them evolve with the times.

There once wasn't such a widespread wish to conserve everything, and great buildings were regularly raised to make space for the new. Take Paris as an example, where two-thirds of buildings were reduced to rubble between the 1850s and 1870s to make way for a city which still impresses the world. Nowadays, we recognise that we cannot build beautiful buildings, so we keep the old ones and build our ugly concrete blobs in the empty lots around them.

What does this imply for the future? Must we resign ourselves to a world in which we can no longer build new Taj Mahals or Versailles? Will we not be able to change the façades of great buildings, like Buckingham Palace's in 1913, simply because we must preserve the past at all costs? Must we, as an epoch, resign ourselves to camping our lives and the buildings in which they exist between heritage sites?

Don't misunderstand me. I'm the first to love the past and the great constructions it left us, and the first to recognise the value in maintaining as many as possible. They generally are more beautiful than what we make today; they're definitely more interesting, and there's no doubt that given the choice between preserving or replacing them with some God-awful glass and concrete cube, we should pick the former. We must preserve the souls of our cities. But we must recognise that they aren't static, that our needs are changing, and that our environments must change as well.



We can't continue like this for the next thousand years — try to think about how many buildings you've seen that predate 1025. Probably very few. They will all disappear eventually, and to me, that's the beauty of the past. It's kind of the whole point.

Instead of preserving everything at all costs, let's give our descendants something to talk about, to criticise, to admire. Let's feel legitimate in tearing down what is old but unimportant and replacing it with something better, and ideally beautiful. Let's try to make our cities live with us, instead of simply living within them.

So, to the Dame-Principal, I say: spare us the scaffolding, by George give us back our fountain, and for God's sake put funds towards cleaning the air vents in the Library. We're suffocating in here.

ILLUSTRATION BY ABIGAIL SVAASAND

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Jasmine Mitchell on St Andrews, Crumble Competitions, and Newfound Fame

TILLY FRAIN-BELL & TARA PHILLIPS
FEATURES WRITERS

Freshly out of the tent, with five Star Baker titles, two Hollywood handshakes, and an engraved glass cake stand to her name, 2025 *Great British Bake Off* winner Jasmine Mitchell was grinning from ear to ear.

"It's felt pretty crazy," Mitchell told *The Saint*. "It's all a lot of fun adjusting to a different pace of life."

The 23-year-old medical student graduated from the University of St Andrews in 2024 and won the *Great British Bake Off* just months later, on 4 November, 2025.

After missing the acceptance call from *Bake Off* producers in February of last year whilst on a GP placement, Mitchell eventually rang them back. "I was literally on a train and had to talk in code," she laughed.

Since receiving the life-changing call, winning the show, and charming the nation with her infectious smile and iconic cowboy boots, Mitchell has made quite the media debut.

"It's really kicked off these past couple of weeks," she explained. The *Bake Off* Champion has appeared on the BBC, Lorraine, and has over 143,000 followers on Instagram at the time of print.

After competing and making lifelong friends with fellow finalists, Mitchell recalled her time between the semi-final challenges. "We were just lying there and Tom [Arden] and Toby [Littlewood] were doing hand-stand walking competitions," Mitchell said. "I was just thinking, this is such an awesome experience, and we are never going to be here again."

> "I got a text at 1am saying, 'Jasmine you're making us a crumble.'"

Mitchell had an incredible support network behind the scenes during her time on the show. She lives in London with her two cousins and has friends and family rallying around her. "They put up with so much mess and chaos," she said. "I remember I would finish a bake, and it looked like a bomb had gone off. Ella would say, 'Get out of here and I'll clear it up.' It was such a saving grace."

"Every morning, I would have a bit of time to sit and pray and be quiet, I think it almost meant that I didn't have this pressure on myself," Mitchell explained. She emphasised how important her faith was throughout the entire process of *Bake Off* filming.

Mitchell is in her fifth year of studying medicine. Despite her Bake Off success, she still plans on becoming a doctor, alongside pursuing her passion for food. "I also really want to push the creative, cooking side of things. I'm really excited about what's coming next," she explained. Mitchell plans on writing at least one cookbook — and hopefully more.

"I have memories from a very young age, standing on a little stool or chair next to the counter helping to mix or add ingredients," she recalled. Growing up in a big family that loved having people over, she remembers helping with baking, cooking, and preparing in the kitchen. "That's definitely shaped my love for food and baking."

Mitchell was born and raised in the north of Edinburgh. "I love that city a lot," she said fondly. Although now spending time further south, she still misses home — and especially her former university town.

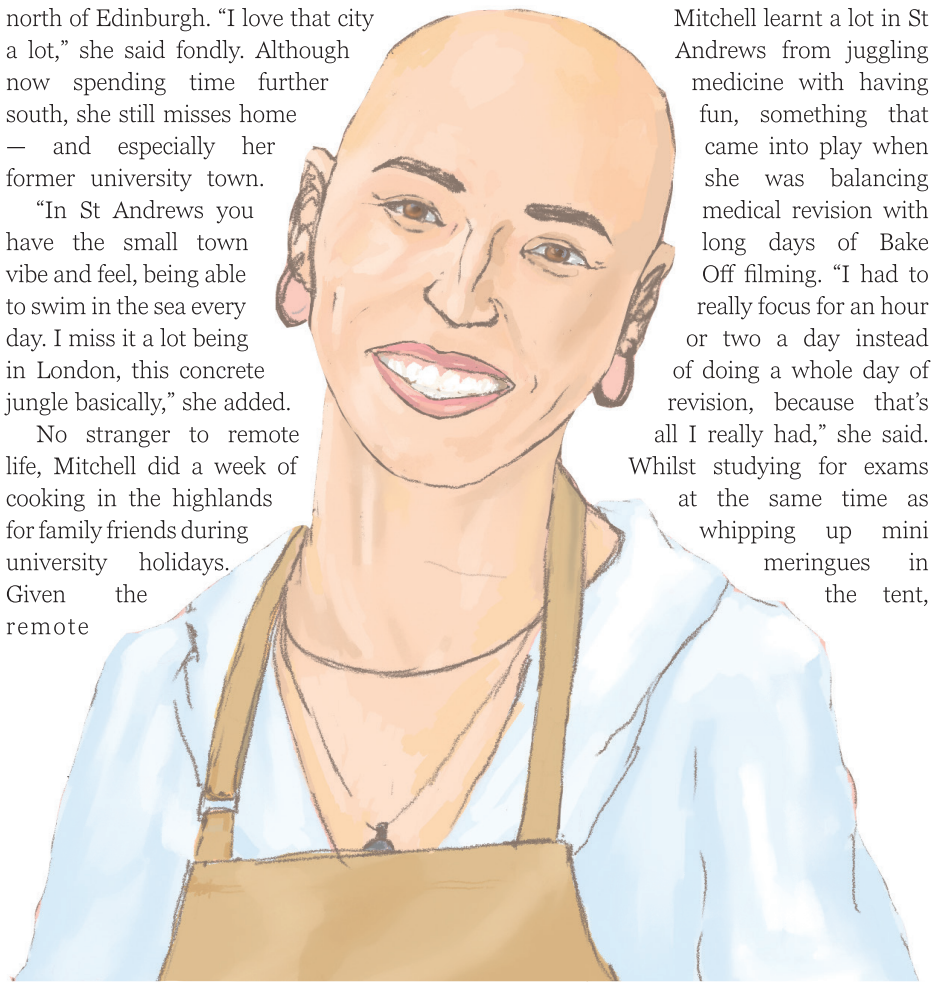
"In St Andrews you have the small town vibe and feel, being able to swim in the sea every day. I miss it a lot being in London, this concrete jungle basically," she added.

No stranger to remote life, Mitchell did a week of cooking in the highlands for family friends during university holidays. Given the remote accessible via boat, she faced the challenge of managing supplies, cooking, and transport. "It was all a logistical nightmare, but I think it definitely set me up well for the *Bake Off*," she said.

For Mitchell, St Andrews was a formative time, both academically and personally. "I was constantly trying to work out how little sleep I could function off the next day and how I could be stood up in dissection the next day for two hours." A challenging balance to get right: "I got it wrong quite a few times," she admitted.

More than just a place to study, Mitchell has fond memories of food in St Andrews. "One of the things I love is, because it's so small, you can easily just knock on each other's doors," she recalled. In autumn, when people leave boxes of apples outside their doors, she remembers making a lot of crumble.

This became a regular habit for Mitchell, even leading her to be unknowingly signed up for a crumble-off by two of her flatmates: "I got a text at 1am, saying, 'Jasmine, you're making us a crumble.'" That was the one bake off she didn't end up winning. "I think it was probably a good thing I didn't win," she laughed. "It was humbling."



Mitchell learnt a lot in St Andrews from juggling medicine with having fun, something that came into play when she was balancing medical revision with long days of Bake Off filming. "I had to really focus for an hour or two a day instead of doing a whole day of revision, because that's all I really had," she said. Whilst studying for exams at the same time as whipping up mini meringues in the tent, cameras, "[It's] ironic that I am plaiting when I have no hair to plait myself."

> "Mitchell has fond memories of food in St Andrews."

During her first year at St Andrews, "I would always wear a wig and never go without it," Mitchell recalled. However, after spending some time travelling during her first year summer, she decided to return to university without a wig.

"St Andrews was honestly the best place I could have been in the process of stopping wearing wigs," she said. "It's such a fun place, people are quirky, interesting, and have stuff that makes them different and unique."

In her final year, Mitchell modelled for charity fashion show DONT WALK, St Andrews' largest student-run fashion show.

"I could never imagine being in a fashion show, let alone being in a fashion show with no hair," Mitchell recalled. "It was a massive confidence boost, just being on a catwalk."

Beyond strutting on the runway, the *Bake Off* winner loves to combine her two passions of friends and food. "It's such a beautiful way of getting people off their phones and actually deeply connecting, chatting, and building a community, which I feel like we don't have at the moment". That's why she loves hosting, believing that enjoying food in good company can add so much to our society.

Mitchell has plans to share even more food, cooking, and lifestyle content online, alongside her passion for all things beautiful and aesthetic, from table settings to fashion and food.

Although active on social media, "I live with the app [Instagram] deleted off my phone because I just end up scrolling and I hate that," she said.

Through juggling newfound fame, cooking, med school, and an active London social life, Mitchell manages to seem incredibly put together.

"It sounds ridiculous, but when I have a lot on, I write everything down and just prioritise," she said. "Start with what you have to do, and everything else will follow. And just try and enjoy it."

ILLUSTRATION BY VERA KAGANSKAYA

Hark the Heralds Cash Tills Ring

VIC PRIESTNER
FEATURES WRITER

'Twas six months 'til Christmas, and all through the town, not a golfer was putting, not one student around. Market Street shimmered in the soft summer light, yet one tiny shop glowed as if it were night. The Nutcracker Christmas shop stood bright and tall, with garlands and baubles lining every small wall. Though July breezes wandered in off the North Sea, its windows still sparkled like a winter marquee. The children were nestled in Rusacks Hotel beds, while visions of nutcrackers danced in their heads. And tourists in sandals, confused yet delighted, found Christmas in June — equally baffled and excited.

The Nutcracker Christmas Shop — St Andrews' very own Bronner's Winter Wonderland — has been a marked feature of Market Street since its inaugural opening three years ago. For students, it sits somewhere between a landmark, a curiosity, and a tradition: It's the kind of place you take visiting parents, the kind of window you photograph on the walk back from Pret, the kind of shop you duck into during exam season just to feel something warm and cosy again. With a Christmas spirit seeming to rival only that of Santa himself, what better time of year than now to walk straight into his workshop and speak directly to the elves? I spoke to Customer Service Assistant, Laura.

Although the British public is never too fond of "tat," as Laura calls it, Christmas decorations are something entirely apart. "It's what Christmas is all about," she explained. The tasteless kitsch that is tat — or "something I don't want on my mantlepiece," according to Laura — becomes coveted when you "can tie it on a Christmas tree."

In describing the shop's promise of the guaranteed Christmas spirit, Laura explained who the shop attracts and why it's so enduring. "We have tourists from January, and then from October it's back to locals and students for the Christmas vibes," she explained. "We're welcoming lots of people who either have come to visit and want to take something Scottish home or have Scottish heritage [from] many, many generations back," she said. These 'Scottish' visitors in question usually speak with particularly strong American accents.

The shop's popularity among students is rooted in tradition and predictability. Families and student households develop their own annual rituals — reserving the same bauble, choosing the same decoration, or seeking out seasonal favourites like the Scottish Santa. "One family of a student gets a bauble every year that she's been here, so if it's a four-year course, then four Scotland-based Santas," Laura said.

These small, repeated interactions turn the shop into a consistent marker of student life in a town that changes every few years. Even visiting alumni find a familiar corner of St Andrews waiting for them, a constant in a shifting world. Students in particular appear to latch onto that reliability. The nutcracker in the window in October will also be there in March, and again in June — a fixed point in a town that otherwise turns over every four years.

The shop isn't static, however. "We bring in other things based on customer feedback," Laura said. The result is a balance between tradition and gentle evolution — comfort without cliché.

It's the comfort of Christmas that keeps the shelves stocked, the cash tills ringing, and smiles on workers' and customers' faces. The St Andrews rumour mill has never shied away from identifying the success of "such a niche market of tat" as evidence of a money laundering empire. In response, Laura asserted that the tourists who flock to our wee town fall in love with the idea of Scottish Christmas, no matter how many months until the big day.

"They come in, in the middle of May, and inquire about those huge blow-up Santas we see in all those classic movies. It's an effort to explain that we keep things a bit smaller here," she explained. "We're pushing 600 years old here in St Andrews, so it's always going to be a tourist hotspot."

When part of the job is to greet every customer with a Merry Christmas — come rain or shine, March or Movember — there would be no surprise if the Christmas spirit was something you left at work. Laura attested to the opposite: "My husband actually banned me from buying anything else. I spend so much time organising and decorating the displays and making them all look pretty that my own Christmas tree is just an amalgamation of everyone's favourite baubles."

Christmas, for the elves themselves (or those suffering from Christmasitis), is really just about the tradition of it all. That's what makes it so at home in St Andrews. In a town of students who come and go, of tourists who drift through, and of locals who witness it all, the shop remains a steadfast reminder that, no matter the season, the magic of the holidays is never at bay, and the threat of gift-giving is less than one paycheck away.

From St Andrews to BBC Breakfast

AVA PARKER
FEATURES WRITER

"I love that place so much I still dream about it," said BBC presenter Louise Minchin, referring to St Andrews. Decades before she was one of the most recognisable faces on British television, Minchin was a student here, wandering the same three streets we do.

In St Andrews, Minchin wrote for the student newspaper — then called *The Chronicle*. Minchin reminisced on the architecture, the beaches, and the sense of remoteness. She described a feeling of "falling off the end of the earth. In a really good way."

Even to this day, decades later, there is something about the town which Minchin finds magnetic. "I love that place so much," she said. "If they offered me a job there tomorrow, I would be right back."

"I thought I was going to do a degree in philosophy and International Relations," Minchin said. One thread of Minchin's childhood tugged harder, however: summers spent visiting her grandfather in a village in Spain. Here she first fell in love with the language. Despite not having studied it at A Level, St Andrews allowed her to continue studying the language at university — yet another point on the long list of things she said she loved about the University.

That chance encounter with Spanish snowballed and ended up changing the entire path of her degree. The third-year International Relations course clashed with a Latin American literature module she was taking as part of her Spanish course. In the end, despite planning to graduate with a degree in International Relations, her love for literature won.

Regardless of her reputation today as an accomplished broadcaster, she maintains that her early years of university were less than exemplary. "My professors will remember me as one of the most unreliable students," she laughed. When it came to her year abroad, something shifted.

Starting off as an unexpected academic choice, her year abroad in Argentina ended up shaping the rest of her life.

When it came to her year abroad, however, something shifted. "It was the making of me," Minchin said. At the end of her second year, she received a scholarship to spend a year in Buenos Aires, Argentina — about 11,400 kilometres away. This decision would require courage even today, let alone in an era before the internet.

"There were no mobile phones, no email, no internet [...] The only way my parents could get in touch was if I was in the room when the landline rang," she explained. It was complete and utter immersion, cut off from the outside world.

The transition was far from simple. She recalled hitting "rock bottom" in a Buenos Aires supermarket. The rapidly changing supermarket prices during Argentina's period of hyperinflation, paired with the country's dialect of Spanish — which university had not prepared her for — left her overwhelmed. "[The clerk] was shouting at me, and I just stood there in floods of tears," Minchin recalled.

Despite the trauma, that was the moment that changed everything: "I decided that I was going to master this language, because it was the only way I could survive."

Enter, García Márquez and a dictionary. Minchin returned to St Andrews fluent and confident. Her professors were stunned. "What happened?" they asked. Minchin's answer was simple: "I decided I was going to learn this."

Her year in Argentina — however traumatising — ended up being the launchpad for her career in journalism.

After graduating, Minchin returned to Latin America, where she worked as a translator and interpreter. As one of the few bilingual staff members, she was forced to do PR interviews. One particular interview stood out to her more than most: A radio interview on a tiny radio station "in the middle of nowhere" was where her interest in journalism was confirmed.

The "natural" place for her to start was in the Latin American section of the BBC World Service. From there, her career took off. Since starting in the world service, she has moved into radio broadcasting, presenting high-profile BBC programmes — namely *BBC Breakfast* and *Rip Off Britain*. Recently, she has also added novel writing to her resume.

Looking back, Michin speaks about studying languages with distinct warmth and fondness. Learning Spanish wasn't merely an academic pursuit; it gave her a "deeper cultural empathy." and a way of feeling connected to the outside world. With many universities across the United Kingdom cutting Modern Languages programmes, she stresses their importance now more than ever.

"There's nothing like being able to communicate with people in their own language."

One piece of advice she would give to current students: "If you're there at the moment, take advantage of this incredible place that you're at, all these amazing friends that you're going to make, and of that complete joy."

“Just Bodies to Be Thrown Around”: On Working for the Scotsman Group Monopoly

TAO YAZAKI
Features Writer

Names have been changed for anonymity.

“The Scotsman venues themselves are one of the most mismanaged,” said one student who works for the Scotsman Group. “[They] treat the staff so poorly, and there’s no value for staff.”

The Scotsman Group seems ubiquitous in the hospitality business in St Andrews. Market Street alone hosts the Vic, Forgan’s, and Mitchell’s. On South Street, the Group owns the Bothy and SPACE Cafe, as well as No. 1 Apartments — the recently-built SPACE accommodation — and also has plans to build a care facility at St Andrews West.

Despite owning a disproportionate number of hospitality venues, the company’s name is relatively unknown. This obscurity appears to be aided by a frequent cycle of acquisitions, refurbishments, and renamings — with financial reports showing that the group has added and lost at least four major subsidiaries and joint ventures in the past five years.

Even on a local level, this has caused alarm. Councillor Penny Uprichard raised concern during SPACE accommodation’s development in 2021, noting the company’s subsidiary Kilrymont Developments had “changed their name three times in a short period.”

Within this hidden monopoly, students feel they have little choice in employers. Another employee and a trade union member, C, explained that, as a student, the hospitality industry is usually the most flexible, providing “the opportunity to work at different times” including on evenings and weekends. “If I left, I wouldn’t want to work for this company again,” C said, “but I think in St Andrews it’s just impossible [not to].”

“Where else is there to work? If you own so many of the hospitality venues in St Andrews, the best job security is with Scotsman,” said B. “Constantly, small businesses and family businesses are being pushed out of this town.”

The group’s dominance leaves many with few options but to tolerate poor working conditions.

B recalled being in a group chat with his fellow employees. In response to a lack of training wages, a colleague brought up the Licensing (Training of Staff) (Scotland) Regulations 2007, which requires a minimum of two hours for alcohol licensing training. “[An employee] was bringing up Scottish legislation and going, ‘You have to pay us for the hours that we are working when we’re training,’” B recounted. The Group refused.

B also detailed an incident where a colleague had to complete training prior to being able to clock in, ensuring those hours were not compensated. “A lot of training is done through online modules,” B explained. It’s usually mandatory and requires several hours. B and C were not paid for their training, and stated that other colleagues did not get paid for training either.

Employees also noted inadequate training. D, a former employee of Mitchell’s, recalled being trained on the job. C added that training was often informal and up to newcomers to “figure [...] out.” This led to a disparity between those who were trained and those who were not, creating what C described as a culture of “nitpicking in the workplace.”

“I’ve worked in some kitchens with Scotsman and they don’t give uniforms at all,” B recalled. “You have to source it yourself, pay for yourself.” They contrasted this with past employers who subsidised the cost or provided supplies, calling the Group’s approach “wrong.” B added that staff members have paid for the uniforms of other colleagues in the kitchen “out of pocket.”

They also explained that front-of-house staff receive preferential treatment on uniforms, likening it to “cleaning your room just enough so people don’t think you’re messy, but you’re actually just throwing everything into the cupboard.” C, who works front-of-house, stated that “uniforms have been provided, but sparsely.”



The Scotsman Group had previously been the subject of controversy after being listed in the Wage Naming Scheme by the UK government for failing to pay the minimum wage. They underpaid 2,895 employees by £45,124 after deducting the cost of uniforms and training from employee wages. While officially rectified, the group seems to continue this practice by requiring some employees to cover these costs personally.

When approached for comment, the Scotsman group denied claims of unpaid training hours and requiring staff to purchase uniforms.

B also highlighted that most employees are paid minimum wage. If they were on a fixed salary, “they would be doing far more hours, so they’re actually being paid less,” B explained.

While minimum wage is not uncommon in hospitality, this is true across all levels of management for the Scotsman Group in St Andrews. “You can’t be paying supervisors a couple of pennies more than the minimum wage. You can’t be paying chefs the minimum wage. It’s a skilled profession and there’s no appreciation of that,” B explained. For comparison, the University of St Andrews, another major employer of students, pays the real living wage across all their age groups.

Because of this, C suspects that students under 22 working at the Scotsman would feel particularly undervalued: “Someone who’s doing the same job is getting paid because of their age when everybody has the same kind of responsibilities.”

During Freshers’ Week, one venue even had its service charge taken off. “I mean, that’s a pay cut, basically,” B explained. “Service charge provides a significant portion of our salary, especially when you’re on a minimum wage.” Tips in the form of service charge were a key hiring incentive during the application process, C added.

“We believe that our teams should feel the full benefit of rewards given for great service. That’s why we ensure that 100% of our venue service charges go straight to the teams, without any processing or admin fees,” the Scotsman Group careers site states. “Our team members earn, on average, 20% of their monthly salary via this scheme.” Yet this gratuity is, in fact, a legal obligation: Under the Tipping Act of 2023, employers must pass 100% of tips to staff without any admin charges.

A Scotsman spokesperson commented that the removal of the service charge was due to “customer service KPIs” that were not met. This was “in accordance with their policy of alignment between team performance and customer satisfaction.”

“There was no incentive to really push [good reviews] before [service charge] was taken away,” C explained. “The decision was poorly communicated.” Employees also thought the metric was unfair, since customers were more inclined to leave bad reviews than to leave good ones.

The Scotsman Group gave no comment on the timing of this removal aligning with Freshers’ Week — when venues experience their highest traffic.

“Getting told that you’re not going to have service charge during the busiest week of the year is completely deliberate,” B said. “We’re just making this abstract company, Scotsman, more and more money — record profits year in, year out. Meanwhile, we don’t see any of that.”

“Most people who are at a minimum wage job do not care about the benefits,” said C. “That’s not going to affect them [..] they’re not going to see a pay rise when the company exceeds how much money it makes for the year.” Yet, “receiving money from the service charge was a way [..] of employees seeing a part of how well the business is doing.”

This approach aligned with the general climate of disinterest from the Head Office towards the staff. C stated that their interactions with the Head Office created the impression that their focus was only on “numbers and money.”

B also pointed to the pressures of being understaffed. “I also think they deliberately don’t try to hire as many people as possible, so they don’t have to worry about wage bills,” said B. “You can’t prove that [...] but it definitely feels like that. ”

Describing his experience working at Mitchell’s, D stated that there was only one person doing dishes for the restaurant, a venue that often ran at full capacity with around 75 seated customers at a time. “There’s just one person on the dishwasher,” D recalled. This was “a lot of pressure” and “one of the worst things” about the job, they said. When the restaurant was busy, there were times when “there was one chef and one sous chef [...] so I had to do dishes while making salads and sandwiches at the same time.”

While the job of Kitchen Porter was advertised as preparing meals and dishwashing, D was assigned to dishwashing only. “It was [a] false advertisement,” they said. Being continuously assigned to do dishes for his six-hour shifts for three months until they left “was not in the job description.”

This added pressure led to accidents. “There was one incident where someone dropped a block of broken glass in the dishwasher sink,” D said. They were “doing hundreds of dishes when this happened,” and had to manage the aftermath whilst

continuing to wash dishes in a hectic environment. "There should at least be two people on the dishwasher," they explained.

When relaying his issues to Human Resources, D said the glass incident was ignored. The reply stated that dishwashing was what D's job entailed, despite the fact that "other people who were working under the same title were never on the dishes."

Within this hidden monopoly, students feel they have little choice in employers.

"The scrubbers were out-of-date" and the "disposer was s***," said D. "There was one tray at a time and one disposer. This correlates to [the company] not caring about the person who's doing the dishes."

Under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, employers must assess risks, provide safe equipment, and ensure safe staffing levels.

Despite having the means to purchase and dispatch supplies, the company refuses to do so, B said. "There is a singular stick blender right now being used by three different hospitality vendors." The group "[doesn't] want to spend the twenty f***ing pounds it takes to buy the stick blender." C also noted that during cleaning, basic equipment, such as gloves, was rarely provided.

In their annual report, the Scotsman Group stated, "our people are our biggest asset, and we strive to treat colleagues like family."

B described feeling like "a body thrown around" within the Scotsman's "collaboration-based system." "When you're the body being thrown around, [it] means you don't feel valued in any way whatsoever," he said.

"Say a kitchen doesn't have a head chef for their kitchen. Oh, [the Scotsman venue] next door has a head chef. [They're] going to bring the head chef over," B explained. "If you have five other venues, you're going to send one in [...] that idea goes for the entirety of the company."

"It's a mentality that you could only get when you have a complete monopoly," B said. "They don't actually have to worry about maintaining a team on a location basis."

C, an employee who has been relocated under this system, explained that there was little notice before being moved: "Sometimes it could be that you show up and you're told you need to go somewhere else, and sometimes other colleagues know that you're going to be moved for the day but you don't." This contrasts with employee contracts, which state that "the Company will endeavour to give reasonable notice of any change in location of your normal place of work." Several employees said they received little or no training, even when moved to venues with different service requirements.

Another employee described a cycle of sacking and rehiring. "Our current manager was sacked before he was replaced with another man who was then sacked for 'incompetence,'" the employee said. "Then our first manager was hired again, just on a very long probation period."

B echoed a similar sentiment: "They churn through their managers." He remembered one manager being on probation for over a year. Typically, probation periods last three to six months at most, a period with less protection for employees.

At Mitchell's, the pattern was the same. D stated that within a few months, the head chef left, the manager left, and some of the waitresses left.

A Scotsman Group spokesperson attributed this "higher level of staff movement" to St Andrews being a student town and tourist hub. They made no comment on the high turnover and probation periods of full-time managerial staff.

"They can get away with it in St Andrews completely because we gain [...] people every year from all the students that come in," B said. The "company relies on student labour [..] to go through their business without raising any big problems" because "students will always be in need of a job," C added.

"The fast turnover of staff means that issues that are raised are never dealt with quickly because people leave," C explained. "People can just push them to the edge, and then you can get somebody else." They added that, for employees, this can create a culture of apathy towards workplace problems, due to the nature of part-time work being temporary. "Students [are left] working without their dignity sometimes," C said.

This exploitation involves "working over your contracted hours," C explained. "It's not really taken into account that you're a student with a busy schedule." While C was initially contracted for fifteen hours per week, they usually end up working more. While workers can try to refuse working more than their contracted hours, it is "made out, on part of the management, that it's a hassle to fix, or a problem." D relayed that several of his colleagues "had left because of the pressure, because management told them to work extra hours during exams."

High turnover, chronic understaffing, and excessive workloads leave student employees with low morale and high stress. D, who left Mitchell's due to the stressful work culture, stated that as a student, "you don't want any stress out of the part-time job to affect your everyday life," describing the venue as a "terrible environment" for stress.

"The whole day, you're running on a very high level of stress when you leave the door. That's not just going to go away," C added.

Behind the Scotsman Group stands founder Stefan King, who has a personal tie to St Andrews: His wife graduated from the University, and the couple owns a second home on The Scores worth over £1 million.

Despite the Group's statement that "open and honest communication is encouraged throughout the estate," several workers and ex-workers declined to speak on the record, fearing they could lose their jobs or be blacklisted.

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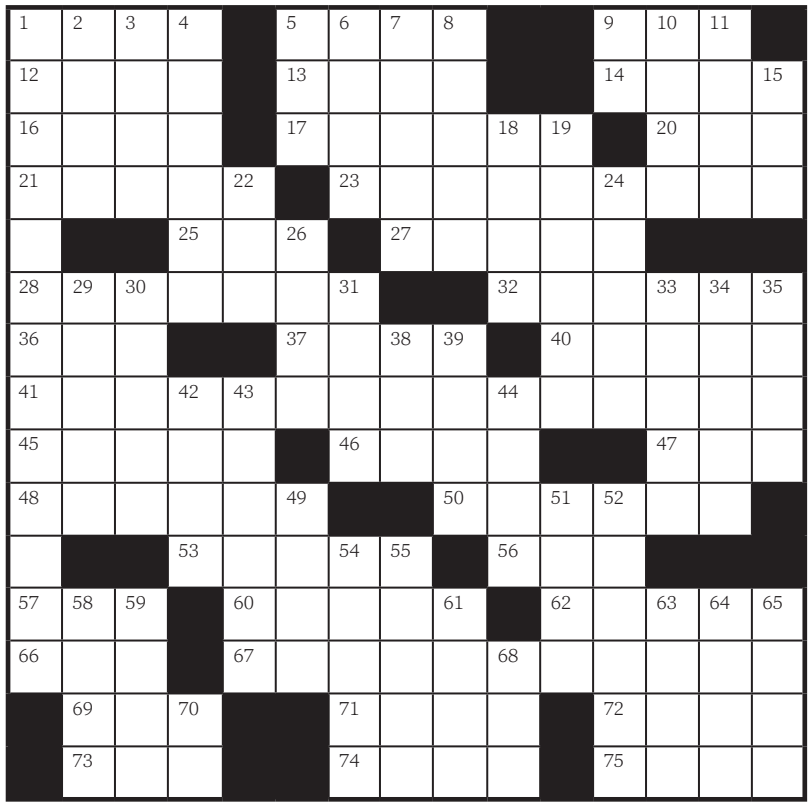
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Illustration by Isabelle Holloway



THE AMERICANS ARE TAKING OVER! THANKSGIVING ED.



YOUR PUZZLES: YOUR VOICE! Fill out the Puzzles feedback form via the website/Instagram now to help make next semester even better!

CROSSWORD BY JULIA EMERY

ACROSS

1. Twelfth of a foot
5. Beliebers or Swifties
9. 'SNL' network
12. Brussels-based org.
13. American awards acronym
14. Business name abbr.
16. Drive-____ , symptom of American convenience
17. Dances to jazz music, in a way
20. Female hoedown participant
21. Secondary teacher for a non-native language class, abbr. (3–2)
23. Second part of *1d*
25. Alternative protein for *41a*
27. Purple hue
28. American Oreo maker
32. I look up to them greatly (2–4)
36. 'Honest' president
37. Torah holders
40. Yanks housing nightmare, "I would hate to live ____" (2–3)
41. Calendar marking for the fourth Thursday in November, for a Bostonian
45. Tiny amounts
46. Sign
47. Cricket method for a weather-interrupted match
48. Praying figures
50. Some wedding RSVP requests, in America (2–4)
53. Formal promises
56. Silent approval
57. 24-hr. cash source
60. Flinch, say
62. Revision essentials
66. Soap ingredient
67. Hall occupied by Yanks
69. Goal at the Old Course
71. Discount grocery chain
72. Thor's father
73. U-turn from WSW
74. Waterproof cover
75. What Burns' 'To a Mouse' and 'To a Louse' are often thought to be, but are not

DOWN

1. Subject occupied by Yanks, with *23a*
2. Refusals, in slang
3. PC key
4. Yemeni Islamic Fundamentalist movement
5. When the Super Bowl is played, abbr.
6. Suffix, for teen–
7. Prestigious prize
8. Vodka brand, informally
9. East Coast state above SC
10. Common promo, abbr.
11. Popular sauce on *41a*, abbr.
15. "Thx" counterpart
18. Tropical tree
19. 'Go out' alternative
22. Small batteries
24. Cinnamon bun topping
26. Immune condition that presents like anaphylaxis
29. Loathe
30. Goal of underdog Team B, perhaps (4–1)
31. Notoriously difficult chem class
33. Bad report card line-up
34. Spoken exams
35. Walker's alternative, à la American
38. Popular Kardashian
39. Reindeer in *Frozen*
42. iPod model
43. 12% of the total stellar population
44. Privy to, as a joke (2–2)
49. Editor's mark
51. Hawaiian coffee region
52. "Same here" (1–2–3)
54. Attacks (5–3)
55. La ____ (Milan opera house)
58. Use a keyboard
59. Not nice
61. Summary, online abbr.
63. "Sweeney ____"
64. HOMES lakes member
65. Nine-digit American identifiers
68. Premium access ticket
70. Prefix of follow-up email

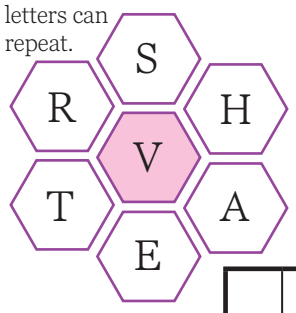
WORD LADDERS BY LUANA VAN ORANJE

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

B	A	S	E	B	A	L	L
P	I	E	S	S	T	A	R

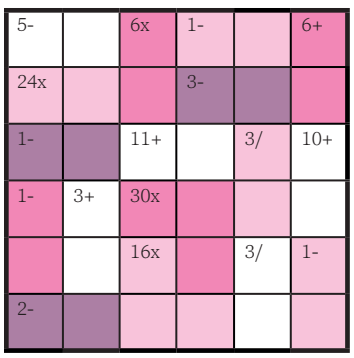
SPELLING BEE BY LUANA V. ORANJE

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



KENKEN BY M. ABIGNALE

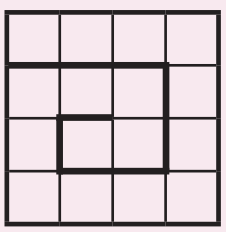
Each row/column uses the digits 1–6 once. The digits in each box produce the number in its top corner, by using the mathematic operation noted in the same corner. Numbers can repeat per box.



SUDOKU BY ISAAC OLDHAM

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

WHIRLPOOL BY MADELEINE ABIGNALE



Row clues fill the corresponding rows (all 4 letters). Whirlpool clues start at the top left and spiral inwards following the dark line 'path' (one after the other, any length of letters)

NEW PUZZLE!

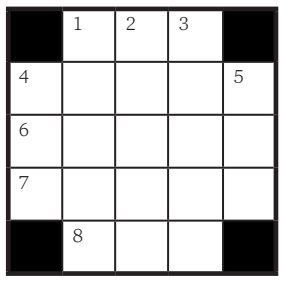
ROWS

1. Dollar slang
2. Over sock
3. Don't give
4. When someone gets XXX before you, in tic-tac-toe

WHIRLPOOL

1st. Peanut butter fudge ball 'candy'
2nd. End goal for a house on Netflix's 'Sunset' show
3rd. Glowed

MINI CROSSWORD BY LUANA VAN ORANJE



ACROSS

1. Revolutionary of Argentine birth
4. Anthem-ending word
6. Ten Commandments mount
7. One that's unusual
8. Shape of this puzzle, pecan or pumpkin

DOWN

1. Thin potato slice, this side of the pond
2. Vietnam's capital
3. Sidestep, shake off
4. GB group controlling quality and uniformity
5. "____ Mubarak"

CONNECTIONS BY JULIA EMERY

LIONS	COCKER SPANIEL	BOSTON	AUSTIN
PLATH	BRONTË	FOXHOUND	NEW YORK CITY
BULLDOG	TERRIER	LOS ANGELES	EAGLES
WOOLF	COWBOYS	ALCOTT	BENGALS

Nature Abstracted

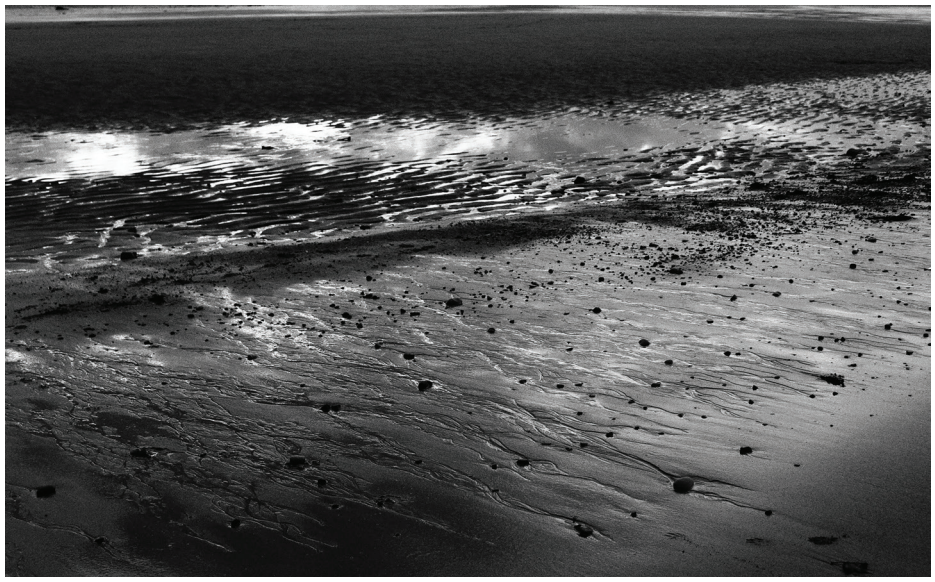
EMMA ROY CHOWDHURY
PHOTOGRAPHER

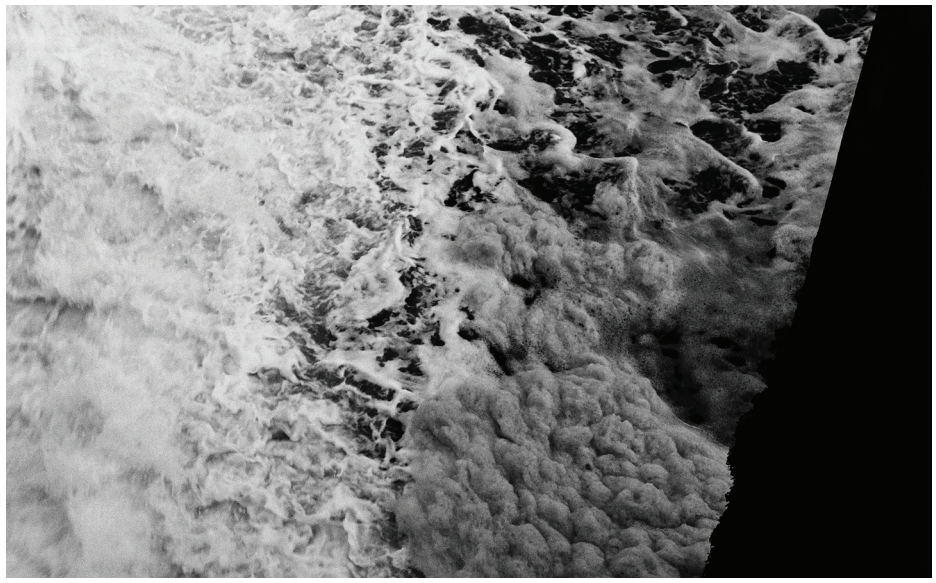








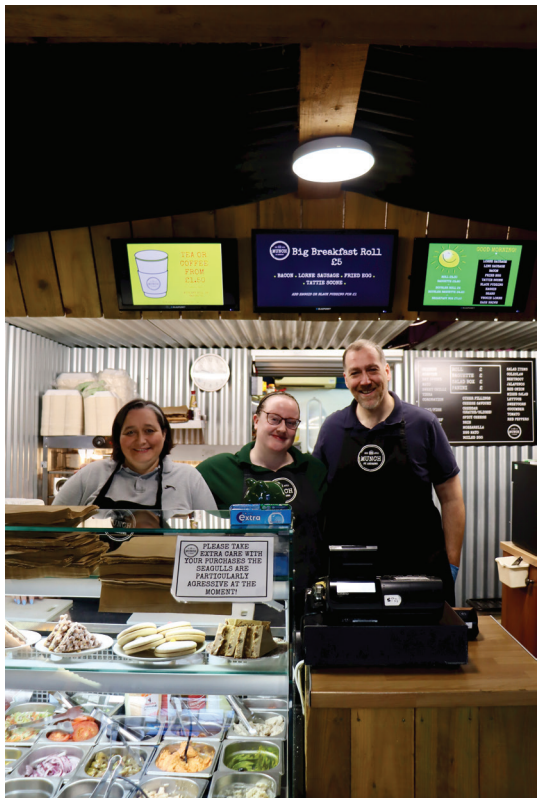




The Faces of St Andrews' Storefronts

LOUISA WILLAN
PHOTOGRAPHER







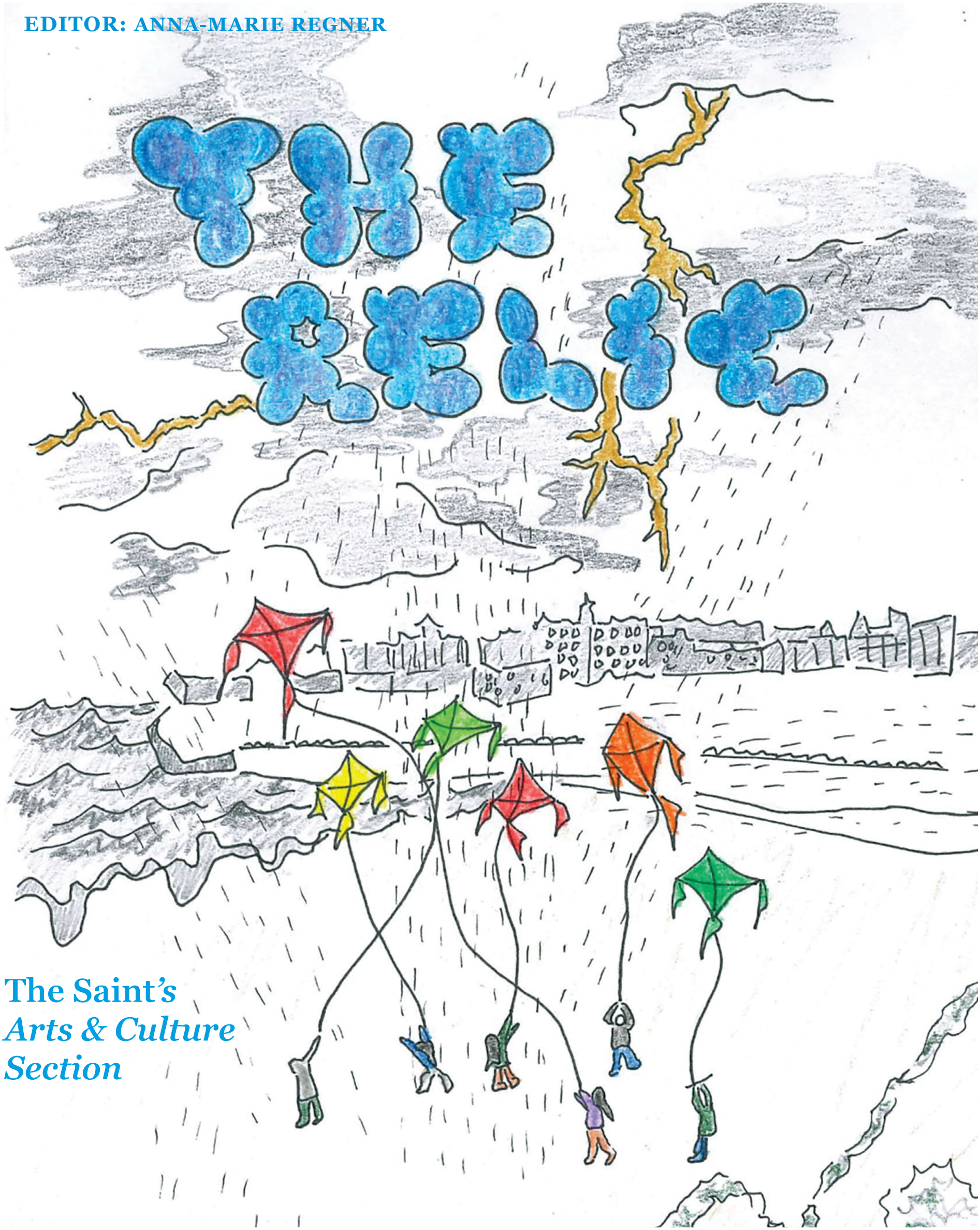








EDITOR: ANNA-MARIE REGNER



The Saint's *Arts & Culture Section*

Waterlogged

Why we write about our aquatic experiences

EMMA INGRAM JOHNSON
Relic Writer

To swim in the North Sea is to tingle. You feel it in your skin as salt finds its way into every pore, in your throat as it gasps for air, in your scalp and eyebrows — every nerve ending is struck. Emerging from the water you feel, ironically, like there is a fire burning behind the eyes. To then write about your swimming experience, according to nature-writer Roger Deakin, is a way to revive these bodily electrifying moments.

Deakin's groundbreaking novel, *Waterlog*, records not just his own experiences of swimming, but also of those he encounters along the way. To Deakin, it is not only the time it takes them to swim a distance that matters, but what stroke they swam, who they were with, and what temperature the water was. These can be collections of pure numerical data, but they often reflect a more visceral reality: the shade of blue your fingertips turn, a seal sighting, the feeling of deep and assured calm that resides for hours after a plunge into Castle Sands Tidal Pool.

And so, I set out in search of this water-writing phenomenon in Fife.

The Step Rock Amateur Swimming Club (SRASC), an initially all-male club founded in 1928, had its original base at Step Rock: a palatial tidal pool which sprawled over sands where Saint Sizzle and the Aquarium now obscure the seascape. Rather than the possibly mythical seals the aquarium is building a new enclosure for, this high-walled sea-bath enclosed dozens of splashing young men. The SRASC still exists. Now, however, its members are aged 3-18 and swim indoors at East Sands Leisure Centre. This change in the Step Rock swimmers' habits mirrors the decline in the number of people who record and write daily journals — and the niche margin of people who both swim in the sea and keep records of it.

However, speaking to (and swimming with) the all-women Bob & Blether swimming group, who usually haunt Castle Sands in their vibrant yellow beanies and wetsuit booties, I found the sliver of my Venn diagram's intersection. My wish to uncover old cloth-bound swimming journals was dashed when I asked how the group records their swims: Caroline, one of two original founders of the group, said, "Truthfully, we don't." However, the rest of our exchange showed me how important the verbal connection of these 140 swimmers is.

As an antithesis to the all-men origins of swimming groups of the previous century, the Bob & Blether group "hark back to the fisherwife days" in their swimming practices. A community of women, based around the water not just for pleasure but as a way of life, certainly rebrands a culture of harsh coastal living into an invigorating and health-driven bathing ritual.

Their group nonetheless does echo the talk-culture of these fisherwomen: anecdotes and stories about "sharing swims with dolphins and basking sharks" and much more are swapped between these women "over a hot drink at the end of each swim", according to Caroline. Where women's talk might have been considered babbling, or using the Scottish word "blethering," they were forming meaningful connections and establishing roots in an otherwise lonely and mercurial setting. While their husbands and children were out, seafaring, these fisherwives battled the wind off the coast, emboldened by their togetherness. The simultaneous swimming and chatting in the sea that members of the Bob and Blether group prize is a renewed form of resistance against this dominant ideology, where men's hunting was esteemed while the women's communities that enabled it were belittled as mere 'blether.'

The treasuring and importance of a spoken word swimming community was revealed to me through contact with Caroline; writing about seabathing can open a portal for personal reflection and enhance your experience of daily life, but it is also a community practice. Deakin's philosophy of writing about his swims allowing him to reanimate his body and mind years after the event can be traced to this localised tradition of women by the sea; talking *while* swimming strengthens this mind-body connection, as well as a connection with the seaswimmers of the past.

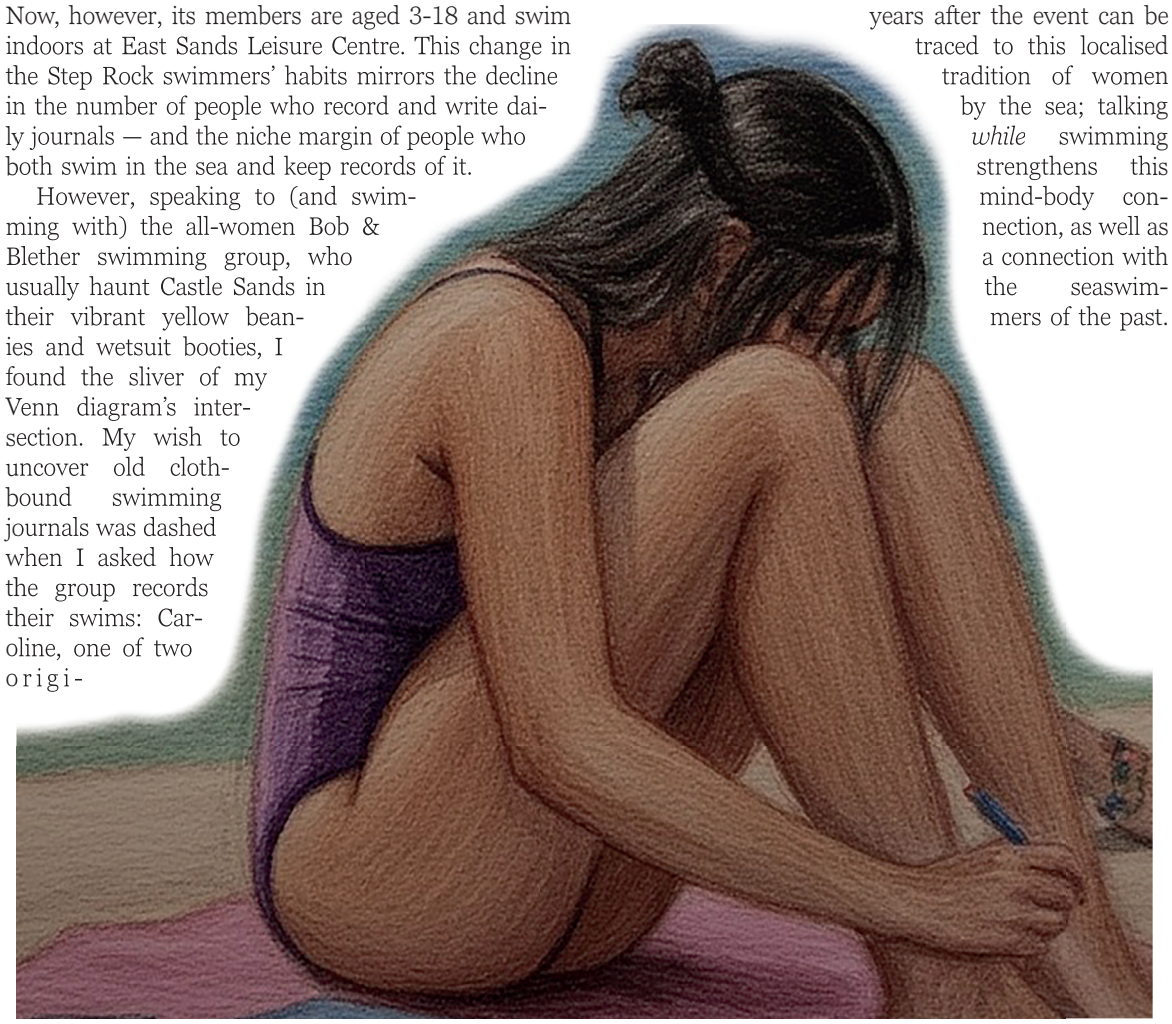


Illustration by Haalah Bint Hashim

Agnes in St Andrews

BY AGNES BRENNA

Once in a while, as I run to class, wait for my coffee or battle with the self-checkout at Tesco, I see one. For a native, they are impossible to miss: the locks in a middle-part with a half-zipped sweater and leather laptop-bag, next to the blow-out curtain-banged blonde in a grey wool-sweater, Månesten-necklaces, and Uggs. Scandinavians.

Sometimes I offer a polite nod, other times I shyly look away – by this point we have offered the line "Nehei, er det enda en?!" (No way, another one?!) enough times. In my first month, I tried to avoid them to 'work on my English skills', afraid a single Norwegian conversation would undo all my progress. But hear them I did, the Scandi-whispers flying through town like ghosts, accent-heavy and overtly melodic.

Finally, I gave in and acquired a Norwegian friend. Through her I discovered that a Scandinavian is like a zit, if you pop one to one, five more have a tendency to appear. The familiarness of these fellow-scandies was double-edged: I prospered in the familiar language and humour, but the homogenous nature also sent me right back to my family's snow-covered mountain cabin, blinded by extreme whiteness.

One Norwegian girl asked me: "So... Where in Oslo are you from?". Because apparently, in St Andrews, Norway is synonymous with its capital with about 10 percent of the population. The question wasn't completely unfounded, almost all Norwegians I met here were from Oslo, and most of them knew each other when boarding the plane to Scotland. You see, an uncle knew an uncle, their parents moved in the same circles, granddad is someone's business partner — he can probably get you a job. Also, there was apparently some secret club eating shellfish or something? But don't worry, this 'secret society' provided some diversity: it was filled with cool non-Scandinavians, because status and Scandinavianness is the most important synonym of all.



I wasn't particularly surprised — if you've lived in Oslo, Stockholm or particularly Copenhagen, you will have learnt that the most prolific Scandinavian specialty isn't fjords, minimalistic interior-design, or even 'natural' blondeness, it is the masterful balance of separate togetherness and humble exclusivity: creating private clubs in a social democracy, 'accidentally' flexing richness, and giving aid while never accepting refugees. It is only natural that Scandinavians in St Andrews create their own (not-so) secret clubs to revel in expensive networking – it's our national tradition.

Of course I haven't met all the St Andrean-scandies to give you a fair assessment, there is probably a wide range of uniqueness from the economics-students to the diplomacy-nepos. Someone told me that there is even one reoccuring Scandinavian stereotype: arriving for one semester to poke arrogant fun at established traditions, dressing up in thrifted clothes to seem chill and authentic, criticising the Scandinavians lack of cultural diversity even though they're from the same area as the rest of the bunch. Sounds annoying

Illustration by Lucy Maitland-Lewis

Under the Sea: with Topping & Co.

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

BOOKSELLER PICKS



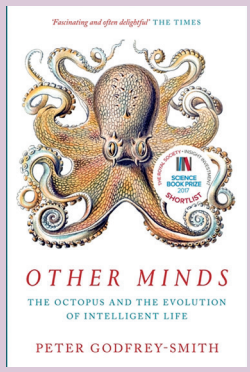
Book Club recommends...

Our Wives Under The Sea by Julia Armfield

Our Wives Under the Sea is a haunting and deeply moving novel that blends deep-sea horror with domestic grief. Armfield crafts the story of a woman witnessing the physical and emotional toll a disastrous oceanic expedition has taken on her wife. The dual-perspective narrative gradually unravels the mystery with lyrical, ocean-infused prose. This is an exploration of the unknown, of love altered by trauma, and of the limits of understanding those we cherish. Armfield's writing is tender, eerie, and distinctly human.

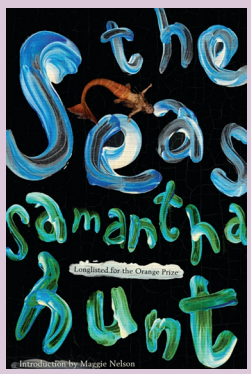
Mikey recommends...

Other Minds by Peter Godfrey-Smith



Reading philosopher Peter Godfrey-Smith's study of the consciousness and intelligence of the octopus is almost like reading an account of alien biology. The mind of a cephalopod, he demonstrates, is astonishingly developed, and yet so remote from human cognition. Their intelligence is not just located in their brains but across their whole bodies (their arms have more nerves than their brains do), and he thus describes their consciousness as a deeply sensory and embodied one. Reading about this is an embodied experience too; as I imagined what it might feel like to feel my thoughts in my fingers, I felt my body come alive. At once rigorous and compulsively readable, this rare book is a humbling reminder of the complexity and intelligence of creatures other than ourselves.

STAFF PICK



Hannah recommends...

The Seas by Samantha Hunt

Having wanted to be a marine biologist up until about age twelve, I've strangely read a myriad of oceanic, maritime books. But rather than suggesting *Emily Windsnap*, I'll instead recommend her moodier older sister: *The Seas* by Samantha Hunt. Our story follows an unnamed nineteen-year-old protagonist who lives in a seaside town rife with alcoholism, is in love with a traumatised Iraq War veteran thirteen years her senior, and, most importantly, believes herself to be a mermaid. *The Seas* oscillates between dream-like narrative sequences and accounts of the narrator's dreary everyday life, leaving ambiguous as to whether the novel chronicles the account of a fish out of water or simply a girl out of her mind. Either way, the narrator's siren song is enticing enough to keep you turning the page and following her line of thinking straight down into the cold, gray depths.

The Last Waltz: The Movie You Need to See This Thanksgiving

SOREN RASMUSSEN
RELIC WRITER

Unlike Christmas, Thanksgiving's annual appearance isn't accompanied by a thousand cultural rituals to follow in the holiday's honour. Unless you're American and have pumpkin pie to slice and a Cowboys loss to watch, Thanksgiving can come and go with no tribute, without the ceremony of a Hallmark movie or Michael Bublé album to mark the occasion. But the holiday does have one time-honoured cultural tradition worth observing this year and every year: an annual viewing of *The Last Waltz*.

A little context. On Thanksgiving night, 1976, a group of five musicians aptly called The Band (known for songs like 'The Weight' and tours with Bob Dylan) gave their final live performance after sixteen years together on the road. Their guitarist Robbie Robertson was calling it quits. To mark the occasion, they assembled one of the greatest musical lineups of all time, including Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, Van Morrison, Eric Clapton, Dr John, Muddy Waters, Ringo Starr, Ronnie Wood, and Bob Dylan, among other legends. To record it for posterity, Robertson called his friend Martin Scorsese, who dropped everything to give the event the full Hollywood treatment. Scorsese brought in seven 35-millimetre cameras, renowned production designer Boris Leven, and three legendary cinematographers in Michael Chapman, Vilmos Zsigmond, and László Kovács to document the performance, with lights and cameras all choreographed to follow the musicians and reflect the emotion of their performances.

The result is the greatest concert film of all time — a two-faced portrait of revolutionary music and filmmaking. Like Woodstock, it celebrates the artists who led a cultural renaissance through music, only now without the stoned altruism of the '60s, in a country that's shaggy, rumpled, and a bit hungover. It's from this decay that The Band emerges, playing and singing their hearts out in one final encore in the spotlight. In some of the cleanest, most expressive documentary footage ever, they give a collage of legendary performances, from Garth Hudson's extra-terrestrial solos on organ and saxophone, to Dr John releasing the soul of New Orleans on piano in 'Such a Night', to Levon Helm crying his lungs out while drumming in 'The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down.' Every song delivers its own magic as The Band shapeshifts with each guest, transforming from Dixieland to Chicago blues to Laurel Canyon, driving their guests like a freight train catching stray travellers. The range is a testament to what made The Band's music unique: its roots are everywhere, and the music is a hundred things at once. Their songs hold, in the words of critic Greil Marcus, "a determination to find plurality [...] an unpredictable resolution of a common inheritance". They are multiculturalism made manifest.

The concert is a thanksgiving, and every guest brings a dish. Crowded around the dinner table there's blues, country, folk, R&B, bluegrass, gospel, jazz, show tunes, and poetry, and you need every item on the plate. When Pops Staples takes a verse of 'The Weight', he drops the 'Miss' from the lyrics 'Go Down, Miss Moses', cutting through the spiritual allusion straight into the heritage only he could reach as a Black gospel singer. During 'Helpless', Neil Young abandons his microphone to sing with his fellow musicians all into one mic. And after being physically pushed on stage by his manager, Van Morrison delivers a rendition of 'Caravan' so powerful it's hard to believe he was overcoming stage fright. It's music that takes a village, music that The Band personified: the composite feast known as rock 'n' roll.

Long before its ties to pilgrims in belt-buckle hats, thanksgiving was a feast for the autumn harvest, a celebration of the bounties of the land and the blessings of the year at its dusk. *The Last Waltz* is just that: an indulgent meal to honour a plentiful season, a final ceremony of an era at its bittersweet end. In the film's final song, the guests all come together for a triumphant 'I Shall Be Released', a last declaration of hope before the abyss. The camera zooms out to reveal a stage decorated with sets from *La Traviata* and chandeliers from *Gone With the Wind*. It's a tragic love story, but one that triumphs so long as it lives on. The waltz continues with every viewing, fulfilling the wishes Dylan sings towards the film's close: "May your song always be sung / And may you stay forever young."

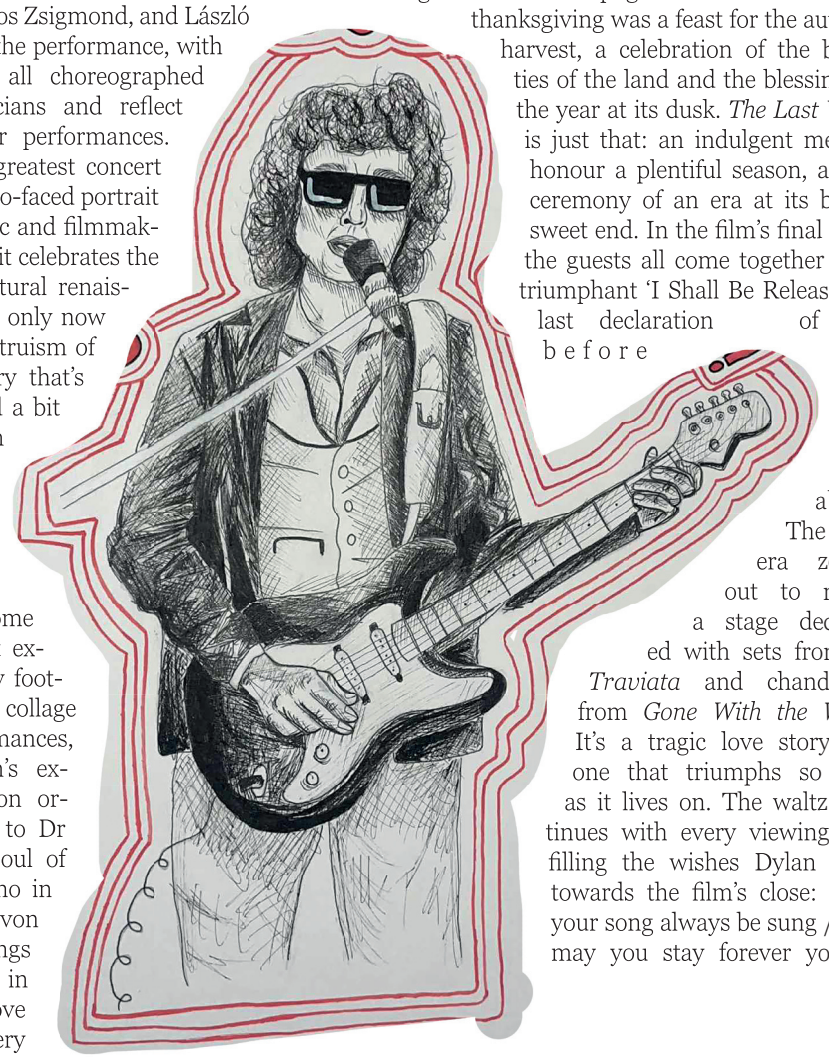


ILLUSTRATION BY RAMONA KIRKHAM

Last-Minute Recipes for Thanksgiving

ILARIA FRECCIA
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The large American population of St Andrews means that Thanksgiving (or, more often, Friendsgiving) has added itself to the list of local traditions. But if you've found yourself with a last-minute invite, so caught up in deadlines that it *completely slipped your mind*, or just wanted to try out some traditional food to see what the hype is all about, no fear. Here are a few quick, easy, and (mostly) *traditional* Thanksgiving dishes you can throw together for a swoon-worthy contribution.

For the full article and more recipes, visit thesaint.scot.

Baked Brie

Ingredients

1 7-inch wheel of Camembert
¼ cup dried cherries
¼ cup sliced toasted almonds
3 tbsp brown sugar
1 sheet of puff pastry
1 egg, beaten

Instructions

1. Cut the wheel of cheese in half horizontally and separate the top half of the wheel from the bottom half.
2. Sprinkle the bottom half of the brie with the dried cherries, toasted almonds, and brown sugar.
3. Replace the top half of the brie and apply pressure to secure the stuffing.
4. Roll out the puff pastry on a well-floured surface.
5. Place the brie in the middle of the puff pastry and fold the excess pastry around the wheel.
6. Using a pastry brush, brush the pastry with the egg wash.
7. Place the brie on a sheet pan lined with parchment paper.
8. Bake for 25 minutes at 200°C. Turn the temperature down to 160°C and bake for another 20 minutes.



PHOTO BY ILARIA FRECCIA

Illustrator Profile: Isabella Abbott

ARNAZ MALLICK
DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Isabella Abbott claimed that she's enjoyed art "genuinely, for as long as I can remember. I've liked drawing all throughout school, I did lots of art classes." At the start of the last academic year, Abbott, a fourth year neuroscience student, began her role as an illustrator for *The Saint*.

In response to what motivated her to apply as a *Saint* illustrator, Abbott said, "Well, I just really like doing art, and I thought it was a good way to force myself to do some art every couple of weeks."

"How long have you been into art?" I asked.

"Pretty much my whole life," she responded. "I come from a very not artsy family, but my family really, really like art. My parents were very big on dragging us to art galleries."



Discussing her inspirations and favourite artists, Abbott said, "I'm a really big fan of a lot of impressionist art, like Monet and [artists] like that. I went to a really, really good exhibition in Madrid this summer of this guy called Nestor. He's honestly become one of my new favourite artists; he's long dead, but it was just really cool."



Abbott said she was drawn towards the impressionists by "the use of colour and the subject matter. It's always quite dreamy, the style of painting as well."

Discussing her process when illustrating, Abbott said, "I normally sketch out roughly what I want to do, and then I'll honestly just Google different things that I want to be in the illustration." It takes "normally a few hours, maybe a little bit longer, depends on the illustration."

A particularly unique part of Abbott's style is her use of cut and paste elements in illustrations; "That was honestly so random; I was just trying out oil pastels, and then I found it easier to do that. If there's a lot of elements going on, I find it easier to do them all separately, and then put it together." Abbott's preferred mediums are acrylic and oil paint, but she has also "really been enjoying using oil pastels lately. I think they're really fun."

In addition to illustrating for *The Saint*, Abbott has done art for MAZE, the psychology and neuroscience magazine. I asked Abbott about whether or not there was any overlap between her enthusiasm for art and her STEM degree, and whether there was any relation between the two. "I actually wrote an article in MAZE about art therapy," she said. "For me, I find art very therapeutic. I think it's good for the brain, just creating something."



"And I think for me, when I'm drawing, I don't really think of anything else specifically. I'm just drawing, and then letting thoughts come to me."

Abbott's illustrations are available online on *The Saint* website.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ISABELLA ABBOTT

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Komorebi: On the Art of Noticing

SYLVIA COVACI
Relic Writer

Komorebi. In Japanese, this word means sun leaking through the trees. It is composed of three kanji: *ko* is tree, *more* is leaking, and *bi* is sunlight. The kanji paint a brief, transient wonder of nature — when light seems to dissolve into threads around a canopy of leaves and come to rest, spotted and blurred, upon the earth. But komorebi is not a phenomenon observed in passing. Walk too quickly, and you won't notice how the light bends and warps as golden midges swarm or swallows swoop by. This delicate scene requires a quiet watcher.



While it is not a distinct literary term, komorebi conveys a manner of thinking commonly employed by writers and artists alike. It is imbued with the action of noticing. Noticing inevitably leads to a particular desire. From this desire, a pulling, magnetic desire to turn vision into words — to take the essence of what one sees and twist it into letters, to curl it into sentences — description is born. Description, to me, lies at the heart of literature. It is less concerned with what is seen than how it is seen. Think of sunlight leaking through the trees. The rays may take on a wholly different hue when observed from different angles — here made green by a beaming field of grass, there infected by the blue of a distant ocean. Description is beautiful because we all have different eyes. Its precursor, *noticing,* is the hard part.

So how do you notice? Well, you have to want to. You have to practise it incessantly, always, until you do it unconsciously, until the action is ingrained in your eyes, and you find yourself overwhelmed by the sheer intricacies and infinities of your environment. Think of it like collecting stones on the beach. Throughout your day, pick up little flickers of inspiration and put them in your pocket, as if they are cherished stones you'll look at later. Notice the grand expanse of sunset over West Sands, yes, but notice too the brown, barnacled fishing crates stacked along the docks. Notice their rotting, sea-soured scent. Notice not just with your eyes but with your nose, ears, fingertips, with the whole of yourself.

I'm aware this is all very abstract, so let me tell you a story. I started noticing, intentionally, last summer. It was the slightly off-balance, in-between period after senior year – uni hadn't started yet, high school was over, and I had nothing to do. I was in Vama Veche, a seaside village in Romania, and spent my days lazing on the beach with a sun-warmed book and a sweating Coke. In the mornings, I'd stumble bleary-eyed into the little hotel's pebbled courtyard and make myself a coffee in the outdoor kitchen, which I'd have with exactly two peaches (the bursting kind, with streaming orange insides) on one of the plastic white tables outside. With a book balanced on my knee, before I knew it two hours would pass and I'd had two more coffees. I was enraptured by the writing of Gabriel García Márquez. Fantastical, vibrant, and tangled, his prose shimmered with magic rooted in reality – Love in the Time of Cholera transfixed me.

The author's prose was so full of movement and colour that elements of it began to infiltrate my own environment. I looked for stories, for fantasies, in Vama Veche. On the sands, I noticed the seaweed in the water and saw great tangled up beasts lurking underneath. While eating lunch, I noticed a local cat's missing ear and wondered who he'd lost it to, in what vengeful brawl. From the balcony, I noticed people in the sea, and saw how from afar they all looked like bathing seals, swaying slightly with the shallow tide. It was slightly unreal, every colour and texture and sound heightened as if in a dream. It was like seeing the world as a child. It was wonder. So with nowhere to put all these noticings, I began to write.

This is the art of noticing. Its purpose, if nothing else, is to consume. Consume everything around you, stop and taste it, relish the world in all its mundane-extraordinary flavours. Inspiration is sown by the self, the result of reverence for the earth around us. The writing will follow. So stand beneath *komorebi,* let the sunlight lick your cheeks, and notice.

Illustration by Eloise Zhang

AI in the Studio: Tool, Threat, or Both?

SOPHIE LYNN
Relic Writer

When debates about AI reach the art world, they often arrive shrouded in anxiety: Will AI replace artists? Will machine-made images flood the market? Will 'real' art become a luxury item?

To gain some art-world perspective on these questions, I turned to my good family friend, award-winning fine artist Raj Chaudhuri. Raj has worked for decades with a medium that couldn't be further from the digital world — oil paint — yet he anticipates that AI will increasingly shape the creative landscape he operates in. Despite his commitment to traditional methods, he's already begun to see how machine-generated content is becoming a more persistent presence in the art world.

"I do think we need to embrace this new technology, or we will get left behind — think flip phone users," he told me. "These models are going to be very sophisticated."

Artists today who are using AI are doing so through a wide range of tools, many of which blend into workflows that were already digital long before AI art became a hot topic. While the media often focuses on image generators like Midjourney or DALL·E, the reality Raj describes to me seems far more subtle.

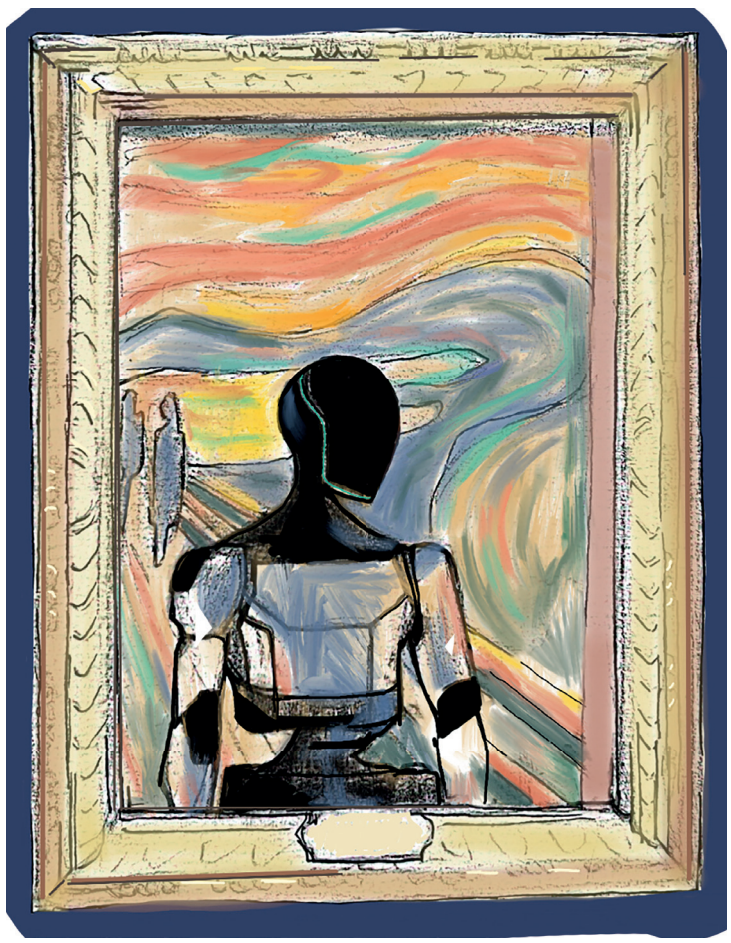
For many artists, AI now appears as a series of features incorporated into programs they already use. Adobe Photoshop, for instance, has rolled out a suite of AI-powered functions, from generative fill to automated object removal, built using models developed by Topaz Labs. Artists can improve image quality, stitch together reference photos, recreate missing backgrounds, or alter compositions. None of this necessarily announces itself as AI art, but it nonetheless shapes the early stages of a growing number of artists' creative processes.

Raj himself has experimented only lightly with AI tools, but he's seen other artists, especially younger ones, embrace them more readily. When asked for his opinion on these AI-assisted works, he said, "Not real or too real looking!"

Raj's scepticism toward these machine-assisted images stems from something broader: a belief that the imperfections of human work are what make art meaningful. "The analogy I like to use specifically about paintings that are handmade is: say a quilt or clothing that is handmade has a uniqueness to it [...] the machine-made stuff is mass-produced and has a lot less value when compared with a handmade (human-made) similar object."

This idea, that art's worth lies in its irregularities, has taken on new weight as AI permeates creative industries. AI can generate images that are visually stunning and endlessly adjustable. What it can't do, at least for now, is replicate the small decisions and intuitive leaps that define human artistry.

This dialogue around AI in art also recalls another recent tech-driven moment: the brief but intense NFT (non-fungible token) boom. A few years ago, NFTs were celebrated as a way to democratise digital art. But as the speculative frenzy fizzled, the art world was left questioning how much of that excitement was about artistic value and how much was about technology for its own sake. The comparison feels apt now. As generative AI floods the internet with endless AI images, some theorists predict that entirely human-made art may become a kind of artisanal rarity, valued for its scarcity.



If that prediction proves true, the art world may be entering a strange new era, one in which authenticity becomes a measurable commodity, and the presence of a human handiwork becomes a kind of luxury signature. Yet even as analysts warn of great change, Raj remains broadly optimistic about the survival of human artistry. When I asked whether he feared losing his job to machines, he answered quickly. "Not at all," he said. "We don't make widgets."

For him, AI is neither salvation nor apocalypse, but a tool whose impact depends on how thoughtfully it is used. "Any tool that helps me make better art is a good thing," he told me, "The challenge is how much you rely on it."

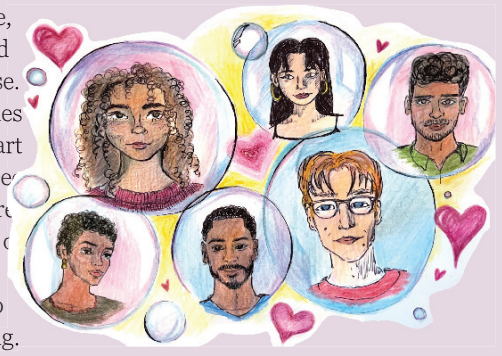
Perhaps that is where the future of art will hinge: not on whether AI usage becomes ubiquitous, but on how artists negotiate their relationship to it. If NFTs taught us anything, it's that technology may change how art is made, but human vision defines what makes it matter.

Illustration by Iona Talbot Rice

Love in the Bubble

Everyone wants a cute meeting story. It's a guaranteed smile and chorus of cooing 'awws' when you're introduced to her friends and she starts recounting how you rescued her from a shark or a burning house, while you sit there with a bashful smile. Meeting stories matter because they hold two stories at once: how you met each other, and how you both happened to be in that exact place at that exact moment. It's why I've never liked dating apps. It's not just the endless swiping or the legions of people who 'still don't know what they're looking for'. It's that apps remove half the story. You're attracted first, and then you try to build a reason to meet. But when you meet someone in real life, the reason is already there. You're both in the same place for a purpose — the same party, the same tutorial, the same pub, the same club. You already have a foundation before the conversation even starts.

"I met your granddad on his honeymoon." My grandmother always says. It's not exactly true, but she delights in the horrified expressions present on everyone's faces. She's eighty-one; you just say whatever you want at that point. My grandfather had just finished filming a series where his character had gotten married and took a holiday to the beaches of Malta, where my grandmother was working on a modelling contract. His opening line, my grandmother recounts, was to warn her about the sea urchins and then proceeded to brag that his shirt cost 'only five shillings'. It's cute, and you can see how she bursts into energy and her eyes sparkle as she recounts it. But what makes the story amazing is the coincidence. She could've been sent to Beirut or Melbourne. He could've chosen Tunis or Nice. She could've gone for lunch instead of sunbathing. He could've lost his nerve. A million different things had to go right for them to meet. And most real meeting stories feel like that: improbable, delicate, and very, very lucky. My girlfriend and I met when I applied to write for The Saint. She happened to be supervising my interview — except she wasn't even supposed to be there. She was filling in for someone else last-minute. The main interviewer hadn't arrived, so instead of sitting there in silence like a lemon, I started talking. Afterwards, we kept bumping into each other around town: reeling, Aikman's, jazz. All our usual haunts, yet somehow, we'd never collided before. Maybe we wouldn't have, had the interviewer not been late, had she not been filling in for someone else. When we talk, we realise how sometimes we were only a degree of separation apart — I declined a friend's invitation to se a play last December – she was there she took French lessons with a friend c mine last year. St Andrews is small, but it's still big enough for two lives to run side-by-side without ever touching. And yet, for once, everything aligned. A missed interview. A last-minute substitution. A conversation that shouldn't have happened but did. That's why I love meeting stories. They remind you that the best things in your life aren't always the ones you planned, but the ones you almost missed. So if you're wavering about applying, joining, showing up — do it. It might get you a job. It might get you rejected. It might get you absolutely nothing. But sometimes — if you're very lucky — it might get you a girlfriend.



DO YOU HAVE A SURVIVAL STORY? EMAIL ARTS@THESAINT.SCOT TO BE FEATURED.

ILLUSTRATION BY ELIZABETH LANG

Port, Policy, and Provocation: An Insight into STAUCA

ALEX BARNARD
EVENTS WRITER

The number of times I've written, "I entered with a sense of trepidation," to introduce an Events review for the Saint is countless. Clichéd, I know, but this time I truly did have a bit of a pit in my stomach. The St Andrews Unionist and Conservative Association, or STAUCA, is one of the most controversial societies at the University. Members are perhaps most commonly encountered at Aikman's following one of their boozy Port and Policy debates. The premise is simple: intellectual debate on political and abstract topics, quickly followed by the downing of much port. Read: descent into garbled and severely intoxicated arguments. In a Saint article from April, the then chief whip and now chairman George Smedley was quoted as saying that in being "conscientious of what the society looks like on paper," they steer away from controversial debate topics — not quite the case this week.

STAUCA's aim is, according to their official statement, to "foster a sense of Conservative-aligned right-wing thought", while being "in many ways a friend group". Not all attendees are Conservatives themselves, contributing nonetheless to the discussions each week. I am not the usual audience for an event such as Port and Policy either. Yes, I've inevitably got to know some of the Conservatives this semester by living in Sallies, many of whom sit on both committees. They're great chat at dinner, but I've firmly stuck to the old 'never talk politics' adage. STAUCA aim to create political cross-engagement, "holding a joint debate with Labour each term, as well as attending the political mixer during freshers week each year".

Instagram drama surrounded their third motion, 'TH supports railways as the superior type of autism.' Many, including the Scottish Independence Society, took issue with this, with other commentators criticising it as a form of caricature or ridicule. I was informed that STAUCA had invited the society to join the debate, an offer which was refused. STAUCA members, with whom I sometimes find myself sitting at Sallies lunch, also refuted the claim that the motion caused offence, because they themselves have many autistic members.



I entered Port and Policy with my extremely leftie companion, and I was greeted with firm handshakes of welcome by multiple members of the committee. The event title didn't lie: greetings were swiftly followed by plastic cups of port. At first, as an infrequent port drinker, I was a little disappointed by how little I was given. However, I also did not realise the sheer potency of even a sip, and my journalistic practice accidentally went out the window slightly, realising I was a little tipsy. Inevitably, the crowd was a sea of Barbour jackets, a great majority of them male, but it gave the impression of being a tight friend group, with everyone from the audience addressed by name.

The debate was divided into three motions: TH would leave the ECHR, TH would join Reform UK, and TH supports railways as the superior special interest. The first of any debate is supposed to be current affairs related, the second a little more abstract, and the third more of a 'fun' motion. It's interesting to note that the more liberal side won in both other cases — both in the vote to leave the ECHR and join Reform UK. After the speakers had made their argument, the floor opened to everyone, with witty firsthand experiences shared. One cited how Nigel Farage had visited his school in a double-decker campaign bus, driving it around to the delight of the fourteen-year-old schoolboys following in tow. Another spoke of his resentment when Farage refused to take a picture with him on account of the fact that he wanted to hold up a pint of ale.

The debates are not necessarily reflective of the political opinions of members. Once the committee has finalised the week's topics, STAUCA members can sign up to speak for or against the motion. However, as slots don't always fill up, committee members often have to step in and advocate for things they don't believe in. Sometimes members will put themselves forward deliberately in a 'devil's advocate' role as a debating exercise. This week, Alex Beckett, a real Reform member, did speak on the virtues of the party, and often personal opinions do bleed through in asides during the speeches.

Now for the 'train autism' debate, the part everyone's really curious about. I have to preface that on the STAUCA Instagram, any trace of the original title has been deleted and replaced with 'special interest.' This was largely upheld during the debate itself, but the more port that went down, the less the self-censorship remained strong. There was a whole throng of likely-fresher-boys standing up and proclaiming themselves 'former autists.' The general use of 'special interest' rather than 'autism' went out the window when it was noted that the Scottish Independence folk hadn't turned up.

Port and Policy was objectively a great event. There was a fantastic sense of community, scarily powerful port, and largely intellectual debate. The society is also not as hardline as it seems – various STAUCA members themselves admitted it was more of a glorified drinking society than a political party. It was lamented that more people couldn't come to events like Port and Policy to see the reality of STAUCA, but it's understandable that opposition may have felt alienated by their advertising. The random throwing-about of words like 'autistic' and 'gay' in these circles clearly isn't seen to be harmful, and is rather a manifestation of the language of probably all-boys, probably private education. At the same time, these are people clearly well-trained in rhetoric and otherwise extremely articulate, so you wonder if they could think of better descriptors than ones which disparage others.

In truly democratic fashion, I'll let STAUCA have the last word: "Ultimately, regardless of what's been said or done, there will always be a certain willingness to bash Tories."

PHOTO PROVIDED BY STAUCA

Ones to Watch: Events of the Week

St Andrews Shinty Ceilidh
Saturday 29 November

Spacestation, The Herons, Thrush
Saturday 29 November

Madrigal Group Christmas Concert
Friday 5 December

Christmas Wreath Making Workshop
Saturday 6 December

Redemption on the Rocks

MALI DELARGY
Events Writer

My family are all atheists, so it's no surprise that I am too. My interaction with religion has been limited to weddings, funerals, or the occasional school play. A friend took me to a crowded Mass last year, but we were separated upon arrival, leaving me to sneak peeks at other churchgoers who knew what to do. With that in mind, it is fair to say that I was slightly surprised to find myself at St Mark's on Friday 21 November for the 8pm start of Bible and Baileys.

Upstairs, the School of Divinity's St Mary's Society had prepared a room for debate. I queued for a token snifter of Baileys (as is only right) only to find that most people were going for wine. This was the first sign that the crowd meant business when it came to booze.

Robert Rayner, the society's Academic Rep, chaired the debates. After two opening speeches and points from the floor, each speaker would respond and close; this was followed by a vote and a quick break to refill our mugs before the next motion. We settled down for the first.

"This house believes capital punishment is against Christian principles."

For the proposition, Ella Prieto discussed criminal intent, judicial authority, and the idea that being made in God's image gives us inherent worth. Citing God's mercy toward David and Abel, she argued that we must follow His example, closing her statement with John 8:7, "Let the one without sin throw the first stone."

Post-grad Matthew Taylor, for opposition, invoked the Mosaic Code — drawing audible objections from the floor — and God's command to Noah in Genesis 9. He flipped Prieto's argument, claiming that bearing



God's image demands that we enforce the death penalty as a reflection of His justice.

The crowd, evidently well versed in theology, followed the arguments with ease. The proposition carried the vote, and after a quick refill break, we were on to the second motion.

"This house believes the University chaplaincy is detrimental to the University's religious life."

After a few mugs of wine, the house began its descent into silliness. During the points from the floor, a slip of the tongue referred to God as "herself," causing quite the commotion!

During the next break, I spoke to the society's President, fourth-year student Mathilda Singer. I asked her how the fledgling event — only on its fifth meeting — first emerged. "It started as a rival to Port & Policy that STAUCA runs," she said. "We realised people love the debate format, but they don't like STAUCA."

"It started as a rival to Port & Policy that STAUCA runs," she said. "We realised people love the debate format, but they don't like STAUCA."

When I pressed on their relation to STAUCA, Singer spoke candidly. "Let's not conflate outrage with entertainment [...] STAUCA forget that when you debate something, you give it airtime. We're just here for a bit of a laugh on a Friday!"

Running over our break, we made it back in time for the third motion: "This house believes present giving at Christmas is unchristian."

By now, the silliness was in full swing. The opening statements began with proposition Luke Robinson's token party hat and ended with his opponent and friend, George W.K. Stevens, gifting him a can of Febreze. This was later found out to have been stolen from Robinson's bathroom.

The points from the floor ended with a spontaneous rendition of 'Jerusalem', the room buzzing with a drunken cheer. Chair Rayner brought the evening to a close with a near-unanimous vote for the opposition.

A flying two hours had gone by, and I was sorry to see Bible and Baileys come to an end. Instead of being swayed by religious zeal, I had caught a glimpse of Divinity at its most playful. Maintaining my reservations about both God and STAUCA, I was more than delighted to spend a jovial evening among lovers of comedy and debate. In Singer's words, there was "too much booze" for anything else.

Photo by Mali Delargy

One Woman, Six Beers, Many Men

MAYA DASILVA
Events Writer

On the evening of 18 November, a cold and rainy Tuesday, I wandered into the Cosmos Centre. A dance class was still finishing up, but nearby tables were already laid out and glasses arranged for the Beer Society's Women in Brewing tasting. As guests trickled in, it became clear that I would be the only woman at this women-centred event.

Originally, the tasting was meant to run in collaboration with Women in Business, though a last-minute cancellation left Beer Society on its own. Despite the hiccup, they pulled together an impressive lineup of beers, and I ended up learning far more about brewing and its history than I expected.



Before any glasses were lifted, we heard a brief talk on the history of women in brewing. For most of human history, brewing was women's work. The first alcohol-related deity was Ninkasi, the Sumerian goddess of beer, and until the Industrial Revolution, beer-making was considered a domestic task, and therefore fell to women. Only when mass production began, and brewing became more physically intensive and commercial, did it shift into a male-dominated trade. Today, women in brewing are an underrepresented minority, and the goal of the night was to highlight their work.

All the beers we tasted were connected to women in the industry, either through a female founder or head brewer. First on the menu were the darker beers, including The Gloaming from Loch Lomond Brewing, as well as Skye Red and Skye Black from the Isle of Skye Brewing Company. We then moved on to the lighter options: Toadlicker Grapefruit IPA and Threads Elderberry Dark Sour from Hand Brew Co, and finally Bonnie & Clyde from Loch Lomond.

Isle of Skye's head brewer, Pam MacRuary, is recognised as the first female brewer in Scotland, while Loch Lomond is co-owned and co-founded by Fiona MacEachern and her husband, Euan. Hand Brew Co.'s head brewer, Kate Hyde, is also active in initiatives to bring more women into brewing. I enjoyed tasting the beers, but it was particularly refreshing to know each one was connected to women's work in the industry.

As someone who rarely opts for the craft-beer option, Archie's commentary taught me how it gets its colour, what influences flavour, how monks popularised the use of hops, and what malt actually is. They certainly tasted better than Tennents.

The group of attendees was small: an eclectic, relatively quiet, all-male bunch of beer enthusiasts. Despite the obvious irony, the women-centred focus felt unexpectedly emphasised. It felt bizarre to sit amongst a room full of men, celebrating women's contributions to the industry.

Beer Society President Eli Wyland Tatch reflected on the evening's intentions: "it's about getting as many people involved as possible and creating a welcoming, low-stakes social environment. We recognised that this is a male-dominated space, and thought it would be cool to get everyone involved."

Despite being one of the society's most sparsely attended events, the tasting was well worth my detour through the rain. I felt welcome throughout, and left only wishing I could have seen the event in fuller swing. At a university where women are the majority, it would have been nice to see more of them in the room. As women, however, I understand it can sometimes be tricky to step into spaces where our numbers are already low. Beer Society seems to be on the right track by partnering with societies that have more women in their ranks to increase participation.

Even if the night wasn't all the society had hoped for, the Women in Brewing tasting was a charming break from my usual routine.

Illustration by Sarah Knight

Doppelgängers: Strangers With Your Face

BHANI KAUR
SCI-TECH WRITER

Have you ever locked eyes with a stranger across a crowded room and felt an unsettling jolt of recognition? Perhaps a friend has sent you a photo of someone who could be your twin, separated at birth. These moments, brief encounters with our supposed 'doppelgängers', feel almost supernatural, as though the universe has accidentally printed two copies of the same person. Yet when scientists peer beneath the surface of these uncanny resemblances, they find something far stranger than cosmic coincidence.

With eight billion people populating the Earth, you might think finding an exact duplicate would be mathematically inevitable. But the numbers tell a different story. The genetic lottery that determines our appearance draws from trillions of possible combinations, making true physical duplicates vanishingly rare. Even so, lookalikes exist. Walk through any city and you will spot them: people who share that distinctive arch of an eyebrow, that particular slope of a nose, that unmistakable arrangement of features that makes you do a double-take. The question is not whether doppelgängers exist, but why — and the answer lies coiled within our DNA, though not in the way you might expect.

Recent studies have revealed that people who look remarkably similar do share something significant: certain genes that govern facial morphology. These are the genetic architects that dictate bone structure, the proportions between eyes and nose, and the contours of the jaw. When researchers compared unrelated lookalikes, they found overlaps in these specific regions of the genome — the blueprints that build a face. Yet here is the twist: beyond these facial features, the doppelgängers were no more genetically related than any two random strangers plucked from opposite sides of the planet. Their resemblance was skin-deep in the most literal sense, a chance alignment of a handful of genes amongst thousands.

The mystery deepens when you consider how our brains perceive faces. Tucked within the folds of our temporal lobe sits a region called the fusiform face area, dedicated entirely to recognising and processing faces. This neural specialist is remarkably good at its job — so good, in fact, that it occasionally becomes overzealous. Neuroscience research suggests this area tends to over-identify resemblances, eagerly spotting patterns and similarities even where they are tenuous. A shift in lighting, an angle of the head, a fleeting expression — these subtle variables can trick our face-recognition system into perceiving a stronger likeness than truly exists. We are, in essence, primed to see doppelgängers, even when genetics tells a more nuanced story.

What makes the phenomenon even more intriguing is that appearance is not entirely hardwired at conception. Epigenetics, the study of how genes can be switched on or off, reveals that our faces are shaped by more than just the DNA sequence we inherit. Lifestyle factors leave their mark: years of sun exposure alter skin texture and tone, diet influences facial fullness and structure, and even the habitual use of certain facial muscles from repeated expressions can gradually reshape our features over time. Two people might start with different genetic templates, yet through parallel environmental influences, their faces could drift towards a similar appearance. Nature provides the score, but life conducts the performance.

Perhaps most remarkably, even identical twins — those genetic carbon copies who share 100% of their DNA — are not truly identical in appearance. Subtle developmental variations in the womb, differences in how genes are regulated and expressed, and even the position each twin occupied before birth can create small but noticeable distinctions. If perfection eludes those who share an entire genome, it becomes clear that the doppelgänger phenomenon is not about genetic duplication at all.



In the end, when you encounter your supposed double, you are witnessing something simultaneously ordinary and extraordinary; a chance convergence of a few key genes, filtered through the quirks of human perception, and shaped by the invisible hand of environmental influence. Not quite magic, but perhaps something just as marvellous — the reminder that in a world of eight billion faces, each one remains uniquely, impossibly singular.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISABELLE HOLLOWAY

The Science of the Winter Slump

BHANI KAUR
SCI-TECH WRITER

There is nothing quite like leaving a lecture at 3pm, the sun already set. It's November — deadlines are piling up, but you can't seem to focus on work beyond the early afternoon sunset. One week you are revising lying in St Mary's Quad, and the next it's pitch black before you have even left your afternoon lecture. The so-called 'winter slump' feels personal, but in reality, it's deeply biological. Our brains are responding exactly as they are built to — just not in ways that support a modern student lifestyle.

At the centre of this shift is the circadian rhythm. This is your body's natural 24-hour clock, keeping you operating on a healthy sleep-wake cycle. Light is the body's timekeeper, received by the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN) in the hypothalamus of the brain. Throughout the day, genes located in the SCN send signals to control activity in the body. Earlier sunsets and later sunrises lengthen the period of darkness, leading to a longer window of melatonin secretion. Melatonin is a hormone secreted by the pineal gland, telling your body it's time to get ready to rest when darkness begins. In practice, this means we start feeling tired earlier in the afternoon, even when we have had enough sleep.

Daylight also plays a major role in regulating serotonin pathways in the brain. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter and hormone, responsible for regulating mood, motivation, and the brain's reward system. Serotonin neurons in the dorsal raphe nucleus in the brain are directly modulated by light-driven signals received from the eyes. Reduced daylight exposure in winter suppresses serotonin pathways. This effect is amplified as serotonin is the biochemical precursor of melatonin. During extended winter nighttime hours, more serotonin is converted into melatonin, reducing the amount of serotonin available during the day. Reduced serotonin is strongly associated with decreased motivation, irritability, and a blunted reward response.

On top of all of this, our immune system is also weakened. Melatonin is not only a sleep hormone, but also acts as an immune modulator, helping to regulate the development and activity of T cells. These cells are essential in antiviral responses, helping to protect us from common coughs and colds. During winter, the longer duration of melatonin secretion disrupts the normal timing of T cell production, causing T cells to become less efficiently activated.

These biological changes directly affect cognition. A disrupted circadian rhythm leads to poorer attention and working memory. Serotonin dips reduce our motivation and reward response, making academic tasks feel disproportionately effortful. It is hard to think clearly through the brain fog a cold can bring. And worst of all, this period coincides with deadline season and revision weeks.

There are practical ways to support the brain, even during these dark months. Morning daylight is one of the most powerful tools, helping to regulate your circadian rhythm. Trying not to hit snooze on the alarm for your 9am is essential, as the early-morning walk to the lecture theatre could change the rest of your day. Light therapy lamps can also be useful, and taking short breaks outside mid-study sessions can help to boost serotonin and motivation while re-anchoring the circadian clock.

Movement also matters. Exercise, even a brisk walk to Taste to grab a chai, stimulates serotonin and increases alertness. Keeping a consistent sleep routine helps to stabilise melatonin secretion, preventing the drift that makes afternoons so difficult. None of these strategies requires dramatic lifestyle changes; they are small adjustments designed to work with biology rather than against it.

The winter slump is real — but it's not permanent. As the term ends and daylight slowly returns, our bodies reset. Until then, understanding the science behind the slump can make the experience feel less like a personal failing and more like what it really is: the brain doing its best to adapt to a darker world.

Nothing Stranger Than a Hive Mind

LOGAN SIBBALD
Sci-Tech Writer

In a key scene from season four of the popular Netflix show *Stranger Things*, a scarred, Freddy Krueger-type levitates within a darkened room, slithering tendrils intertwining with his limbs. The tentacles splay out across the walls, forming a connection to the very fabric of the environment, much like a nerve to a muscle. He twitches and stirs with his surroundings... This scene serves as a metaphorical representation of the hive mind and is central to the story of the Netflix show *Stranger Things*, but what is the real-life inspiration behind it?

The concept of a hive mind, in a science fiction context, describes a universal consciousness shared by many individuals. With the premiere episode of its fifth and final season due to be released on 26 November, *Stranger Things* has recently popularised this idea.

For those who are not familiar with the series, it centres around a group of young kids who — following the disappearance of their friend — face supernatural events linked to secret government experiments. In the show, the hive mind manifests in the interconnection between the show's ultimate antagonist, Vecna, and all other creatures inhabiting the alternate dimension known as 'The Upside Down.'

We see this in the way Vecna forms and harnesses 'The Mind Flayer' — a giant spider-like entity which serves as the conduit for controlling other organisms, including humans. The hive mind network, of which Vecna acts as the central hub, is unified in its goals, thinking, strength, and pain — to affect one being in the collective web is to affect all others as well.



While this shared consciousness is ultimately fictitious, the concept is extrapolated from examples in the natural world. Reminiscent of insects, the term hive mind is indeed analogous to the behaviour of ant colonies when searching for a new nest site. This 'house-hunting' behaviour involves a few ants being sent to scout out a new home and, if satisfactory, report back to the original nest to lead the others to this new location. When the population in this new site surpasses a certain threshold, the leaders will register this — via a process known as quorum sensing — and begin physically moving any other ants towards it. This ensures that, if multiple new sites have been scouted, only the highest quality location (marked by the greatest numbers of ants) is fully committed to. As such, the colony appears to make a collective decision to move towards the best site, abandoning all other potential homes.

House-hunting behaviour demonstrates how, despite being fully capable of functioning as independents, social insects appear to operate for the greater benefit of the herd — something which is akin to the hive mind concept.

A second example of an organism whose behaviour evokes a hive mind mentality is the slime mould. Slime moulds are ancient, single-celled amoebae that can combineto form a large supercell capable of what seems to be intelligent, collective decision-making. When placed in a maze puzzle, the supercell can determine the shortest path to get from one food source to the next, remembering routes and dead ends it has previously explored by leaving a trail of sticky slime behind. Furthermore, when the supercell is severed into smaller fragments and spread across the maze, the individual slime moulds will seek out each other and fuse to reform the single, unified network. Although the precise details are unclear, this behaviour may be the result of individual slime molds sensing and propagating chemical signals in the environment (either from food sources or other slime moulds).

Both of these examples have undoubtedly served as natural inspiration for the sci-fi hive mind trope. And in *Stranger Things*, it is the mechanism by which Vecna gains the upper hand on his victims — something which must be overcome by our beloved protagonists in the highly anticipated final season.

Illustration by Isabelle Holloway



The Tale of Sir Thomas Lipton

Tea tycoon, America's Cup hero, and godfather of the World Cup

BEN BAGLEY
SPORT EDITOR

Anyone who has slotted a 50p coin into a vending machine will be familiar with the name Lipton (of iced tea acclaim). Few, however, will know that Sir Thomas Lipton — the Glaswegian merchant behind the brand — has a place in the America's Cup Hall of Fame and is credited by FIFA as the organiser of the inaugural Club World Cup.

Born in 1848 to Irish parents who had fled the Great Famine, Lipton grew up in the Gorbals. As a boy, he was fascinated by the docks, where he spent hours watching ships and talking with sailors, captivated by their stories from the sea.

Inspired, he found work as a cabin boy at fifteen, using his wages to fund passage to America in 1865, spending several years travelling and working. One of his most formative experiences came working at one of Manhattan's pioneering department stores.

Upon his return to Glasgow, Lipton opened his first shop in Anderston in 1871, selling everyday groceries. Buying directly from merchant ships, he brought quality produce to the masses by cutting out the middle man. The business model was a success and by 1888, Lipton had more than 300 shops across the UK.

"He had a unique charm," Laurence Brady, founder of the Sir Thomas Lipton Foundation, told *The Saint*. "Lipton was down-to-earth, very ordinary, and very accessible to the public."

In 1897, he anonymously donated £25,000 (about £4 million in today's money) to fund a dinner for the homeless in London. Acts like these, paired with his affordable produce, won the hearts of the public.

Lipton was also known for his elaborate PR stunts. In 1881, he commissioned the 'world's biggest cheese' to be made in America and shipped across the Atlantic. After Queen Victoria declined his offer of



the massive block, Lipton brought his prized cheese to Glasgow, where it was paraded through the street. The cheese was so large it didn't fit through the door of his shop.

Building on the success of his grocery chain, Lipton entered the tea trade in 1890, purchasing a plantation in Ceylon (modern-day Sri Lanka). At the time, tea was a luxury item. By controlling the supply chain, Britain's favourite import was brought to the masses under the slogan "from the tea gardens to the teapot". Lipton Tea, now owned by a private equity firm, remains the largest tea brand on the planet.

Commercial success won Lipton a number of influential friends. He hosted the likes of Theodore Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, and Kaiser Wilhelm II on his steam yacht. He often went sailing with King George V, earning him the nickname 'the King's Grocer.' At a pre-war regatta, the Kaiser joked that the king was late because he had "gone boating with his grocer."

Encouraged by the King, Lipton entered the America's Cup, the world's most prestigious sailing competition, first challenging in 1899 on behalf of the Royal Ulster Yacht Club. Although defeated, his charm and sportsmanship won over the American public.

He challenged four more times without success. After his fifth failure in 1930, the Mayor of New York awarded him the unofficial 'World's Best Loser Trophy'. Crowds lined the streets as he travelled from his hotel to City Hall to collect it. The trophy's inscription read: "In the name of hundreds of thousands of Americans and well-wishers of Sir Thomas Johnstone Lipton."

Beyond the America's Cup, Lipton supported a host of sporting events. Sailing competitions from South Africa to Hawaii bear his name to this day. His sponsorship extended to football — the Copa Lipton was played regularly between Argentina and Uruguay until 1992.

In 1909, the Sir Thomas Lipton Trophy was held for the first time in Turin. Football teams from across Europe took part in one of the earliest international football tournaments. It was won by the English amateurs West Auckland, who beat Italian titans Juventus 6-1 in the final. The side from County Durham are thought to have been invited by mistake, after someone misinterpreted the initials 'W.A.', intended to refer to Woolwich Arsenal.

Lipton's legacy extends well beyond caffeine and sport. "He was regarded as one of the people who helped shape modern American business," Brady explained. In 1928, Lipton was invited to a dinner for the 'Pioneers of American Industries,' hosted by Columbia University, alongside the likes of Henry Ford, George Eastman, and Walter Chrysler.

Despite receiving little recognition today, Brady works to keep Lipton's legacy afloat. He founded the Sir Thomas Lipton Foundation in 2010, teaching children from underprivileged backgrounds to sail. This year, Brady released a children's book, *Mysteries, Marvels and Miracles at Sea: Around the World in 18 True Stories*, with all proceeds going to the foundation.

"Lipton shouldn't be regarded as the world's best loser," Brady emphasised, "but as one of the world's most positive enthusiasts – a great ambassador for sailing, and a great role model for young people."

IMAGE FROM WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Scotland Achieves World Cup Dream

GREGOR MURRAY
SPORT WRITER

Scotland has gone from strength to strength in recent years. After qualifying for back-to-back Men's Euros, the national team have now booked their place at the 2026 FIFA World Cup thanks to late strikes from Kieran Tierney and Kenny McLean against Denmark.

Their chances of reaching their first World Cup since 1998 had been written off by many pundits before a ball was even kicked. But Scotland kept themselves firmly in the running after remaining unbeaten against bottom-placed Belarus, holding favourites Denmark to a draw in Copenhagen and coming from behind to beat a well-drilled Greece side at Hampden.

A disappointing defeat in Athens briefly looked to have ended Scotland's hopes of automatic qualification to the World Cup, but Steve Clarke's men were handed a lifeline when Belarus secured a surprise draw in Copenhagen. That result meant Scotland knew a win against Denmark at Hampden would secure their place at the World Cup.

The Scots couldn't have made a better start. Napoli's cult hero Scott McTominay produced a stunning bicycle kick inside five minutes to put Scotland 1–0 up. After Denmark levelled from the penalty spot, it threatened to be another 'oh-so-near' moment for the Tartan Army.

Hearts captain Lawrence Shankland restored the lead with a textbook poacher's finish, bringing qualification within reach. Hopes were dashed, however, when Manchester United's Patrick Dorgu equalised almost instantly, setting up a tense finale to an all-or-nothing match.

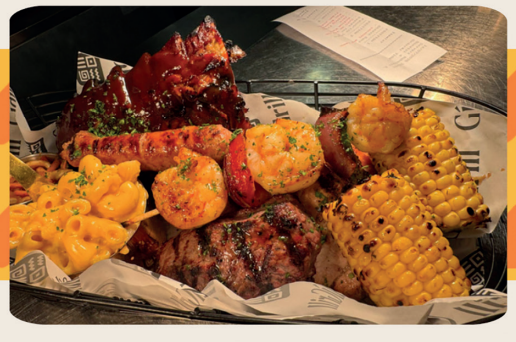
Scotland threw the kitchen sink at Denmark in the closing stages. Long balls into the box sustained relentless pressure on the Danes. When a recycled cross was cleared only as far as an onrushing Kieran Tierney, the defender swept the ball past his Celtic teammate Kasper Schmeichel, sending Hampden into chaos.

> "One of the most historic results in Scottish football history."

Kenny McLean completed the job in stoppage time, lobbing the goalkeeper from the halfway line to seal one of the most historic results in Scottish football history.

Scottish hangovers will have to recover in time for next summer, when Scotland will face off against the world's best in North America.





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A Swim in the North Sea

GABRIELLA THOMAS
Sport Writer



It was 7:45am when I met the St Andrews Wild Swimming Society for the first time. I stood on West Sands Beach, shivering and shielding my eyes against the gritty wind. The beach was deserted except for two figures, who I thought were seals but turned out to be paddleboarders.

An eager group of wild swimmers has grown over the last few years. Luke Campbell, the society's Wellbeing Officer, motioned for us to find a spot on the beach to place our things.

"The morning swims are quieter," Campbell said as we positioned our towels and coats in a way that kept them dry and free of sand. The society runs three open swims a week, one on each beach.

"My friends enjoyed going in [the sea], so we made a group chat," Campbell said, explaining the origins of the society. "People kept getting added, and it just kept growing." He stooped to pick up some rubbish left on the beach. "It's only going to be a quick dunk for me today."

There was one wetsuit between us, one knock-off Dryrobe, and lots of chattering teeth. The swimmers were very apologetic, as if there was anything they could do to stop the rain and clear the grey clouds.

"Usually you get to see a beautiful sunrise," Kitty Harland, a dedicated member of the Wild Swimming Society, added. A few minutes later, another blast of wind reminded me just how cold St Andrews can get.

The group was eager as they reminisced about past swims. I only had to endure one dip; surely it was doable.

"Let's go, swimmers," Campbell said tiredly. He looked over at me, remembering I was noting down his every word. He laughed, mustering up some enthusiasm for a second attempt. "Let's go, swimmers!"

We took off towards the lashing, grey waves. The tide was far out, giving me a minute to warm up on the way over. But this warmth faded as soon as we hit the sea.

A flock of confused seagulls watched over us, likely wondering why anyone would put themselves through such an ordeal. A chorus of whoops and winces switched to a show of faux-bravado. "This is easy," someone exclaimed, "I'm not even cold."

As the waves reached my shoulders, I lost sensation below the knees. I was almost certain my feet had fallen off and floated away. The Wild Saints were right, though. The cold is invigorating, and I soon found myself cheering alongside the other swimmers as another wave struck. Perhaps my face had frozen too, because I could not stop grinning.

"This one!" someone shouted, and we formed a rough line, watching the tallest wave yet crash towards us. Before I could second-guess myself, I dived into it, resurfacing in triumph. Almost everyone joined for the next wave, even those who claimed they were keeping their hair dry. The delight was truly intoxicating.

"It's euphoric," Harland said as we hurried back to shore. "But I want to get a wetsuit, it's even more fun when you can stay and swim around."

Despite my best efforts, my clothes were sandy and wet, but the dopamine spike sustained me long enough to dry off.

"We've seen dolphins and rainbows before," Harland told me as we trudged along the beach. "But not today, sadly."

I suppose I'll just have to join them again.

Illustration by Ramona Kirkham

Mo Darts Returns to 601

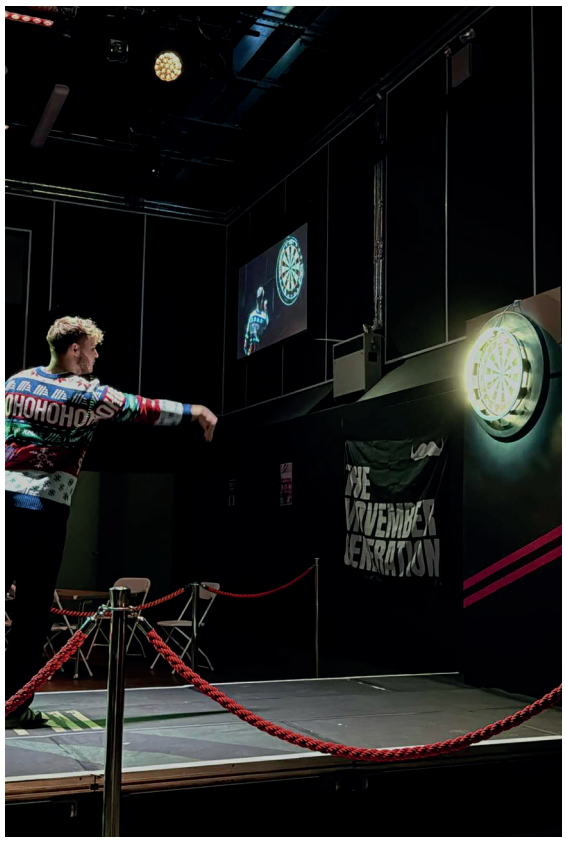
The highlight of the Movember calendar

ELODIE COWAN
Sport Writer

601 felt more like Ally Pally on Saturday night. With a pair of lobsters, two men dressed in Lederhosen, and many more, everyone embraced the spirit of the darts. Alice Nicholson and her partner, the lobsters in question, deservedly won best dressed.

The Artful Dodgers (Izzy Checkley and Ella Wilson) had been working their socks off all afternoon. The pair trained at the Whey Pat under the guidance of their new friend, Crail resident John. The 65-or-so-year-old taught them how to throw, kept score, and told them he was proud before leaving to get back to his parrot around the Neuk.

Wilson had even pre-choreographed a walk-out routine in hopes of intimidating their opponents. Sadly, it failed to shake the Botswana Meat Commission pair (Agambir Dhaliwal and Chris Nicholson), who killed the Dodgers' (and Coach John's) dreams in Round 1.



Dhaliwal declined press after the victory, telling me to come back when he won. It would've been a brilliant narrative arc, but the BMC pair were eliminated in Round 2 by teammates from their own Sunday League side. In honour of Dhaliwal's original condition, no further comments were collected.

A major upset then struck last year's reigning champions, The Final Bosses. Eddie Maglione and George Rook, dressed in homage to road-man-impersonator TikToker Vuncle, arrived hoping to defend their title, but the stage disagreed, sending them out in Round 1.

Afterwards, Maglione offered a highly reflective breakdown: "We just weren't there on stage," he said. "I went one for three — that's 33% if you run the numbers."

He stressed that their chemistry wasn't lost and instead discussed the pressure men feel to perform. At home, he divulged, he hit triple 20s with ease; under the lights, however, it became a whole different scenario. He even compared a perfect treble to academic success: "I mean, hitting a triple twenty is like getting a first in honours." Tongue-in-cheek, but rooted in real societal pressure.

Elsewhere, no-shows The Dirty Dogs were subbed out and replaced last minute by seasoned throwers Ani Wong and Maddie Bell. Forced to adapt instantly after an Around-the-World format was adopted, they fell at the first hurdle to eventual runners-up The Bull S*******.

One man grateful for the format shift was announcer James Taylor, who prepared by watching darts commentary on YouTube. "It's less maths with Around-the-World [...] which is probably better for me," he joked.

The Marlboro Inbreds ultimately emerged victorious, swimming through the competition with ease. Their pair included Luke Jones, who had the most wholesome support in the room — his girlfriend's Nana. She told me that mental health struggles had affected men in her own family, and she emphasised how far things have come: in her generation, men often suffered in silence, and seeing Movember help break down those walls made her genuinely hopeful.

Amidst the chaos, Movember's message stayed central. Rosie Grist encouraged men to ask each other how they are really doing. As the sponsors' rep, she also addressed the long-running criticism that student fundraising can feel "performative." She rejected this entirely.

"To gauge attention is through performance," she said. "To say performance is reductive of what we are doing is a critique with no basis, because without the performance, we've not started the conversation."

She added, "It's these events that raise the money to train mental health professionals. Without these events, we have no money to do these genuinely meaningful things."

If Saturday proved anything, it's that St Andrews is long overdue for a darts society. Students embraced the sport with exceptional enthusiasm. But more importantly, the 'performative' stage created real, meaningful conversations.

Mo Darts was a hit. The night of the year, one might argue.

Because any night where half the room can't aim, a mysterious pensioner teaches darts at the Whey Pat, and a footballer demands post-match interview conditions before crashing out in Round 2 is a night doing something very right.

Photo by Elodie Cowan

Sunday I'm in Love

Your weekly Sunday League round-up

BEN BAGLEY
Sport Editor

The twenty or so hardy souls who braved the pissing rain might have agreed with George Livanos' assessment on the Sunday League Final Facebook event that it was "by far the s***test thing I've been invited to in my four years here."

Butts Wynderers secured their place in the top flight next season after seeing off DLL in the relegation play-off. After a controversial late equaliser from DLL, the game went to penalties. It's been a tough season for the Wynderers, but they delivered under the lights when it mattered.

"We had a lot of new players this year, but I definitely think we started gelling in the second half of the season," Wynderers captain Oumar Sagna said. "We're going to fight next season, and I definitely think we can do big things."

With the promotion play-off out of the way, attention turned to the small matter of the final. Strokers were firm favourites heading into the clash with Spartans after finishing top of the league.

Denys Zhurov fired the game into life inside ten minutes with an absolute screamer from the edge of the box. Strokers hit back on the half-hour, a clinical finish from top-scorer James Taylor levelling things up.

Two goals either side of the break put Spartans firmly in control, and they had one hand on the trophy when Victor Bootz put them 4-1 up entering the final twenty minutes. Spartans' experience showed with their game management, and they added a fifth and sixth to seal the deal.

"It means a lot to the boys," Spartans captain Avik Sanyal said. "We lost to Strokers in the opening game. It was nice to get our revenge in the final."

After eight hard-fought weeks of Sunday League, we have a winner. Real Sosobad will join the top division next season, with Bolton Fondlers resigned to Division 2.

If any disgruntled members of Bolton Fondlers (or anyone else for that matter) feel the urge to get in touch over Christmas, direct it to sport@thesaint.scot.

DIVISION 1

Final Result and Full Table

Strokers 1 – 6 Spartans

Pos	Team	Pld	GD	Pts
1	Strokers	7	+17	18
2	Spartans	7	+16	16
3	Botswana Meat Commission	7	+15	14
4	Beavers	7	+8	14
5	Paqueta Crisps	7	-6	8
6	Sheffield Tuesday	7	-9	4
7	Butts Wynderers	7	-14	3
8	Bolton Fondlers	7	-27	0