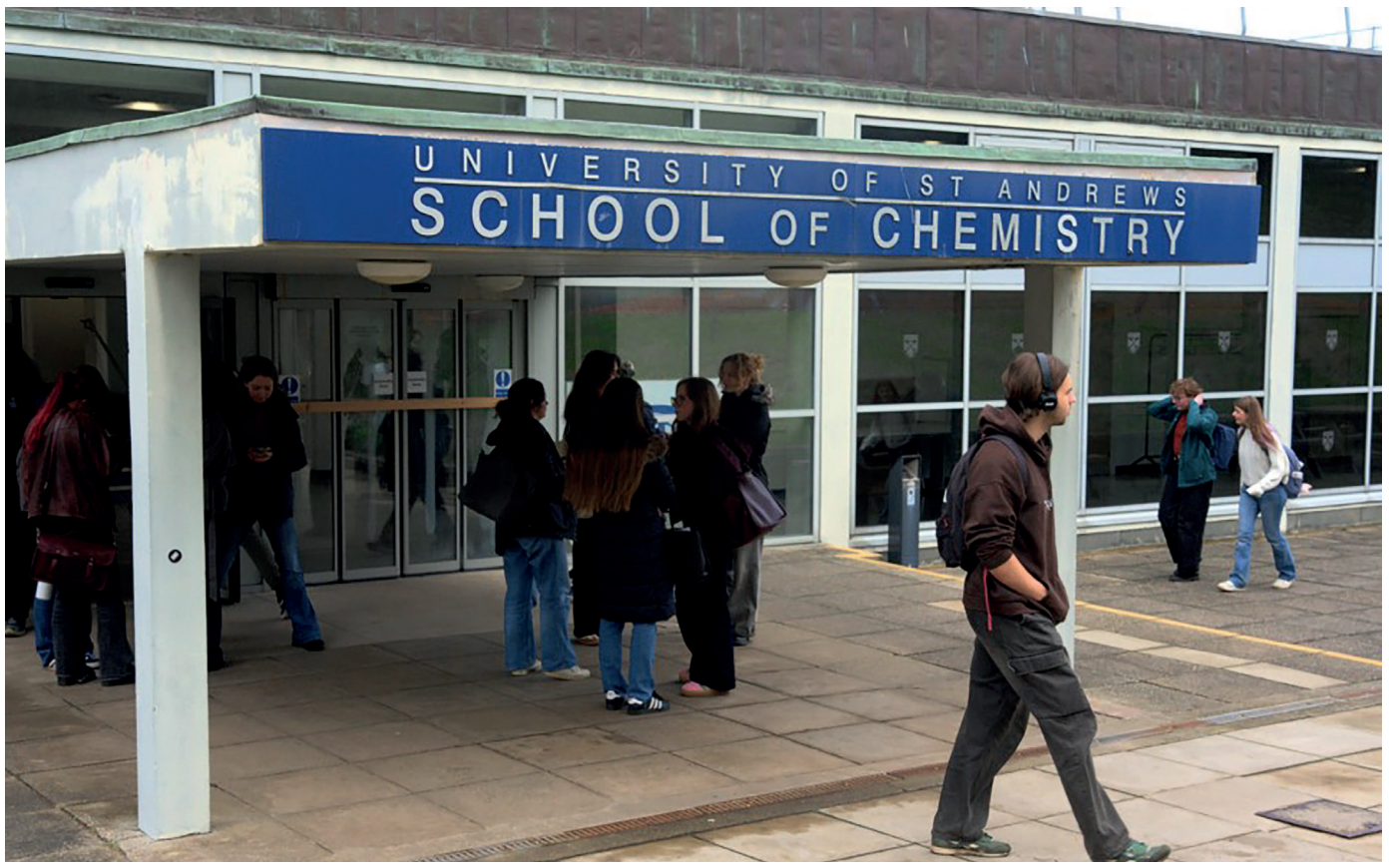
THE SAINT

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University Staff Member Pleads Guilty to Child Communications and Abuse Images Charges



CECILY TODD
News Writer

Dr Aidan McKay, a University of St Andrews Scientific Officer in the School of Chemistry, has pleaded guilty to serious sexual offences, involving attempts to communicate with a child and the possession of indecent images of children at his Dundee home as well as on University property, Dundee Sheriff Court has heard.

McKay, 32, admitted to attempting to communicate with someone he believed to be a twelve-year-old girl and downloading sensitive materials involving children. This was revealed as the result of an undercover police operation aimed at identifying online grooming activity. According to court proceedings, McKay used an online chat platform to initiate communication with a user he believed to be a minor named 'Chloe'; the account was instead operated by an undercover officer.

Prosecutor Joanne Ritchie told the court that communication began on Chatiw, a platform known for being used for child-grooming purposes, after which "the conversations accelerated and transferred to Snapchat," as Press Reader stated. Contact between the two accounts ended on 13 February, 2025, when McKay became suspicious.

Court documents revealed that McKay used the username 'Prvforgirls' on Chatiw and described himself as a 30-year-old man from Scotland. Despite the account representing a young girl, prosecutors said he continued sending explicit messages and asked the individual questions of a sexual nature, like if she did "naughty things" with "old men," as Press Reader stated.

Investigators later traced the activity to IP addresses

Continued on Page 4.

A Culture of Carelessness: A Dangerous Lack of Drug Testing in St Andrews

by Alex Brubaker

Many St Andrews students use recreational drugs unsafely. I am from San Francisco, California — a city in the midst of a deadly fentanyl crisis. It is common to know someone who has overdosed from a laced drug. People test their drugs before they use them, and if they don't, they know they should have. Many carry Naloxone (known as Narcan in the US), which can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose.

Read on Page 24.

Diri Me, What a Fight!: Fight Night 2026

by Ben Bagley

"St Andrews, are you not entertained?" Josh Diri bellowed the famous quote from Gladiator over the Kinkell Byre PA system after defeating Will Nugent in Fight Night's main event. The fourth-year's antics were more Jake Paul than Russell Crowe, but the crowd lapped it up. Diri-Nugent was the talking point going into this year's Fight Night. For months, the pair's feud has been the worst-kept secret in town. The fight was reportedly arranged after Nugent slapped Diri at last year's Charity Oktoberfest.

Read on Page 31.



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EDITORIAL

Slainté, Prost, and So On...

After a longer-than-usual and much-needed break between issues, *The Saint* is back and better than ever. Did you miss us? Don't worry; in our absence, we were still working hard, brainstorming and investigating just for you. So while you were off galavanting around the world during Reading Week, thoughts of Uni politics far out of sight and even farther out of mind, we were working away, making custom candles (available to order via the link on our Instagram) and once again piecing together the latest issue.

In honour of issue 298, and in recognition of the cultural celebrations that have reached this little town over the last week — thank you to Oktoberfest, St Patrick's Day darties, and the many flat viewings of this week's Oscars (a shout out to the very talented Jessie Buckley) — we would like to take you around the world with *The Saint*.

As two Americans, we must admit that these two countries can get it down. In fact, many countries can. Now, more than ever, it is important to celebrate our international community and appreciate the diverse multiculturalism that makes St Andrews so unique.

As was eloquently put by STEPS Scholar Kate Khair in her interview with Features' Edie Oborne (read it on page fifteen), the effects of the world's injustices affect everyone: "It's one planet. We need to act as if we are living in one place."

Some may want to dissect our differences, to tease out the us-versus-them of it all, but Khair is right. To avoid sounding too preachy-peace-and-love-y, let's put it this way: global conflicts can and will affect us all. So check on your friends, ask how they're doing. In such an international community as this, friendship and camaraderie are perhaps the most powerful antidotes of all — especially now.

The most recent global events, having dominated headlines and clogged up our social media feeds, have made us, we feel, appreciate this week's past social events even more. They serve as the celebration of culture, community, and of what different parts of the world bring to the table — or to the glass. These events, along with Thanksgiving and St Andrew's Day, Burns Night, and Holi, and the prominence they play in the broader University social calendar, are a testament in themselves. To the global community that makes St Andrews such a unique and special place to learn, and the multicultural education that every student leaves with, whether they like it or not.

Now there is some debate as to the academic calibre of the University of St Andrews — 22% of you seem to think we do not deserve our academic ranking. Well, you can make that decision for yourself (see page six to hear the arguments in our Devil's Advocate), but here's our two cents: Do we have minimal contact hours? Yes. But have we learned the language of the world? Maybe, at least, to an intermediate extent. At the end of the day, some types of education are more important than that which is purely academic. We certainly enjoyed some of the lessons learned at Oktoberfest this weekend (Bratwurst is always a good idea [and so is Guinness]; don't stand on a table bench with a half-full stein in hand; the corset can always be tighter; and so on and so forth).

So to conclude this kumbaya (and to pass the mic over to our many talented writers) on behalf of *The Saint,* slainté! Or prost! Or however you choose to, cheers.

Hannah and Ilaria

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Corrections
Sport writer Freddie Coughlin's name was mispelled
Viewpoint writer Megan Titheridge-Stark's name was mispelled

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University to Increase Student Accommodation Fees Next Academic Year

IONA CARRUTH
NEWS WRITER

The University of St Andrews is set to increase student accommodation fees for the next academic year. This coincides with the town having been named, for the second year in a row, the most expensive coastal town in Scotland by the Bank of Scotland Coastal Homes Review.

The Bank of Scotland Coastal Homes Review reported that the housing market for coastal locations in Scotland was worth £1.9 billion in 2025, also finding that prices in Scottish coastal towns have increased by 25% over the last five years, greater than the British average of 18%.

The price for some of the University student accommodation will also increase in the 2026-27 academic year, as observed on the university website. A self-catered ensuite room in David Russel Apartments — one of the largest student accommodations in St Andrews — will increase from £8,849 in the 2025-26 academic year to £9,286 in 2026-27, as found on the University's website.

A University spokesperson told The Saint that "increases are based on the CPI (Consumer Price Index)+1 [adding 1% to the cumulated CPI] with dialogue, discussion and agreement with the Student President." The spokesperson added that "accommodation is available to students at varying rent levels. For students who require assistance with fees, the University has various funds which can be accessed."

They added that the 5% increase to rent for the 2026-27 academic year helps to "maintain modern facilities and 24/7 support services."

The spokesperson also highlighted a "comprehensive review of our residential system" by University officers, University Court representatives, and elected student representatives," which resulted in changes to accommodation based on "sustainability, fairness, and improved support for those who need it most."

"The review responds to increasing financial pressures, evolving student needs, and the growth of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) in St Andrews," they wrote. It included what they called "five core workstreams," consisting of "student experience, pricing and affordability, capacity requirements, services and operating costs, and private sector partnerships."

Additionally, the University spokesperson highlighted that a new Residential Review Board consisting of elected Student Association members will oversee any future changes made to accommodation-related decisions.

Third-year student Amelia Beattie told The Saint that she thinks "it's totally unreasonable for the University to charge that much for self-catered accommodation without changes to the accommodation that justify the inflation in price. It only damages the University's reputation as an elitist institution and makes it less accessible to prospective students who will be priced out of the largest accommodation."

Beattie added that — "SAAS [Student Awards Agency Scotland, responsible for issuing Scottish student loans] already didn't cover the cost of DRA for me in first year, and I had to supplement my cost of living with a part-time job as all my SAAS [funding the cost of my] accommodation."

She continued, "I can't imagine how anyone can afford this. I think that the limited options for payment instalments are already unreasonable, as you can only pay in a max of four instalments. The University is pricing out anyone who can't afford to drop over £2,000 on rent at a time."

For the current academic year, the maximum student loan for Scottish students is £8,400 — compared to the rent for DRA at £8,849. This leaves students unable to use their loan towards other living expenses.

Third-year student Millie Tougher, who lived in DRA during her first and second year, expressed a similar attitude towards the increase: "I just think it is really unfair on students who don't come from wealthy backgrounds to [be expected] [...] to have that amount of money to spend on accommodation [...] It means that St Andrews is going to become even more exclusionary and elitist because no one else will be able to afford to live here."

The University spokesperson noted that "St Andrews invests over £20 million annually in bursaries and scholarships, and our accommodation bursaries have more than trebled in recent years. This support follows the student, enabling access to the full range of accommodation options."

The Student Accommodation Award has increased 8.5%, from £1,750 to £1,900, "providing a stronger safety net for those who need it most," the spokesperson wrote. "We are committed to keeping accommodation accessible for all students."

Lower-cost student residence accommodation, like Gannochy House, are also available. Gannochy House, for example, costs £6,246 for a self-catered standard single room. It does, however, have significantly fewer rooms, with 85 single standard rooms compared to DRA, which has 875 rooms.

The University spokesperson wrote: "At St Andrews, our goal is to provide high-quality and supportive living environments that enhance the student experience.

- Our rents include energy bills and Wi-Fi, offering excellent value for money.
- We provide a varied mix of accommodation types and prices, designed to suit different needs and budgets.
- Our Halls Life team ensures each undergraduate hall of residence has a dedicated live-in team committed to providing a positive and supportive residential experience.
- Halls Life organises events and social activities, offers drop-in sessions, and provides wellbeing support.
- Increasing numbers of returning students are choosing to stay in halls rather than move to the private sector – a testament to the quality, value, and convenience of our accommodation."

National Focus — Stories from Scotland

ANNABELLE MACKEY
NEWS WRITER

First Minister to Meet with UK Cabinet Office on War in Iran
Scottish First Minister John Swinney has requested a meeting with the UK Cabinet Office to discuss the entry of US military planes at Prestwick Airport. This request comes amid the recent conflict in Iran, initiated with strikes in the region by the US and Israel on 28 February, 2026. Swinney hopes to discuss the situation at-large and clarify whether US planes are being used for offensive operations in Iran, which BBC Scotland has confirmed from publicly available flight logs. Prior to his request, Swinney faced pressure from Scottish Greens on the issue, challenging him to ban the entry of US planes from Prestwick. Commenting on the issue, Swinney has made his stance on military intervention in Iran clear to media outlets, describing it as "incompatible with the international rules-based system."

Historic Glasgow Building to be Demolished Following Fire
On Sunday, 8 March, 2026, Forsyth House — a B-listed Victorian building next to Glasgow Central Station — was destroyed in a fire. In response, Glasgow Central Station temporarily closed operations. The fire spread from a nearby vape shop on Union Street, with no casualties reported. Since the incident, Forsyth House's infrastructure has continued to collapse and deteriorate, prompting calls from Glasgow City Council to demolish the building. "After a full and final assessment of the remaining structure, [we have] decided that demolition must happen in the interests of public safety," said a City Council representative. Glasgow City Council now has control over the building, though the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service remains at the scene to "take care of any hot spots," according to local authorities. First Minister John Swinney is in discussion with Glasgow City Council on the issue and plans to investigate vape shop regulation as a preventative measure for future incidents.

Bank App Glitch Causes Customers to View Other Users' Transactions
On 12 March, 2026, a glitch occurred on Lloyds Bank, Halifax, and Bank of Scotland's banking apps, allowing customers to view the transactions and account information of other users. Some customers have reported witnessing cross-account transactions totalling upwards of £1 million. Others have claimed to be able to view sensitive security details, with a Kirkcaldy resident reporting having viewed National Insurance numbers through Department for Work Pensions payments on the Bank of Scotland app. Following the incident, multiple users have expressed concern over Lloyds Banking Group's (the owner of Lloyds Bank, Halifax, and Bank of Scotland) ability to protect client details. Lloyds Banking Group has since issued an apology, adding that the issue has been resolved and is currently under investigation.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

registered to the University of St Andrews. Prosecutors stated that many of the communications took place during working hours. Police were also able to identify location data linked to McKay's Snapchat activity, which corresponded with both his workplace and his home address in Dundee.

Following the investigation, officers executed a search warrant at his home. "The court heard how more than 980 indecent images of children were uncovered from a mobile phone and a system unit," the prosecution stated as Press Reader wrote. In addition to the images, investigators also found dozens of videos with a combined running time of nearly two hours.

"Investigators later traced the activity to IP addresses registerd to the University of St Andrews."

McKay replied "no comment" to all questions asked during police interviews.

In an email sent to students on the CH4421 Chemistry Research Skills Laboratory module, the Chemistry Head of School acknowledged the case and its potential impact on students, while also confirming that the individual had assisted with teaching activities in the chemistry department during the previous academic semester of the 2025-26 academic year.

"For legal reasons, neither I nor the University can make any comment on this matter. All appropriate procedures are being followed, and the individual concerned has been suspended," the message stated. It added that "neither the School nor the University had any prior knowledge of this case."

The email also noted that the situation could be distressing for students and reminded them that support services were available through academic advisers and University wellbeing resources.

McKay pleaded guilty to the charges at an initial court hearing. Defence counsel Kevin Jarvis requested that mitigation be reserved until a social work report is prepared. Sheriff Alastair Carmichael deferred sentencing until April and placed McKay on the sex offenders register on an interim basis pending the outcome of the report.

In response to *The Saint's* request for comment, a University spokesperson reiterated that "the University cannot comment on an ongoing Court case."

More information on the issues raised in this article can be accessed by Rape Crisis Scotland on their website https://www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk/help-helpline/ or by calling the National Rape Crisis helpline on 08088 01 03 01. Advice and support from the university can be found by visiting https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/sexual-misconduct/.

"Neither the School nor the University had an prior knowledge of the case."

Local Schoolboy Competes as Team GB's Youngest Paralympian at Winter Games

TUANA KARDAS
NEWS WRITER

Sixteen-year-old local St Andrews schoolboy Dominic Allen is competing on one of sport's biggest stages, heading to Milan, Italy for the Winter Paralympic Games. He will compete in the Alpine Skiing category.

Allen becomes Britain's youngest Paralympian at this year's Games in Milano Cortina. A student at St Leonards School in St Andrews, the alpine skier is competing in both the slalom and giant slalom events after earning his place on the Paralympic GB team earlier this season.

The alpine skier was born without part of his left hand and competes in the LW6/8-2 standing classification, a category designed for athletes with upper-limb impairments who use one ski pole.

Despite his young age, Allen is among the nation's top para-alpine skiers. Having first learned how to ski at Glenshee, he has developed his skills and improved his results in recent years.

Speaking about his selection to *The Courier*, Allen explained that the opportunity still feels surreal. "I didn't think I was going to get to the Games in this Paralympic cycle," he said. He acknowledged that being the youngest athlete in the team brings a certain level of pressure. While representing Paralympics GB is a major milestone, he understood the importance of his role in the team as he is "representing the next generation of racers coming through," and emphasises that it is, in fact, not about the medals. Despite his nerves, Allen hopes his participation will inspire others with disabilities to get involved in winter sports.

His selection has already gathered excitement at St Leonards School, where staff and pupils gathered to celebrate his achievement ahead of his departure for Italy. Allen joked that the attention has made him something of a campus "celebrity," he told *The Courier*.

St Leonard's Headteacher Simon Brian praised Allen's achievement and the dedication that has brought him to where he is today: "We are beyond proud of Dominic's selection for the Paralympics GB team."

Independent Councillor Seeks Outdoor Pavement Charge for St Andrews Restaurants

AVA GOODMAN
NEWS WRITER

Independent Councillor for St Andrews Robin Lawson has petitioned Fife Council to begin charging St Andrews businesses a fee for using outdoor pavements for extended seating. Fife Council has rejected these petitions and instead voted to make these extensions permanent.

Councillor Lawson has advocated for the Council to enact a pavement-use fee since the extensions were first added as socially-distant infrastructure to many South Street establishments in 2020. The addition of the extensions replaced approximately 60 parking spaces, and Councillor Lawson argues that this loss of revenue for the Council has been consequential.

In his view, charging businesses that use the pavement for tables and chairs would make up for this lost revenue. Councillor Lawson cited Edinburgh City Council's pavement renting scheme as a successful example of generating revenue, as he said they make around £9 million a year from this fee.

John Mitchell, the Fife Council service manager, told *The Courier* that the proposed scheme would not actually produce an income for Fife Council. He said, "We're acutely aware of the economic position of businesses [...] a scheme that wasn't necessarily going to be raising a significant income relative to expenditure seemed not worthy of progress."

Fife Council's North East Planning Committee approved plans to make the South Street extensions permanent in a meeting on 9 April, 2025, following the plans' recommended approval in a 12 February, 2025 report. According to the minutes for the April 2025 meeting, Councillor Lawson left the meeting before the Committee voted to approve these extensions due to his expressed views against them.

At a 4 March, 2026 meeting of the North East Planning Committee, Councillor Lawson raised his objections to the lack of pavement regulation. According to *The Courier,* he told the committee, "I think St Andrews could be tidied up enormously if pavement regulation were to be brought in, rather than the Wild West which we have now."

Councillor Lawson continued, "It's community space and people who use it ought to be paying the community for it."

At the time of publication, Councillor Lawson has not responded to *The Saint's* request for comment.

University Announces St Andrews Prize for the Environment Finalists

MICAELA LOPEZ
News Writer

The University of St Andrews has announced the three finalists for the 2026 St Andrews Prize for the Environment — now in its 27th year, with a $95,000 USD award for the winning project.

This year's shortlist spans three continents and reflects a broad range of approaches to the environmental crisis, including urban wildlife corridors in Costa Rica, Indigenous-led education in Guyana, and climate-smart water infrastructure in Rwanda.

The Sloth Conservation Foundation's Connected Gardens project in Costa Rica, founded by Dr Rebecca Cliffe in 2017, addresses the fragmentation of forest habitats caused by rapid urban expansion. With Costa Rica's human population having doubled in 40 years, and urban development rising by 250%, the project creates networks of small biological corridors through cities, allowing arboreal species to move safely through landscapes increasingly dominated by roads and buildings.

In Guyana, the South Rupununi Conservation Society (SRCS) — one of the country's leading Indigenous-led conservation NGOs — has developed an environmental education curriculum blending scientific knowledge with traditional Indigenous understanding. The programme equips young people in communities responsible for safeguarding over 25% of the world's land mass, with the skills to address environmental challenges in their own backyards.

Rwanda's IRIBA Water Group, founded by Yvette Ishimwe in 2017, rounds out the shortlists with its Tap&Drink system, which uses solar-powered smart water ATMs to purify local water sources using energy-efficient technology. The innovation tackles two crises at once — the reliance on firewood and charcoal to boil unsafe water, and the proliferation of single-use plastic water sachets — while generating verified carbon credits to sustain its operations.

In 2026, the Prize marks a notable evolution in how submissions are assessed. This year, applicants were asked to include a proposal for a student placement — a new requirement that drew strong engagement from the judging panel. A University spokesperson said the judges "were enthused by the take-up of this new proposal and saw some very strong submissions."

Beyond the prize money itself, the University emphasised the longer-term value which the recognition brings. "The Prize has historically served to elevate the work of previous winners," the spokesperson said, "both by extending the impact of the conservation activities and by increasing visibility across the globe."

Established in 1998, the Prize was a pioneer in the now-crowded field of environmental awards. The University sees its continued stewardship of the Prize as part of a broader responsibility: "We maintain this leadership role as part of our responsibility towards sustainable stewardship of the planet, a role we take seriously."

Forthcoming, the three finalists will present their projects to judges and students at St Andrews on 17 March, 2026, during the institution's Sustainability Week from 16-22 March. The winner will be announced that evening.

The week will also feature a keynote from Professor Sir Jim Skea, Chair of the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), whose talk — *Climate Change: Down to Earth Solutions* — will open proceedings on 16 March. The event is open to the wider St Andrews community.

Since its founding, the Prize has awarded more than $2.7 million USD to organisations, innovators, and community groups worldwide.

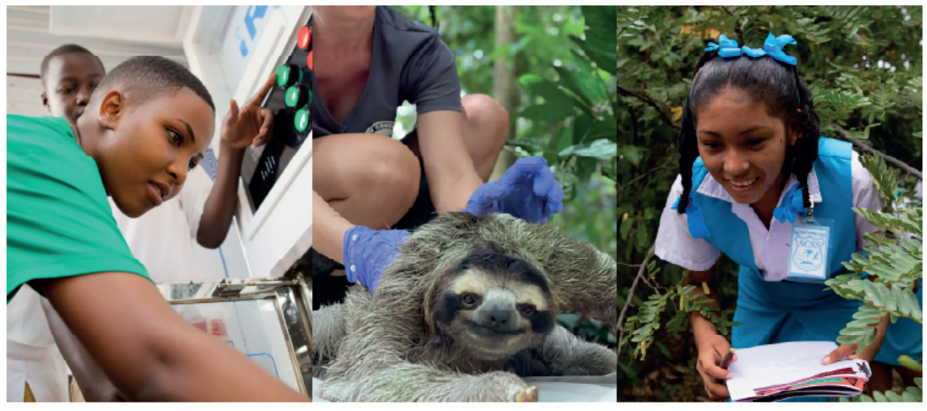


Photo Provided by the University of St Andrews

Student Golfer Competes at 2026 South African Open

PABLO BRIENS MONTERO
News Writer

A Master's student at the University of St Andrews, Judd Sundelson, has competed at the 2026 Investec South African Open Championship at Stellenbosch Golf Club.

His victory in the 26-hole final of the 2026 South African Amateur Championship at Pretoria Country Club secured him a place at the Investec South African Open Championship from 26 February to 1 March. This marks a strong start to the season for Sundelson, with two tournament wins, a runner-up finish, and a third-place result.

First held in 1903, the South African Open Championship is one of the oldest national opens in the world and part of the Dubai Ports World Tour. Sundelson played alongside world-renowned players such as Major Champion Ernie Els and tour player Patrick Reed.

Sundelson is a member of the GolfRSA National Squad and represented the GolfRSA UK Squad Tour for the past two years. Sundelson previously completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Nottingham before coming to the University of St Andrews. Sundelson is currently pursuing an MLitt in Middle East, Caucasus, and Central Asian Security Studies after recently finishing his MSc in Finance and Banking.

For the University's Saints Golf Performance programme, Sundelson's participation marks a major milestone. His recent victory at the South African Amateur Championship is described by the Athletic Union President, Amy Gordon, as one of "the most significant individual victories in the history of our programme."

His victory also highlights the standard of golf performance at the University of St Andrews; Gordon asserted that the current programme has "never been in a stronger position."

The St Andrews team won both the men's and women's R&A Student Tour Series Order of Merit in 2025, representing a significant moment in the programme's history. Other St Andrews golfers have produced great performances at the elite amateur level beyond university competitions, such as Ellie Monk's victory at the 2024 Scottish Women's Open or Caitlin Maurice's participation at the Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific Championship.

The Saints Golf Performance programme aims at ensuring academic and athletic success for students, producing strong performances across university golf. Gordon commended the support of partners of the golf programme, such as the R&A, PING, and the Rusacks Hotel, asserting that "achievements like these would not be possible without the continued support of partners."

The programme is also supported by the Union and the University to help students balance academic commitments with high-level competitions.

> "[This is] one of the most significant individual victories in the history of our programme."

Students and Faculty Take International Women's Day Dip

REESE ABROMAVAGE
News Writer

On Friday, 6 March, University students, staff, and members of the wider St Andrews community came together for a morning dip on East Sands in celebration of International Women's Day.

The 'dook,' which is now in its third year, was organised by Victoria Herd and Lindsey Alexander from the University's Communications, Marketing, and Public Affairs team, designed to both honour the day and to raise money for the selected charity, Fife Women's Aid.

> "All proceeds from the 'dook' will go to Fife Women's Aid, supporting their work with women and children affected by domestic abuse."

"Whether you'd prefer to run into the water and out again as fast as you can, or you're a dedicated wild swimmer who'd like to make the most of an early morning dip, everyone is welcome," Herd and Alexander advertised on the official Eventbrite page.



The event suggested a £10 donation for all participants, though attendees were invited to contribute whatever they were able to afford, with Herd and Alexander noting that, "All proceeds from the 'dook' will go to Fife Women's Aid, supporting their work with women and children affected by domestic abuse."

Fife Women's Aid, the event's charity of choice, is an organisation based in Glenrothes, which provides confidential support, advice, and emergency refuge accommodation for women, children, and young people experiencing domestic abuse.

According to Fife Council's most recent statistics, published in a report prepared by their Research and Insight Team, 4,903 incidents of domestic abuse were reported in Fife between 2022 and 2023.

While this number shows a 17% decrease from the 2021 to 2022 statistics, Fife Council says that this was still above the 2019 to 2020 figure, appearing to be "a legacy of the increase in incidents seen during the Covid pandemic," as stated in the report.

According to their website, Fife Women's Aid has managed to support 260 affected women and 130 affected children and young people in February 2026 alone, with the help of donations and volunteers across Fife.

While no official numbers for this year's event have been announced, the University reported that, in 2024, donations for the ocean dip totalled almost £800, all of which went to Fife Women's Aid.

That same year, following the 'dook,' The Vice-Principal of Education (Proctor), Professor Clare Peddie, reflected on the event, telling The Saint: "I must admit, there was a moment as I stood in the freezing wind waiting to go into what looked like a wholly uninviting sea that day, that I did briefly question why I was participating. But then, it only takes a few seconds of thought to reflect on the horrific situations in which women, and sometimes their children, find themselves with apparently no option but to continue to endure."

The Proctor added that Fife Women's Aid "offers both practical assistance and genuinely supportive advice to help women find a way to recover and to be safe."

Photo by Ada Newton

BT Outreach Apologises for Light-Related Traffic on A91

SARAYAH SHAW
News Writer

On Sunday 15 February, temporary lights on the A91, between St Andrews and Guardbridge caused hours of traffic delays.

The lights were set up by BT Openreach to allow them to reset a cover on the road, which has led to a week of repairs after the discovery of a collapsed chamber beneath the A91.

A technical malfunction caused the lights on both ends to get stuck on red for more than three hours, resulting in back-to-back standstill traffic for up to 40 minutes in both directions on Fife's second busiest road.

The broken lights caused so much frustration that some drivers disregarded them completely, pulling out of their lane into oncoming traffic and risking a head-on collision.

Fife council received over twenty calls from constituents complaining about the incident. Liberal Democrat Councillor Jane Ann Liston (St Andrews & Strathkinnes) criticized BT Openreach for poorly handling the situation. The councillor said she was first alerted to the issue around noon, and when she cycled out to look at the situation three hours later, the lights remained stuck on red. She told local papers how she found one man "using what looked like a hi-viz vest to control traffic," noting, "he didn't even have proper stop-go boards."

An Openreach spokesperson apologized for the delays, acknowledging the concerns raised about roadworks and temporary traffic management and stating that they are investigating further with their contractor. The spokesperson stated, "We're sorry for any inconvenience this may have caused road users."

The incident has stirred up debate over the needs for access to the rail system from within St Andrews to ease transportation efficiency.

Counillor Liston claimed that the traffic incident demonstrated the inadequacy of St Andrew's public transit link. The councillor is chair of the StARLink (St Andrews Rail Link) campaign, an organization established in 1989 in the hopes of reconnecting St Andrews to the rail system. According to their website, the town of St Andrews has around 17,000 residents, including students, making it one of the largest settlements in Scotland without a railway line.

St Andrews is also a popular tourist destination, recording seven million visitors in the year of 2024, according to BID (Business Improvement District).

According to Liston, "there would almost certainly be people who missed their trains today due to the buses being caught in the snarl-up." The councillor disagrees with claims that a better bus system to Leuchars Railway Station would be an effective improvement of St Andrew's railway and public transit accessibility maintaining that, after all, "incidents of this kind also hold up the buses."

> "There would [...] certainly be people who missed their trains today due to the buses being caught in the snarl-up."

HerCampus Has a Problem

Taking the temperature of one of St Andrews' vital publications

VIC PRIESTNER
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed is how I began my second year in our sodden town, determined not to spend another year waiting for my friends to stop vomiting in the Vic's toilets. I'd spent the entirety of first year seemingly hiking between DRA, McIntosh, and Sallies, and what time I had left was spent pretending to do readings and gossiping in the corner of Younger Hall. It was, in other words, a perfectly respectable St Andrews routine — but not one that suggested I would graduate with a first. If I wanted to justify my academic downfall to my future self, I needed something else to fill my time. As many students do, I drifted back toward hobbies I had quietly abandoned after arriving at university. Writing had always been one of them, and *HerCampus* seemed like an obvious place to start.

It promised a space where students could experiment with ideas, try their hand at journalism and — crucially — write about whatever they found interesting. For a long time, that promise more or less held.

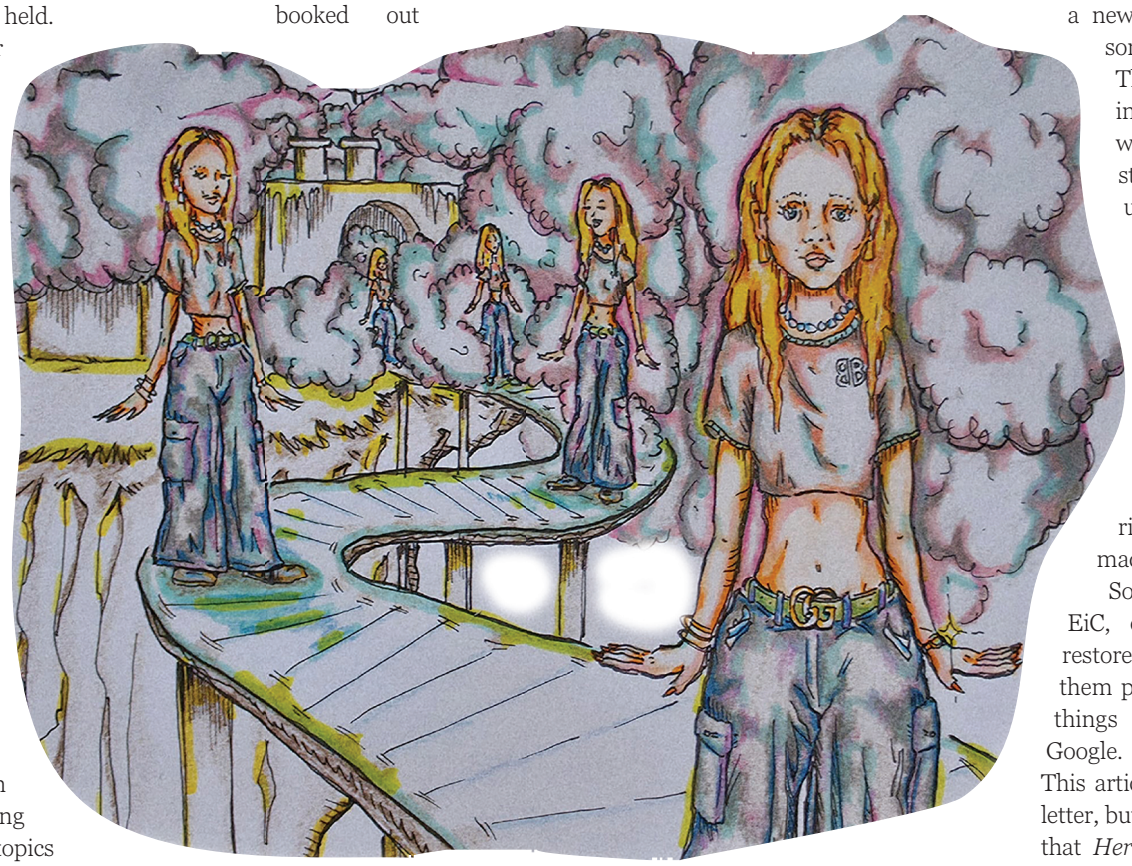
I have written for *HerCampus* for over two years now, through two different chapters and four editors-in-chief. And, despite ever-changing management, one thing has remained clear: My articles usually were on the higher end of the reader count spectrum. For better? Mostly. For worse? Once or twice.

Thus, I have some stock in saying that HerCampus has changed for the worse. What used to be St Andrews' journalistic stepping stone has become the publication I can do nothing but ask people to avoid.

When I was first accepted into *HerCampus*, the writing team consisted of about twenty women. We'd take up one of the tutorial rooms in St Mary's, pretending to know everything about each other when we were mostly there to show face and tick that all-important attendance sheet. We'd brainstorm in groups of supposed strangers, um-ing and ah-ing over what might be good topics to cover. And, that evening, we'd go home, enter our expected two pitches for that week, and wait to see who got the green light.

It was, admittedly, a fallible system. Despite *HerCampus* basically being literary Pinterest or *Cosmopolitan*'s youngest cousin, some writers were 'picked' to write at a higher rate than others. This, naturally, led to complaints. Writers who wrote the fourth 'Why everyone dresses up for lectures in St Andrews,' or fourteenth 'I have imposter syndrome, and you do, too,' article of the week were, unsurprisingly, never really picked. Despite a clear desire to regurgitate the same concepts as literally every other publication on campus, said campus would rather not be subject to reading it. And so, the editor would look elsewhere.

But on my return from my year away, things had dramatically changed. Twenty writers had been replaced by sixty, and gone was the literary freedom to pitch what you fancied that week — now, you had to write for one of five sections: life, style, culture, career, or wellness. Each writer was assigned roughly two weeks across the semester and essentially told what to write and how to write it. Want a change from the assigned homework? There are two slots a week for arbitrary pitches, which are usually booked out a week in advance. Evidently, literary freedom is harder to access than Masayoshi Takanaka tickets.



If you're lucky, you get assigned to the culture section — where you can really let loose. I'm talking, 'How to find your favourite workout,' 'Where to find the viral necklace that's all over your fyp,' and 'Romanticising St Andrews.' Riveting stuff; although, I probably shouldn't be harsh. In assuring literary freedom, writers who opt to write things like that should be given the chance just as much as any other. But telling good writers to write what Google Gemini or a reverse image search would answer in 30 seconds just so thirteen fourteen-year-old girls click on it during their English class in Tennessee is everything that journalism probably shouldn't be.

The introduction of RankMath earlier this year confirmed many of my suspicions about the direction *HerCampus* is taking. RankMath is a WordPress tool that scores articles out of 100 based on search engine optimisation. To improve that score, writers must incorporate 'focus keywords' — trending terms that people might type into Google. The logic is that articles will appear higher in search results if they contain enough searchable language. I've had editors tell me to write in subheadings and sprinkle in images (that always serve this misogynistic ideal of female journalism); they've told me to hyperlink the word "valid" when I was saying that someone thought their belief to be a "valid" one, and worst of all, I've had an editor (without asking, I may add) change all of my spellings to American-English despite me being pretty sure we're currently in Scotland.

In the few times I've attended *HerCampus* events over the years, patterns emerge within the management of the writing team. I've routinely witnessed them proudly gossiping in a corner over writers they don't like, or articles they thought were boring — a problem that would be solved if they chose better pitches and encouraged writers to write liberally. The writers, simply, are not at fault. It's the editorial leadership who sidle up to the blonde American social members and clearly ignore those who don't fit what they see in the mirror, who are doing nothing but hurting the chapter that many great women have built for them.

Simply put, *HerCampus*'s writing team has become too big for its boots. It is not a news publication, nor, unfortunately, something many people take seriously. Thus, it's wildly inappropriate, for instance, to publicly threaten a writer who had the flu with loss of good-standing — simply because of their understandably low output that day.

HerCampus once functioned as the trial run — a place where students experimented with ideas before moving on to more formal journalism. If it continues prioritising algorithms, rigid content structures, and managerial authority over creativity, it risks losing the very qualities that made it worthwhile in the first place.

So, for whoever becomes the next EiC, consider this a gentle request: restore some freedom to the writers. Let them pitch strange ideas. Let them write things that may not perform well on Google. Let the publication breathe again. This article may be in part my resignation letter, but it is also a long-overdue reminder that *HerCampus* can and will be a great space for women who build each other up instead of putting us down. After all, great writers deserve a great platform.

ILLUSTRATION BY VERONIKA SULLIVAN

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

Devil's Advocate

Does St Andrews Deserve Its Academic Standing?



GEORGES TOULOUSE

78% YES

MILLY SMITH

NO 22%



We can all agree that St Andrews is not exactly Oxford or Cambridge. We're much smaller, slightly colder, do not have one-on-one tutorials, and are not exactly producing the same quantity of research. Ensues a refrain which one often hears in St Andrews and elsewhere: 'How on Earth is St Andrews competing with Oxford and Cambridge in national rankings?'

"I would argue one comes out a better-rounded individual than the Oxbridge types."

Here's what I feel inclined to argue: academic prestige should not be defined by the metrics of yesterday, especially not in a world where university schooling's importance is rapidly shifting.

Before addressing our University's merits compared to those of other British institutions, I think it's useful to compare it to other universities worldwide. St Andrews is over 600 years old — thrashing Harvard by 220 years — and has managed to maintain itself as a globally relevant institution without the laughably large endowments, luxurious campuses, research grants, and — I know this firsthand — fresh raw milk at breakfast. Without charging 100,000 a year for cups of milk and a diploma, and given the university funding model in the United Kingdom, St Andrews is doing remarkably well for a little university lost on the coast of Fife.

Domestically, Oxford and Cambridge still reap the benefits from their glorious past as beacons of British taste and culture, with the plethora of prime ministers who once sat on their benches, their beautiful campuses, in their funny little outfits. But gone are the days when Oxford and Cambridge ruled as the pearls of education in the United Kingdom — there are other ways of doing things nowadays. Do you *need* one-on-one tutoring to learn things? Do you *need* pompously decorated colleges to study efficiently? Is having the Prince and Princess of Wales as alumni not *at least* as good as claiming Margaret Thatcher as one of your own?

Maybe we aren't necessarily the most rigorous academic institution — I must say, from experience, one does end up with much free time. Maybe our professors aren't, you know, Hillary Clinton or whatever, but we still get to chat to leaders in their fields, who can open our minds to the world.

In this day and age, where the value of a university degree is once again questionable, maybe academic prestige should come from a different source than the past. We might not have all the fluff, all the illustrious alumni, but St Andrews gives us the ability to study what we want, to change our minds, to mess up a few times along the way. I would argue one comes out a better-rounded individual than the Oxbridge types who got in for Modern Languages just to have a diploma from there. We get to be ourselves, to read what we want, to not be crushed by excessive testing, to live a life as well as study. That ought to be the source of academic prestige in this world: creating people who don't want to shoot themselves and have actually learned something, not only about their subject of study, but also about life in their university years.



Readers, let me ask you a candid question: was this university your first choice? Because I have a sneaky suspicion that many of you, as little boys and girls, grew up dreaming of punting, golden cloisters, gowned dinners in wood-panelled halls, and *real* academic prestige. Yet, after a rejection email and a little cry, we all settled on this one instead. Rather embarrassingly, I can even recall a night in Fresher's week when, clearly in a state of squash and vodka-induced delirium, we went around the table sharing anecdotes from our Oxbridge interviews, like a weird, slightly pathetic version of Never Have I Ever.

Now, I don't mean to exclude the 20% of our student body that have the misfortune of hailing from across the pond. I'm sure you have had your own share of Ivy League rejection, as I cannot otherwise understand why you'd choose to relocate from California to Fife. However, by the time I'd matriculated, St Andrews managed to bag the top spot in *The Times'* Good University Guide 2022, and year-after-year the accolades just kept coming. As of 2026, *The Guardian* puts us at number two, sandwiched between Oxford and Cambridge. People spoke of a change to the status quo, a crack in the great Oxbridge duopoly. I thought perhaps I would no longer be a disappointment to my Oxbridge-graduate parents (no luck on that front, unfortunately).

Yet, is this league table success deserved, you ask? Well, when I sit in a tutorial which is silent enough that we can hear a car's indicator two streets away, I sometimes struggle to consider myself amongst the brightest minds of our generation. How could we possibly ever survive one-on-one supervisions when most people can't even seem to locate the module reading list? For most, their tenure at university seems to require less academic exertion than one Maths GCSE class.

"For most, their tenure at university seems to require less academic exertion than one Maths GCSE class."

The next issue is that, at this university, we only have to submit about four essays a semester. Students describe the 'generational lock-in,' fuelled by copious amounts of Red Bull and self-hatred, that it takes to complete one 1500-word coursework essay. Now, dear friends, imagine a university where an assignment was due weekly! The horror! The venerable institution of Aikman's Bar and Bistro might be forced to close its doors if such a thing were to happen; its regular patrons would have to relocate their nightly routines to the Main Library, swapping Jubel for JSTOR. They'd all be stabbing themselves in the head with a biro, hoping to reawaken all the brain neurons damaged from a four-year long episode of binge-drinking.

Yet, we need not lament our situation. The lucky few of us who haven't actually managed to acquire pint-induced brain damage finish our time here with a pat on the head from Sally Mapstone and a piece of paper proclaiming that we've received a degree from an academically prestigious institution. What more could you want? Apart from maybe a river and some punting.

ILLUSTRATION BY MAYA MASON

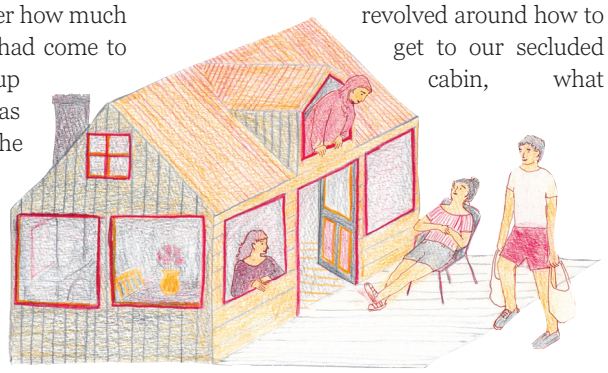
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What to Bring on Holiday

What I learned over reading week

ALEIA BHALLA
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Last week I found myself in the Cairngorms in a cabin with nine friends. We finally got to live out our first-year uni trip dreams and have a getaway to the middle-of-nowhere for a three-day holiday. This particular vacation, for me, came at a singularly bad time – midterms, last-minute travelling, and a general sense of "no matter how much I plan it all goes wrong"-ness had come to haunt me in the days leading up to Spring Vacation Week. But as we must all realise by now, the most unexpected gifts come at the most necessary moments, and this trip was undoubtedly my most favourite gift.



I should start by saying that if you take anything from this, it should be that you absolutely must do everything in your power to go on vacation in university. I cannot imagine the number of times I had to use my former-debate-kid voice to convince and eventually guilt-trip my friends into believing that this was indeed a non-negotiable life experience – it was only a humble journey to the Highlands, after all. The Airbnb was reasonably priced and split between ten of us, the travel was free (god-bless you, YoungScot), and we weren't going to be burdened by the world's most expensive Tesco anymore – what could go wrong?

Being the perfectionist Type-A organiser that I am, I had everything ready from the bus schedule to the grocery list. But as is typical of anything planned in six days, most of the discussions prior to break revolved around how to get to our secluded cabin, what necessities to bring, and who owed who money ... essentially we were sure of every detail, except for the most important part – what were we going to do once we were there?

During the hour wait between five of us arriving by car and that of the rest of the group, who valiantly took the bus, I spent most of my time daydreaming about how much fun we were about to have. I flooded my thoughts with pre-teen ideas of how we would all bond — cooking late at night, watching movies, and getting way too riled up over stupid boardgames. Much of these childish dreams did come true, and since returning from Kingussie I have found myself much too nostalgic about the occurrences of last week. In this time I have also concluded that our three-day party was the perfect first-year uni trip. As the benevolent peer and planner that I am, here is a step-by-step guide of what I think made our getaway so reminisce-able.

1. Find a friend with a car: Stake out the Sports Centre car park, keep an eye out for car keys on lanyards and befriend a generous someone who drives around town in their scrappy blue Ford Fiesta – just do what you have to do.

2. BUY EGGS: In our 72 hours in the woods, our unassuming group of ten went through one hundred eggs – you in your adventures quickly learn that eggs, as well as being the only things we can cook consistently well, also go with everything from breakfast, to steak, to midnight hotpot.

3. In any long friendship there will be something you've been avoiding that you need to talk about with someone. Words that hurt and feelings you think you can't name (both good and bad) – name them. Work through them. Address them.

4. In person-ify your favourite online games: Among Us with imposters who pinch you? Yes please! Honestly, just play anything but Cranium, I promise you the fights about whether someone's eyes are closed while they draw aren't worth it in the end.

5. Come to terms with the fact that you will turn nocturnal ... embrace it. Still, don't forget to see the sun when you can.

6. Be vulnerable. Trust your friends. Share.

7. The digital camera becomes public property – take photos of everything. The number of moments we have remembered because of a singular Canon and one of our sleep-deprived artistic visions is unreasonable.

7a. Side note: if you are the friend with the digital camera, bring a battery and use your judgement to filter out the bad photos ...

8. Lastly, perhaps most importantly, tell your friends you love them. Drunk or sober, I promise most of them need to hear it more than you think.

ILLUSTRATION BY RAMONA KIRKHAM

My Hungover Superpower

After a night out comes a morning of productivity

SAFFRON ROWELL
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Buddhist philosophy outlines the concept of the 'monkey mind.' We are all susceptible to this: monkey mind represents a state of restlessness, distraction, uncontrolled thought. Our discursive mind is like a chattering monkey. Without care or guidance it will swing from tree to tree, pulling us from thought to thought — distracting us from the present moment.

This is a concept I like to play with to steady my thoughts, and it is one which I feel is especially relevant as someone who has ADHD. My brain often feels like a chattering monkey, as if the beat of my thoughts is set to the clamour of thousands of tap shoes in a school gym, wild and loud and rhythmic, but out of my control. There is a way to move yourself to the rhythm which is created — I would never change this part of my brain. It is almost a point of pride for me that I am not, and have never been on, medication. The closest I have been to an orderly monkey, to a naturally linear line of thought, is feeling hungover.

The day after a couple of drinks, I will reach a whole new level of productivity. It's as if I become a different person. The tap shoes stop clicking, the skies calm and the mountains in front of me flatten into one straight path. I'm by no means more motivated, it's more that it only takes me two minutes to make my coffee, to wash my face, to pick an outfit. I just understand, for the first time again, what to do and exactly how to do it.

Time will pass slower for me as well. In every minute, I gain extra seconds, in every hour, extra minutes. It's quite disconcerting actually, how time will pass in an effective and linear manner. It ceases to jump about, to float, to speed up and slow down at whim. The hands of the clock pass each other in exact intervals, quiet for the first time, without the roundabouts and fluctuations which a typical distraction could provide.



There are limits to this. Every superhero has his kryptonite, and every monkey his banana. I can never do any creative work — I couldn't write this hungover, for example. Admin on the other hand? I own admin. Similarly, I do *feel* hangovers. The hungover-superpower is less of a saving grace and more of a secret bonus. If I'm going to throw up, then I'm going to throw up. If I'm sleep deprived, however, it will only strengthen the monkey's serenity, only add to the flatness of the road.

In my extensive, non-existent knowledge of neuroscience, I have come up with some hypotheses. ADHD is caused by a lack of baseline dopamine in one's system; dopamine deficiency in reward pathways leads to symptoms which typify ADHD, such as poor focus, impulsivity, and fluctuating motivation. This makes it difficult to feel satisfied or motivated by long term goals, leading individuals to seek immediate, high-stimulation outcomes.

I like to think that hungover, I still have a lingering level of dopamine punching about in my system from the night before. If anything could do it, the combined alcohol sugar content of five vodka cranberries will. As a reward for having a good time, I get to experience life in its easiest mode, as it apparently is set out for everyone else.

As a general rule, if I wake up as I normally would, my powers will only increase. Past twelve, and I am pretty much condemned to sloth. Before that though, my hangover acts as a protector, shuttering the monkey off from the fog of indecision.

This isn't *directly* an article advocating for you to get hungover. What sort of newspaper would publish that? If you do have ADHD though, and you happen to be hungover ... get back to me. For the advancement of science.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANA BROCKMANN ALDASORO

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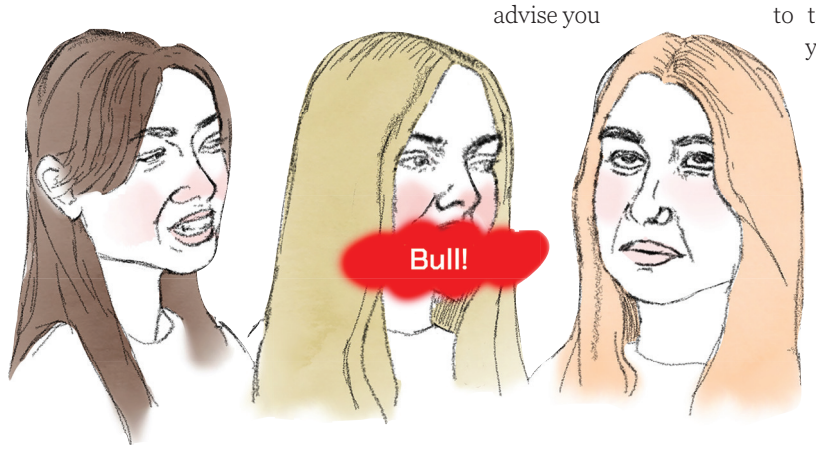
Stop Tutorial Bulls**tters

They can't keep getting away with this

POPPIENA HORSINGTON
VIEWPOINT WRITER

At a glance, higher education seems most idyllic when the sun is shining and someone in the group chat has texted 'pub?' However, there are moments in the nitty gritty of university life that grant a similar level of joy, if you like what you do. When everyone in the tutorial is on the same page and making good contributions, I must nerdily confess that I get excited. But what is one to do when the seminar flow state is interrupted by arrogance and incompetence? Today I will be discussing the figure of the classic bullsh*tter. Reader, it behooves me not to use such language, and I promise I shall only use it twice. Yet, you must also believe that this term is the truest and most appropriate to describe that twisted mind which goes out of their way to speak up in a seminar when it is immediately clear that they have no idea what they are talking about.

Let's set the scene. Random seminar. Maybe you've done the reading and you're feeling ready to speak up; maybe you haven't done the reading and are planning on being silent. Both are good, rational options. Yet, there is some sicko amongst us who completely defies natural order by not doing the reading while also feeling ready to speak up. Do they enjoy the thrill of looking dumb? Do they get off on ruining everyone else's seminar experience? What could inspire someone to voluntarily raise their hand and speak nonsense beyond human comprehension? I realise that in this article I am asking more questions than ever before, but this is only because I stand in complete confusion as to why someone would go out of their way to establish themselves as an idiot.



I am not referring to people who get called on out of the blue and answer as best they can. I am not referring to people who are honest about not doing the work and go from there. I am instead referring to the people who attempt to play off their ignorance with the most infuriating false bravado. This buffoon speaks their Simlish and then smiles confidently at the room, as if we didn't all just witness that verbal diarrhoea. And if you read this article and scoff, thinking 'I mean, I bullshit all the time and no one can tell,' I advise you to take off your clown makeup and face the truth. You are bad at pretending to know things; we just don't have the heart to tell you. And this cowardice changes today. Today, I endeavour to expose this festering villainy to the world.

However, this also raises an interesting consideration regarding those who've done the work. Do you not have a responsibility to face this devil head-on? When they go on their ballad of balderdash, you should retort with a tune of truth. You worked hard to get here and have consistently continued that work — so be proud of yourself. This ignoramus may strut about unweighed by basic human feelings of shame and embarrassment, so why do you not grant yourself the same when you have the knowledge to back it up?

If you haven't realised already, I am not a writer for the nonchalant. I stand with the passionate and will continue to do so until I perish. Thus, my question stands: if you can't be honest about your ignorance at a place where the goal is to gain knowledge, then what do you plan on doing? If Timothée Chalamet could confess, 'I know nothing, Oliver,' to a cannibal, then you should have no problem telling your tutor that you do not know the answer to their question. Do the right thing and shut up, for our sake as well as your own. I cannot overstate how dumb you make yourself look in this misguided pursuit to appear smart.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE O'SULLIVAN

On Meditative Self-Care

What I think about when I pluck my eyebrows

MEGAN TITHERIDGE-STARK
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Like most childhood overachievers, I have an acute case of anxious perfectionism. I've often been told to try grounding exercises. Name five things you can see, four you can hear, three you can touch, two you can smell, and one you can taste. Notice your surroundings. List what you're grateful for. Do box breathing. But sitting there, simply taking stock of the world, envelops me in my own helplessness. The world is overwhelming. Forcing me to passively focus on it only overwhelms me more. When typical advice makes you feel worse, it can seem like there's no helping you. Your problems are unsolvable, outside the scope of modern medicine and conventional wisdom. You are broken. Or maybe... you just need to get a little unconventional.

Meditate. Have a bath. Do a cold plunge. Every day, we are inundated with self-care tips and tricks. Friends, family, and influencers think they know what's best for us. Take up running. Eat clean. Talk to someone. We are told how to keep our minds and bodies healthy. Again and again, I've been told the same things. My entire life has felt like the target of a clandestine operation to make me take up mindfulness. And frankly, I am starting to get sick of run-of-the-mill brochure advice. It's reductively simple, clinically apathetic, and — worst of all — entirely unreasonable.





They're right, of course, all those well-meaning mouthpieces telling you how to feel better. Their advice *does* work. Well ... sort of. If you're looking for a way to cope with life's natural stresses, then yes, it works. But what about the days that feel like the plug's been pulled out of your heart, and every drop of life has been drained out of your body? Or the days when happiness feels like an eternal impossibility? When going outside seems as achievable as getting a booth in the library, conventional advice fails.

One day, sick of my own forlornness, I decided to stop listening to other people. Clearly, their nuggets of wisdom weren't helping me. I had no choice but to get slightly wacky with my coping mechanisms. It's strange, but I can't deny that it works. When I'm in that pit of despair, I turn to the only thing that actually calms my anxiety-induced stomach aches: plucking my eyebrows. All my concentration focuses on a single hair. The bright light of my lamp illuminates it just so. The silence of my room. The small pinch of pain as it dislodges. And what do I think about, I hear you ask? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

I never understood *how* to meditate. I thought I must be genetically predisposed to have a busy mind. Constantly rushing through thoughts, reliving every conversation, making endless to-do lists. My attempts at meditation made me feel worse. It gave every bad thought my undivided attention, while I desperately tried to 'clear the mind.' Doing my eyebrows, working with my hands, channeling all my energy into a simple, physical activity, completely silences my thoughts. It's meditation for beginners, a wave of calm for those struggling to get out of bed. It's a low-stakes act of self-care that requires no thought and little commitment. Of course, I'm biased. I say whip out those tweezers! But you could shave, brush your hair, clip your nails, anything really. I think it works because these kinds of tasks require your full attention. You are quite literally absorbed in caring for yourself. So much so that anxious thoughts can't slip their way in; self-care is the shield that protects our minds from themselves.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANA BROCKMANN ALDASORO

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Throw Yourself in the Deep End

What canoeing taught me about living

SOPHIE RAE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

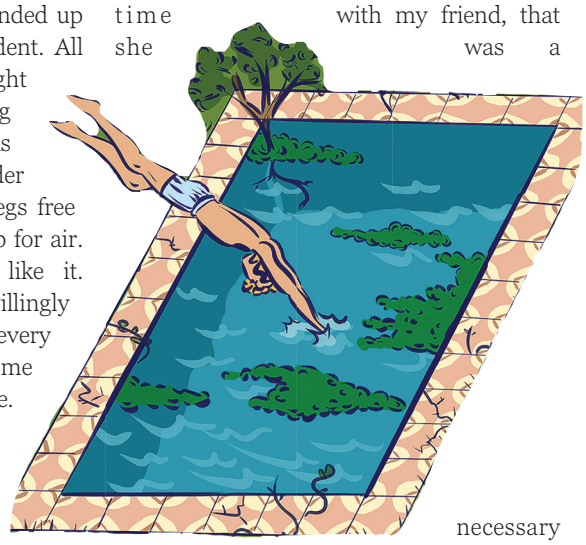
The first time I capsized, I panicked. It's an odd thing to do: willingly throwing yourself overboard. It was a mandatory requirement before I could properly join the canoe club here, as everyone has to complete a spraydeck test in the pool. I had ended up in that pool session quite by accident. All it took was one Wednesday night social where I agreed to tag along with a friend, and then there I was one week later: upside down, under the water, scrambling to get my legs free from the kayak so I might swim up for air.

I had never done anything like it.

Time pauses underwater. To willingly hold myself under went against every survival instinct screaming at me to get my head above the surface.

One of the most cliché pieces of advice we all receive is to put yourself outside of your comfort zone. Going outside your comfort zone is easy; what no one talks about is how difficult it is to stay there.

As something of a perfectionist, being bad at something embarrasses me, especially when I'm surrounded by people who have had years of practice. It's unreasonable, sure, but the feeling is real nonetheless. Adding on top of that the matter of knowing only one person, and partaking in a sport where if you majorly screw up, you could properly hurt yourself, I was almost miserable — despite repeatedly showing up of my own volition. At the time, I thought I did it to spend time with my friend, that she was a necessary crutch on which I had to lean. And anyway, I'd bought the membership already and I didn't plan on wasting that money. That mentality might have initially kept me there, but it turned into something else. Everyone else went because they could do it, and they all seemed to know each other really well, so what business did I have being there?



A year and a half on, I've realised I didn't need an excuse. As much as my friend supported me, I went because I wanted to prove to myself that I could do it. I wanted to be good; I wanted to get better. Somewhere in between, I began to enjoy it. It sounds silly to say, it would be stupid to do something I didn't enjoy, but it's true.

Interestingly enough, my fear of the sport to begin with — the endless 'what-ifs' — is what made me stick around. The level of trust you place into someone to save you when you cannot save yourself forms firm friendships. One kayak rescue is literally called the 'Hand of God.' Having faith that someone will be there to help you, whether in a pool or out on a river, is an incredibly unique bond. The close-knit nature of the sport can be intimidating from the outside, but once you show up and stick around, the reward of finally getting that skill, of being part of a team, of having a support system through the highs and the lows is unbeatable.

It's improved me on an internal level, making me slightly more okay with imperfection, but it has had a physical impact too. Not only do I feel stronger, but I get to travel around Scotland, my home country, breaking the bubble of St Andrews when I most need it. Being outdoors — not quite touching grass, as we're on the water, but close enough to it — is the best cure. Nothing beats the serenity of a loch on a sunny day, or the adrenaline rush from going down a rapid.

> "I wanted to be good; I wanted to get better...I began to enjoy it"

I think of capsizing now and I still feel panic, but I also feel calm. Underneath the surface, there is nothing else going on in my mind. Only the water around me and the comfort that, no matter what happens, I'll get back up. So do the hard thing, and stick with it — you'll be better off, even if it doesn't feel like it for a while. Or, in the words of STAUCC: "get wet, get keen."

ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH BEGGEROW

A Rector-to-Be's Manifesto

Let's make St Andrews great again

AMELIA MACKENZIE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Back in January, after a controversy provoking students and the university's governing body, Rector Stella Maris was removed from her position as President of the University Court. Many, therefore, are looking to October, when we will be presented with an array of candidates for our next Rector, all no doubt promising to represent our interests and share the progressive views of our liberal student body — yes, all three of them.

However, after the Maris debacle, can we really know that the succeeding Rector will fulfil their role as our representative and tackle our true student concerns? And, if not, who will? Well, knowing nothing of the future candidates, and my only achievement since winning the race to the egg being obtaining my school pen license, I'm frankly not qualified to provide an answer. Nevertheless, what I do know is that if you want something done properly, do it yourself. So, to ensure that the next rector genuinely benefits St Andrews students, allow me to present my manifesto for my reign of terror to 'Make St Andrews Great Again.'

I'll start with the most pressing issue first: the financial crisis. For years, we've been plagued with monetary concerns, and nobody has found a solution. This is because nobody has bothered to ask me. Looking around, we have the largest, most profitable asset just waiting to be exploited: the foolish. Every other night, there are students mad enough to go to The Vic, so much so that it remarkably remains running. Furthermore, there is a whole community who pay fortunes to attend fashion shows that they weren't considered attractive enough to appear in, and yet somehow still consider this fun. Above all, the town is crawling with those foolish enough to believe we're remotely interested in the Edinburgh private school they went to, and even more foolish to think we can't hear their silly accent. If these people are daft enough to exist in this way, surely they won't notice if some of their finances were, say, diverted to better causes.

With finances fixed, I would then revitalise our academic environment, and, fear not, my plans are extensive. I will make the university campus a place for all to prosper, starting by removing all hindrances to academic focus and comfort. I will deport anyone too enthusiastic in lectures on a Thursday morning (or post-Wednesday night, as it would officially be called). I will have the cougher, the mouth breather, and the cruncher sitting next to you in the library taken out and shot. I will personally maim the slow walkers on North Street who don't understand the concept of single file. I will have those in the gym taking up all the treadmills burned at the stake before the miles of natural coastlines that they so crudely rejected. I will cleanse the town of all anti-social behaviour, and it will be a better place.

I shall also attack — sorry, improve — the physical town, bringing me onto the housing crisis: yes, the houses are ugly. One of the glorious features of St Andrews is its historic architecture, and it's devastating to see beautiful buildings engulfed by acres of grey pebble-dashed monstrosities. I would therefore create an aesthetic plan to restore the town to its former glory, starting by taking a bulldozer to Andrew Melville Hall. Alterations underway, I'd then target more housing that makes you lament how it's a bad day to have eyes, namely Gannochy and the architectural skid mark that is Largo Road. "But what about the rental crisis?" I hear you cry. Well, looking at my aforementioned student proscription list, this should no longer be a problem. If anything, there will be too much housing.

> "I shall also attack — sorry, improve — the physical town."

So, with such infallible solutions to finance, housing, and the academic environment, vote for me for your next Rector: a woman with a vision, an understanding of the real issues facing St Andrews students, and a belief that 'things can only get better' ...

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

Sinners Need Not Apply

The myth of the perfect victim, and how it hurts activism

ALEX MCQUIBBAN
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Everyone is created equal, deserving of equal rights and moral consideration. You, dear reader, believe that ... right? Indeed, this seems a basic tenet of modern ethics; rejecting it would signal moral failure. But, in truth, we reject it all the time. In fact, there exists a constant clash between our ideal morals and idealised image of who actually deserves moral consideration.

Consider our conception of the ideal victim: typically very young or old, physically weak, and completely blameless. Indeed, when the media wishes to paint a tragedy as especially horrific, it focuses on the casualties which best represent this ideal stereotype, unearthing from the rubble the names of newborns, the elderly, anyone it deems defenceless and entirely without blame. This stereotype is, then, further narrowed by cultural prejudices. In the West, the ideal victim is white, female, and blonde. They 'had many friends,' 'were a kind person,' and 'achieved many great things.'. If they died young, 'they had their whole life ahead of them.' If they were the victim of sexual assault, 'they wore modest clothing.' If they were the victim of theft, they didn't flaunt their possessions.

The less a victim matches these preconceptions, the less likely they are to be memorialised sympathetically. Their victim-status may even be dropped altogether. Take George Floyd, for example. Despite being murdered in broad daylight by police, commentators were quick to emphasise that he had been arrested in connection with using counterfeit bills and had prior criminal convictions and a history of drug use. Of course, these extraneous factors should matter little to our moral consideration. Derek Chauvin, his murderer, should not have kneeled on his neck, let alone for that long, and Floyd had done nothing which should have condemned him to death. Alas, George Floyd was a Black man. And Black men, let alone those whose conduct we deem 'objectionable,' do not get to be victims — not perfect victims at least. This same principle is illustrated each time a victim of sexual assault is discredited because, as a 'strong man,' they 'couldn't possibly have been assaulted' or because, by acting a certain way, they were 'asking for it.'

Of course, dear reader, you're 'woke' and already wise to the paradox of perfect victimhood ... or are you? Be honest. When conveying the calamity of a tragedy to friends or family, you focus largely on the women and children; when you find out a particular victim has done something which scores them lower on your own perfect victim checklist, you cringe. But, if you seriously don't think you're guilty of this hypocrisy at all, then might I present to you the last hurdle, the one at which even the wokest among us fail: resistance fighters.

Whether in the North of Ireland or in Palestine, we are quick to single out resistors not as victims of the oppressive situation they are actively fighting against, but as participants in the chaos, undeserving of any particularly heartfelt moral consideration. Granted, many resistance groups may have committed heinous injustices themselves. But in contexts of oppression, there is often little choice in who resistors can be affiliated with, especially when oppressors have conspired to leave only those more 'unsavoury' organisations as viable options for active resistance. In any case, resistance, even violent resistance, is not just natural, it is oftentimes necessary — not just deeply human but truly heroic. And so, especially against the backdrop of those who have committed unjustifiable crimes — whether in the name of resistance or not — we should be all the more sympathetic to those whose chief 'crimes' are simply the act of resistance itself.

Still, in the eyes of many, even the Gazan child who throws a rock at an Israeli tank is no longer a perfect victim — let alone the teenager who puts a bullet in between the eyes of an invading IDF commander. And yet, based on those descriptions alone, I see no reason why both shouldn't deserve our deepest sympathy. In light of this, I implore you, dear reader, to right this injustice, to 'lower' your standards for victimhood so that it includes the martyr whose resistance is the only hope of ending the tragedies which affect even our most perfect of victims, so that the martyr's name can be just as quickly and ceremoniously unearthed from the rubble, so that his life no longer goes unmourned.

War as Short Form Content

Is there something wrong with our current news landscape?

STELLA PAK-GUÉNETTE
VIEWPOINT WRITER

When news of the war in the Gulf broke, I saw it on Instagram. A video popped up on my feed; it was filmed vertically, with dramatic music and a voiceover explaining what had happened. About just about thirty seconds later, it was over.

My first instinct (which I find both uncomfortable and a little embarrassing) was to keep scrolling like I always do on the app. But I stopped for a moment because it felt so strange that after watching a video about a war, my reaction was to treat it like any other post.

Only a few minutes earlier, my feed had been full of reading week posts. But then suddenly, those posts had been replaced by updates about a major conflict, though nothing about the format changed. Instagram presented both in the same way: short videos with background music, with the option to swipe away in one tap. The scale of the event flattened; the global significance appeared in the same stream and same form as everyday posts.

Why have we become so comfortable consuming global events as if they're highlight reels? Whether we admit it or not, this is how many of us first hear about major world events. Platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube Shorts have become one of the main ways people encounter news, myself included. In some ways, it makes a lot of sense. These platforms are fast, engaging, and effortless to consume, with algorithms that reward whatever keeps people watching — and more importantly, scrolling. They also don't come with a hefty price tag that a news subscription entails.

Because this environment makes it so easy to consume news, everything starts to blend into the rest of the feed: flashy, easily digestible, compressed stories. The problem isn't that people get their news from social media. The issue is that short-form platforms push this compression much further than it should go, and we hardly notice. As clips get shorter, the space for nuance shrinks with them, and complexity becomes the first casualty. Geopolitical events that have developed over decades are condensed into quick explanations designed to hold attention for just long enough before the next video appears.

At an international university, conversations about what's going on in the world happen regularly. Students bring different perspectives and personal experiences into chats about politics and conflict, which makes those conversations richer and more nuanced. But I've started to notice how often they begin (and sometimes end) with a clip someone saw online.

It seems that a single video becomes the starting point for an opinion, which is okay, until the 30-second explanation becomes one's entire understanding of an issue. It's easy not to realise how comfortable we've become with this way of consuming information. Watching one or two clips often feels like enough to participate in a conversation, and we scroll past the information rather than sit with it. The algorithm, of course, isn't built to reward depth or accuracy. It rewards engagement. The stories that spread the fastest are usually the ones that are dramatic, emotional, and easy to understand.

And while war is certainly dramatic and emotional, it is also layered with decades of tension, decisions, alliances, and historical context. When those realities are squeezed into a short clip designed to stop someone in the midst of their doom scroll, most of that complexity disappears.

This doesn't mean short-form media is useless. In many cases, it acts as a gateway. An interesting clip can spark curiosity or draw attention to stories that traditional media might overlook. But a gateway only works if people actually walk through it, and too often we don't.

Instead, the clip becomes the endpoint. We watch the summary, feel briefly informed, maybe even enough to mention it to a friend later, and then move on to the next post or big thing. The result is an illusion of understanding without the effort of actually building it.

That illusion matters. Student discourse is shaped in this very environment. When information that we're so prone to consume and share is designed around speed and virality, engagement and critical thinking become harder to sustain. With this, complex events risk being reduced to just another piece of content. But war is not content, and conflict is not a trend cycle.

Short-form news itself isn't inherently good or bad. The more important question is why we've come to accept it defining the limits of our attention. Because the events unfolding on our screens deserve far more than 30 seconds of it.

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Through the Window of Fisher and Donaldson

Celebrating 100 years in St Andrews

MAISIE EVERITT
FEATURES WRITER

To Chloe Milne, who runs Fisher and Donaldson, the team that makes up the institution is so much deeper than the coveted fudge donut. It is funny how flour, sugar, butter, and cream can be so defining to so many people. Though the famous Fisher and Donaldson fudge doughnut first hit the shelves and streets in the 1980s, Fisher and Donaldson has been around for over 100 years, watching both the ever-changing movements of the town and a century of history unfold from its bakery window.

Summer through winter, St Andrews has always invited a constant buzz of students, golfers, tourists or residents. Whether this influx spans four days, four years, or four generations, the consistency of movement is key. Amid the ins and outs and new and old faces, Fisher and Donaldson have stood the test of time.

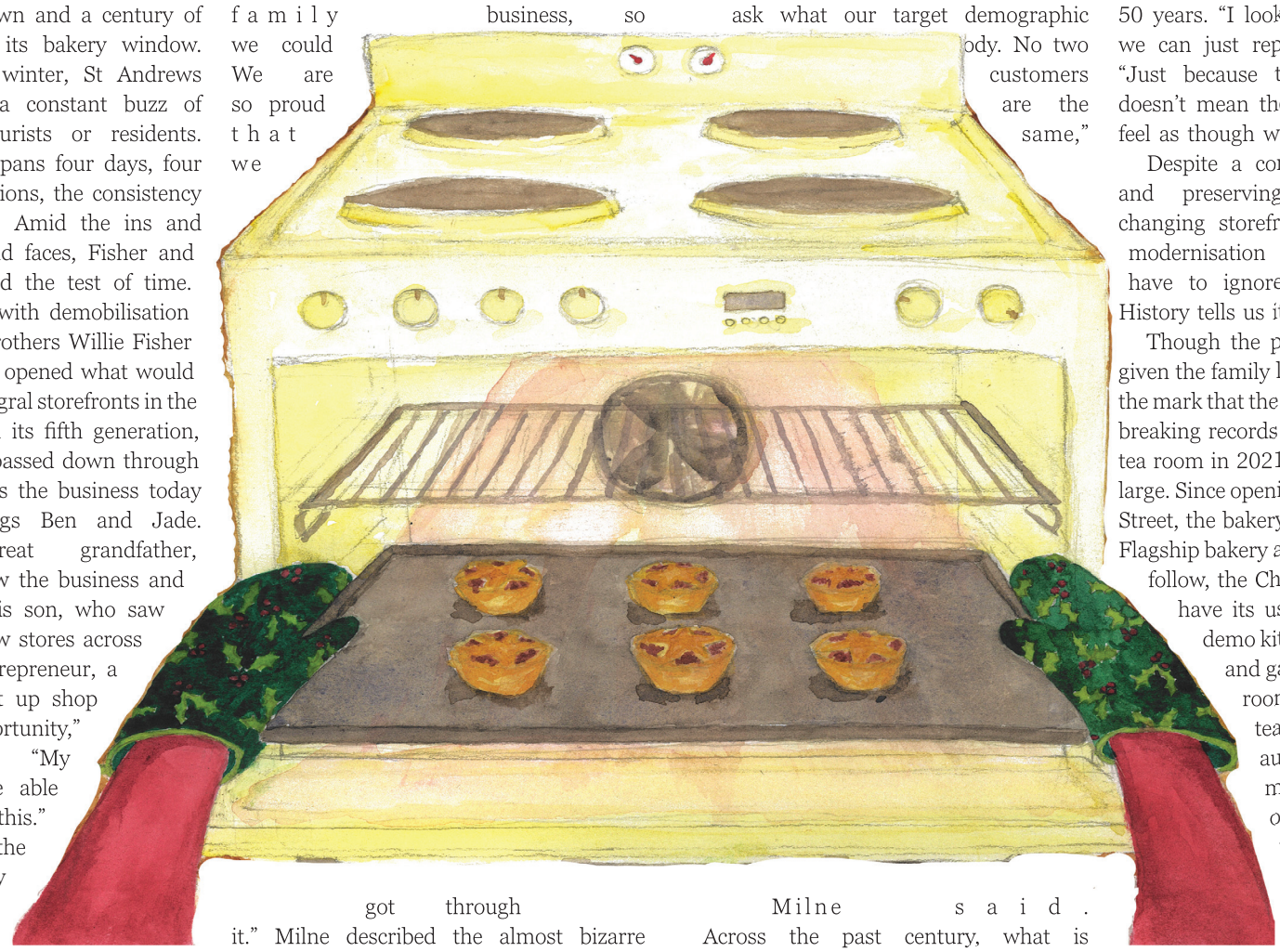
Founded in 1919 with demobilisation money from WWI, brothers Willie Fisher and Davie Donaldson opened what would be one of the most integral storefronts in the Fifedom. Currently in its fifth generation, the bakery has been passed down through the family. Chloe runs the business today alongside her siblings Ben and Jade.

Chloes' great-great grandfather, Alexander Milne, grew the business and passed it down to his son, who saw the opening of six new stores across Fife. "He was an entrepreneur, a businessman, and set up shop wherever he saw opportunity," Milne explained. "My dad and uncle were able to streamline this."

Handed down to the Milne siblings, the joy that runs through the family is reflected in the business. When I asked what the family legacy meant to Milne, her answer was simple: pride. "We run the business wanting to hand it down in a better position than we found it," she explained. "That's what previous generations have done; it's a relationship of pride."

"St Andrews used to have twelve bakeries. Fisher and Donalson's USP is that we are still here," Milne said. Celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2019, I asked about the turning points in history that F&D experienced firsthand. "We were founded after WWI, and of course, we were around for WWII," Milne said. "There have been financial crises, but [from] what I've seen, even with the rising cost of living, [...] people need to treat themselves," said Milne. "And we aren't a very expensive thing to treat ourselves with."

When COVID hit in 2020, the national conversation quickly looked to that of the small independent business, a natural assumption that they may be at the most risk. "I don't really like to look back on it too much," Milne reflected. "We were a small family business, so we could get through it." Milne described the almost bizarre workforce shift, with employees hot-seating on the bakery floor and hiring workers to pour flour into customer-sized bags.



COVID was not all bad. It brought a new space to St Andrews — the F&D tea room on South Street. The tea room retains the classic F&D charm, while providing a space for budding conversation, a quick treat, or a sit-in cafe experience. "Because of COVID, we could do this. When lockdown fell, we had three graduations in one year. It was filled with possibility," Milne said.

The relationship between students and the bakery is also central to F&D's history, Milne said. "St Andrews is such an interesting place, and our teams in St Andrews love the aspect and relationship with the students," Milne said. "We are so reliant on the relationships with the students, whether they are looking for a little luxury or food made fresh."

This extends to tourists, too. "People come from all over the world, it's not just St Andrews watching us, it's everyone," Milne explained. The Royal Warrant affirmed this success in 2011. The F&D stamp is one you cannot miss when in town. "When people ask what our target demographic is, everybody. No two customers are the same," Milne said.

Across the past century, what is undeniable to the F&D brand is its commitment to tradition. Feeling almost frozen in time, the bakeries transcend local change or trend, consistent against the risks of the ever-changing commercial sector. Its roots with locals and tourists alike show that what really matters to preserving the town gem is tradition. "A lot of our business is built on nostalgia, whether people grew up here or went to university," Milne reflected. "Slowly, our trends have changed, but luckily enough, our items can stay the same."

Milne described a story of a customer buying the custard and fudge upon her aunt's request, a few days before her passing. "This silly doughnut is so important to people. It's not just cake; it's part of people's lives and celebrations. It's ridiculously special," Milne stressed.

Tradition is also reflected in the brand's image. When Milne's father and grandfather took over, they refreshed the brand, but as Milne pointed out, that was over 40 years ago. Despite these changes, the core of the brand remains consistent. Even walking into the shop, you are transported back 50 years. "I look at old photos and think we can just replicate them," Milne said. "Just because things are old-fashioned, doesn't mean they can't become trendy. I feel as though we do the tradition justice."

Despite a commitment to consistency and preserving tradition, amid the changing storefronts of the high streets, modernisation is still a question. "I have to ignore the sense of pressure. History tells us it's doing well," Milne said.

Though the pressure is understandable given the family legacy, it is undeniable that the mark that the siblings will make. Already breaking records in 2019 and restoring the tea room in 2021, the future of F&D looms large. Since opening 70 years ago on Church Street, the bakery is expanding to create its Flagship bakery and cafe. For generations to follow, the Church Street store will now have its usual cafe front, but also a demo kitchen, a family space, a cafe and garden area, and an upstairs room for a luxurious afternoon tea experience. Opening in autumn, F&D once again managed to surf the waves of and everchanging, through its commitment to traditional charm. "It's always so interesting to observe how integral [F&D] is to the identity of the town," Milne said. So, if you haven't yet, you are not doing your St Andrews experience justice if you do not frequent F&D. If you stop by, it's worth remembering that they offer more than just the fudge doughnut. "I forever tell people to give our other cakes a chance," Milne said. "The Coffee Tower is the underdog."

ILLUSTRATION BY LAUREN MCANDREW

A Dinner at Blackhorn Burgers

In conversation with owner Justin Hughes

ARNAZ MALLICK
DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This article has been kindly sponsored by Blackhorn Burgers

"We *are* local — we're not everywhere,' says Justin Hughes, owner of Blackhorn. Blackhorn Burgers is a local business, a fundamental and beloved part of St Andrews' culinary scene. The restaurant stands in the centre of Church Street, with its characteristic blue and gold facade and windows looking into warm, cosy interiors. Their newest renovation gives way to a space filled with booth-style seating in the back of the establishment, tucked away from the more bustling, lively entrance.

Walking into the restaurant, you can be momentarily taken out of St Andrews and instead transported to a timeless, charming environs, fragrant with the scents of freshly made, quality food. A particularly appealing feature of Blackhorn is their £9 Sunday Deal for students. Aware of the fact that halls don't serve food to students on Sundays, Blackhorn has introduced a deal where any student, for £9, can purchase a burger or wrap, along with a drink, and fries. And this deal's value is even more prominent when considering the rarity of genuinely well-made, affordable food. Given that burgers are often either inexpensive and underwhelming, or 'artisan', millennial-made and outrageously priced burgers, the value of Blackhorn's deal — where you can get warm, delicious freshly made food, for all kinds of diets — is undoubtable.

Blackhorn's menu is easy to understand and equally full of variety, with a mouth-watering selection of burgers to choose from, as well as sides, hot dogs, salads, and wraps. "You can get wraps and get a few salads and so on [...] We try and look after vegetarians." Says Hughes. And indeed, the menu is full of options for vegetarians, across wraps, salads, and burgers, also offering the possibility to 'make your own' wrap, choosing from a variety of different sauces, cheeses, vegetarian and meat options to create a wrap most suited to you. The menu also offers a number of beverages, alcoholic and non-alcoholic, including a mouth-watering array of milkshakes, a selection of wines and beers, as well as soft drinks.

Justin Hughes established Blackhorn Burgers in 2012, after being inspired by a New York restaurateur who founded the ShakeShack restaurant chain; Hughes described the burgers as being "halfway between McDonalds and pub food', where previously 'there was no in between." Hughes described how, prior to the rise of these more specialised burger chains, "burgers didn't really taste of anything." That was what Hughes sought out to change when founding Blackhorn.

> "It's a slightly more intimate business [...] I am quite proud of it. [...] We're not cutting any corners."



"We spent quite a bit of time working out what we thought was the right mix and what was the right grind and so on," he said. "The rule — we still have a lot of local friends and farmers — was to say, right, 'I want all this to come from within 30 miles.' And that's the rule for the butcher [...] He makes it to our recipe, he does it to our grind, and it must come from within 30 miles." Blackhorn does indeed source its ingredients locally; rolls coming from Fisher & Donaldson across the road, and ice cream from Luvians' on Market Street.

Inspired by Danny Meyer's founding of Shake Shack and the rise of burgers that were both affordable and of high quality, Hughes sought out to "understand the philosophy" of successful burger restaurants, which is simply to focus on "really good quality" food. Hughes discussed how his biggest priority is that "the meat has to be good."



The atmosphere was convivial, with outstandingly friendly service. It highlights what Hughes proclaimed to be one of the most enriching aspects of establishing Blackhorn in St Andrews — connecting with the local community, which encapsulates both the town and university students. "We employ a lot of students, we've got an affinity with the rugby teams, and we're part of that community. We're a *local business*, we employ locals, we employ students, and that's our bit." says Hughes. "And we've done quite a lot — things like the DRA Ball, we've done some of the bigger events with the students, we sponsored a girl for fight night." Hughes spoke of the initial doubts and hesitations surrounding opening up a restaurant in St Andrews: "A lot of people were looking at me like, *really*? You're really going to open up in St Andrews? It's generally considered to be a bit of a gamble."

"But I love the fact that it's worked. I love the fact that it's carried on. It's quite a cool thing, with all the different staff that we get, we've got year after year of different students. It's a kind of family-type thing, and I enjoy that."

The charm of Blackhorn lies in its accessibility; I came to Blackhorn for a casual dinner on a Thursday night date. We sat beside each other in the cosy booths tucked away from the large windows of the entrance, while it was pouring rain outside, and indulged in the sense of warmth and community which the restaurant was full of. Each table beside ours was full of groups of friends, shy first-dates, impromptu, relaxed dinners where students were indulging in feel-good food. We got a burger each and shared between us 'chunky fries' off the menu along with a delightfully cold milkshake. The ingredients were all of an exceptionally high quality, while the food was entirely fresh and aromatic, served by an outstandingly friendly staff.

When I asked Hughes what he found most rewarding about Blackhorn, he said, "We've created close ties. It's a slightly more intimate business [...] I am quite proud of it. We've made it work, and we've achieved the standards we were wanting. We're not cutting any corners."

The experience Blackhorn offered on the whole — of abundant, flavourful food, an intimate, cosy atmosphere with friendly faces all around — made it the perfect spot for lunch and dinner on any day of the week in St Andrews.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BLACKHORN BURGERS

"O Little Town of *Occupied* Bethlehem"

Kate Khair's journey from the West Bank to West Sands

EDIE OBORNE
FEATURES WRITER

To a packed hall largely comprising the elderly segment of St Andrews, Kate Khair, a Palestinian former STEPS (St Andrews Education for Palestinian Students) scholar, spoke of the realities of living under an apartheid. We often view these horrors, which seem so far away from the serenity of St Andrews, as another world. Here, our concerns seem to range from deadlines to whether we should really go to the Union on a Wednesday night. As we know too well, nothing is as it seems. Though our first thought of Bethlehem may be an idyllic Christmas Card scene, as Khair told me when we sat down together on a rare sunny day in St Mary's Quad, the reality is quite the opposite.



"It's not something that is happening at another place in the planet, that they are not connected with," said Khair, emphasising the detachment between the comfortable bubble of St Andrews and the wars raging across the world.

"I think the world would be better for everyone if there was no injustice in it," said Khair. To her, injustice is not something which affects anyone singularly — its effects "will come back to you," she explained. "It will affect everyone. It's one planet. We need to act as if we are living in one place."

Khair is from Beit Sahour, a small town east of Bethlehem. The city is renowned for being the birthplace of Jesus Christ, and Khair can see and hear the bells of the Church of the Nativity from her house. Now it's also known for being one of the most visible indicators of apartheid. It has a 30-foot-high 'separation wall' running through it, determining where Palestinians and Israelis live.

"We were surrounded by the wall," Khair explained. "We had the apartheid wall all around. We had settlements all around. We didn't have many places to go."

Khair reminisced on her life there before the events of 7 October, 2023. "It was really, really nice. It was busy, active, [and had] lots of international volunteers, tourists. She was even part of a youth group, she said, as well as having been involved in organisations which ran cultural events.

"It was fine," Khair said. "But it was an open-air prison as well."

In the West Bank, it is difficult to travel to other places. There are different roads for Palestinians and Israelis. Palestinians are forced to take roads which bypass settlements and have military checkpoints, which can take hours to go through.

Freedoms we take for granted in the UK are not freedoms which extend to the Palestinian people: Freedom to move, freedom to build, freedom to protest. These do not exist for Palestinians, because they live under military law. In contrast, Israeli citizens live under civil law, where rights are protected in ways we would expect in the West. While it is possible for an Israeli citizen to visit Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and even the West Bank (although this is deeply discouraged), all Palestinian movements are controlled by the Israeli army and are usually restricted to the region in which they were born.

Khair describes being unable to visit cities like Nazareth and Haifa — lands controlled by Israel since 1948. "I had a lot of international friends, and they would go to Jerusalem, Haifa, and I was just not [able to]," she explained. Khair's ability to visit these cities is severely restricted under military law. She said she had only been to one of them once on a school trip, organised with permits. "You feel trapped," she said.

Bethlehem before 7 October was bustling with pilgrims, tourists, and many international activists. After 7 October, "everything just stopped," said Khair. "Everything completely shut down. All my international friends left without a chance to see me and say goodbye."

Khair's life in the West Bank was completely reversed: "All of our attention was on Gaza."

"We knew that Gaza would be [in] a very devastating war, and it even surpassed our expectations," said Khair. "It is now the most horrendous genocide I have ever witnessed in my whole life."

Khair's father grew up in Gaza and describes it as "the most beautiful Palestinian city." Khair has never had the chance to visit herself, as it is impossible for Palestinians to get a permit.

Yet Khair does have some friends in Gaza: "It's very hard. Some of them escaped to Egypt. Some of them are still in Gaza, just trying to survive," she said. "I feel helpless. I call them, and I don't know what to do or what to say."

While we sat overlooking the great oak tree of St Mary's Quad, Khair spoke of a green area near her, Makhrour, where she would go every week to walk. It is now being taken over by settlers. While the world keeps its eyes on Gaza and regional war, illegal settlements in the West Bank have intensified their campaign.

Israeli settlers live in lands that were designated for Palestinians, often expelling Palestinians from their homes and villages to do so. As documented by human rights organisations like B'Tselem and Amnesty International, these settlers destroy the homes of Palestinians, who are refused permits to rebuild their homes. If Palestinians rebuild without a permit, their new homes will be destroyed. Israeli settlers, however, are permitted by the Israeli government to build homes in the West Bank, despite these settlements being illegal under international law.

These illegal settlements have dramatically altered the landscape of Khair's city.

"The city and the West Bank are full of buildings because people don't have any place to live," she explained. "The Makhrour area was one of the most beautiful places, because in Bethlehem we don't have parks like this, [it] is a luxury for us."

The Makhrour area, once beautiful green land and, according to Khair, "a very nice area to walk," is now under threat. "There are settlers around. It is dangerous to go there," she explained. "They are planning to annex it to build more settlements." Khair explained that it is part of a wider plan, approved by the Israeli government to connect illegal settlements between Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

Before the war started, Khair was already applying to universities overseas, hoping to further her study of history. After being accepted as a STEPS scholar, Khair made it to St Andrews.

"When I arrived in St Andrews, I was very happy. I was like, 'Finally, I made it. Finally, I left Palestine,'" she recalled. "I was thanking everyone, like, 'Thank you so much, thank you STEPS, thank you St Andrews, thank you.'" She remembers being dropped off at her accommodation: "I felt like a survivor, and I had to thank this place for taking me in."

The University offers a scholarship for usually two students from Palestine to study a postgraduate programme with waived fees. STEPS is a charity which pays for the students' other costs. The charity and scholarship were created in 2011, after St Andrews students called for the creation of a Palestinian scholarship through an organised protest in 2009. The protest saw 60 students occupying Lower College Hall.

"The activism is what [created] scholarships for Palestinian students to come here," Khair explained. "It's all a result of activism — not of universities being so generous and the administration being so generous."

She attributes it to pressure: "Pressure [creates] an effect, but it takes a lot of time," she said. "You have to battle with them to make them care about Palestine, about justice, and about human beings not being killed."

After two years of genocide in Gaza, the University was unable to accept more STEPS Scholars onto the programme because the visa facilities in Gaza were destroyed. The British government would not allow them in without an official visa application — which was impossible to obtain. Fortunately, the British government resolved this bureaucratic difficulty, and we now have six more students from Palestine, including four from Gaza, studying at St Andrews.

> "The activism is what [created] scholarships for Palestinian students to come here."

When I asked Khair if she has hope, she replied, "It does feel hopeless, but I also look for hope in everything." She reflected on her studies of Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé, who focuses on the unsustainability of apartheid and colonial regimes: "I hope that it's going to happen — that I am going to see the fall of an apartheid colonial state and the creation of a democratic state in Palestine for all its inhabitants, that we live with our civil and human rights."

"This is the only thing that gives me hope — that something is changing," Khair said. "And hopefully it will happen before all of us are annihilated."

PHOTO BY MANRAJ GILL

Lessons on the Road: Stories from Race2 Madrid

MIA FISH
FEATURES WRITER

Who would have thought that hitchhiking across Europe in a race to Madrid is how nearly 200 students chose to spend their vacation week? Race2 is an annual St Andrews tradition, entirely student-run, organised by the Charities Campaign. This year, the endeavour has raised over £68,000 for its three chosen charities: Doctors Without Borders, Fife Women's Aid, and Centrepoint.

Teams set off from Scotland and launched into Europe, where they quickly scatter across France. The aim of the game is simple — spend as little money on public transport and accommodation as possible. A devoted safety team of student volunteers tracks each team as they progress.

I talked to three students who took part and discussed their unsettling, shocking, and crazy moments. From dire toilet situations to "crazy ladies" dropping off a team on the toll road, here's everything they encountered racing to Madrid.

Charlotte Black, a third year in a team of three girls, 'Albondiva,' spoke to *The Saint* about her experience of the race. "[There are] few opportunities in life where you can be carefree," Black said. She described experiencing a sense of "boundless freedom" right from her first race in 2025.

In spite of this, however, some concerned parents were not so keen on the adventure. One student's parents, who requested anonymity, texted their concerns. "This hitch thing is plain stupid and dangerous," they wrote, pleading with their child to "just give up."

> "Hitchhiking is also inherently dependent on trust."

Black had kept the hitch a secret from her parents, and probably for the better.

Black recalled a conversation with her first driver after he revealed to the team that he was an ex-convict. "I left them for dead," he had told them, describing the provoked attack he spent time in prison for. "It was terrifying," Black said. She expressed that the race no longer felt like a game when they had been in the car for one hour and the driver had driven past a few service stations.

"Obviously, you can't say anything," Black explained. A car can pose a tricky situation when its riders are truly at the mercy of its driver.

Black described how the driver gave them self-defence lessons as he whipped up his seatbelt to demonstrate on one of the team members. Despite the strange experience, Black didn't think he was a "bad person." He even gifted the team £20.

Black recognises this encounter was an "exceptional" one, albeit it was their first hitch. "When else would you get an experience like that?" she asked.

By the journey's end, Black had a renewed view of kindness — a "profound sense that the majority of people are really kind and generous." Similarly, Hazel Myrick and Lauren Blackmore, third-years of the team 'Spanish Incarsition,' spoke of a restored faith in humanity.

That doesn't mean the journey was without its challenges, though. At her lowest moment, Black recalls thinking, "Get me out of here." This was the second night of no sleep, as their team attempted to sleep under the fluorescent lights of a Costa at Medway Services. For Black, Race2 demands a certain type of person — someone who can accept being out of control and "sleeping in random places."

Teams often find themselves stuck on the side of a motorway. Black recalled how their team was dropped at a toll road by a "crazy lady," while Myrick and Blackmore were forced to cross a toll road. Learning to deal with these situations, however, is a valuable lesson.

From the lowest of lows, blossoms the highest of highs. Myrick and Blackmore endured a terrible but lucky thirteen-hour drive of over 630 miles from Maidstone to Toulouse with a Romanian lorry driver called Matteo. Matteo spoke no English and played Lena Micalus' 'Un copil e ca o floarein' in a "sweltering van," on repeat the entire journey — dizzying music from his homeland. He was accompanied by a mysterious package which had to cross the channel separately. Sometimes it's better to ask no questions and take the ride. After two days of waiting for a lift at Folkestone, Myrick jumped straight into the back of the van.

"Waiting for a lift after a long ride makes you feel deflated," said Blackmore. The pair experienced a low blow when they found themselves stuck outside of Toulouse with no toilet facilities or refreshments.

That was until they hitched a lucky lift to sunny Andorra with Ivan. On the way, they even stopped off at natural hot springs — what Myricks described as a "once in a lifetime experience." To the pair, Muhammed, their next lift, was "an angel sent from heaven." He went out of his way to drop them at a service station within striking distance of Madrid, donated £50, and bought the team coffee.



> "Race2 demands a certain type of person — someone who can accept being out of control and sleeping in random places."

Myrick's favourite moment? "Driving out of Andorra with views of the Pyrenees," she said. "As soon as you treat it as a holiday, everything falls into place."

Myrick suggested the importance of going with the right person. When you're "hungry, tired, sleep-deprived," what matters is your ability to perk up and find your inner fight. "It is an endurance game and you need a lot of resilience," she explained. Yet, Myrick and Blackmore agree that anyone is capable of doing the Race and everyone should try it.

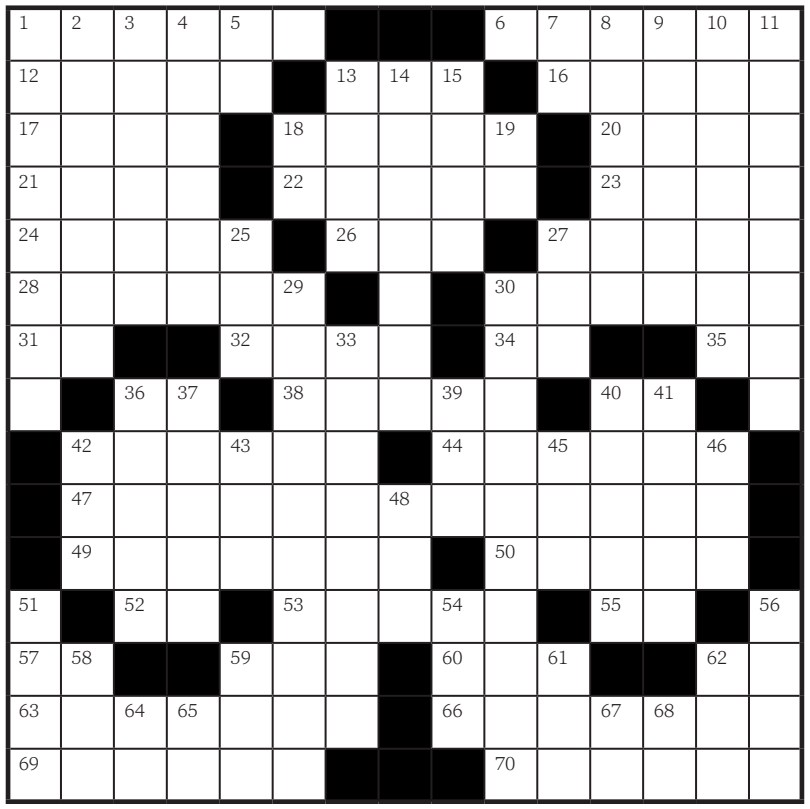
For Blackmore, the race "put things into perspective" and made her realise how much she wants to go travelling before jumping onto the corporate ladder. It is Black's "favourite activity of the year" and she "looks forward to it every time." Neither team cared about winning and agreed that it was better to take longer and enjoy the journey. Blackmore and Myrick insisted that the experience changes your life in ways you don't recognise and agreed that more people should open their minds to hitchhiking.

For Myrick, Race2 "embodies the spirit of St Andrews" — the crazy and quirky traditions that imprint unforgettable memories. Despite its trials and tribulations, Black said she had "the best time ever."

Life on the road is tough, and so is fundraising, but there is comfort in the lessons of endurance and perseverance it bears. If nothing else, Race2 is an example of the hardship it takes to get to our desired destination in life and a lesson to keep pushing on, no matter the pain.

ILLUSTRATION BY EVE FISHMAN

'LIGHTS, CAMERA, PUZZLE!'



WORD LADDERS
BY LUANA VAN ORANJE

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

F I L M C A S T

__ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

__ __ __ __ __ __ __ __

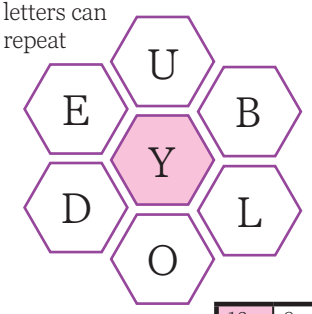
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R E E L R O L E

SPELLING BEE
BY MADELEINE OLIVER

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



CROSSWORD BY MADELEINE ABIGNALE

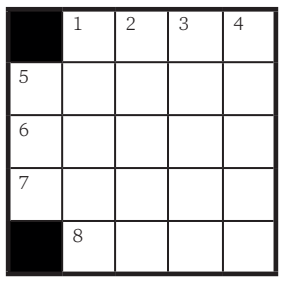
ACROSS

1. *Arabian Nights* sailor
6. Paul ____
12. Person working in an office, who may deal with records
13. 'Watch me'
16. Use a loom
17. Stack ____ Blues (John Hurt song)
18. Titled ladies
20. First step of the alphabet (1-2-1)
21. '____ pity!' (3-1)
22. Helps carry out a crime
23. Mouth, in Spanish
24. Andrew ____
26. Afore
27. Saoirse ____
28. ____-ul-Quran (NGO founded by Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri)
30. Day before Domingo
31. @
32. Adjust an instrument
34. How a texter might respond to a favour
35. Opposite of off
36. Summer cooler, an American necessity
38. Argentine answer to the GOAT of football
40. Feminine article in Spanish
42. Shoe, in Italian
44. International charity dedicated to saving the world's water
47. What *6a*, *24a*, *27a*, *70a*, and *3d* all celebrate at home in March (2-8-3)
49. Items lit for the Gaudie
50. Aged song
52. Sun god
53. Consume, biblically (3-2)
55. Boat prefix
57. Next to
59. Metric units (abbr.)
60. Golf tour in the USA
62. A person's signature in November
63. Gently convince to share (4-3)
66. Conquers
69. Capital where Wilde, Stoker, and Joyce were born
70. Cillian ____

DOWN

1. A 'true' one might go bare under his kilt (5-3)
2. Unlawful
3. Liam ____
4. Inhaled air
5. ____-47, Soviet assault rifle
7. 'Gross!'
8. Underwater scooter
9. Start of a 1955 Tennessee Williams play title (3-2-1)
10. Key guac component
11. Country bordering Syria, if there were multiple
13. Name of a beau, or a 1995 film's pig
14. Comes out of
15. Head, in French
18. How a KGB agent would have said yes
19. Nazi Party paramilitary organisation (abbr.)
25. Body ink (abbr.)
27. Bit of sun
29. Go too quickly, before the proper time (4-3-3)
30. Rectangle you chew on for fresh breath (5-2-3)
33. Biblical setting (4-4)
36. What *6a*, *24a*, *27a*, *70a*, and *3d* all are, individually
37. Goat genus
39. Uni-affiliated group (abbr.)
40. Actresses Cheryl and Diane
41. Author Nin
42. Concorde, eg.
43. Roadside help provider
45. Type of course a native Polish speaker might take in the UK
46. Affirmative vote
48. Believer's suffix
51. Start of the alphabet
54. Haters, in slang
56. Snug
58. Not me
59. Type of fish often found in garden ponds
61. ____ Dhabi
62. 'It was only ok'
64. Singular stomach muscle
65. Sweatshirt size
67. Prefix for a medical professional
68. 2009 film featuring a floating house

MINI CROSSWORD
BY JULIA EMERY



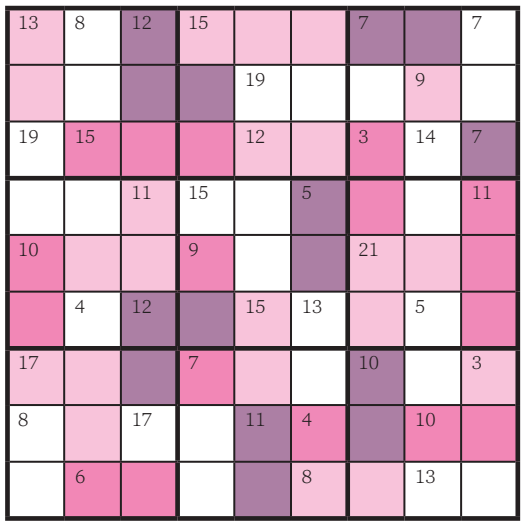
ACROSS

1. U.S. Pacific island
5. Is possible (3-2)
6. Award won in March
7. Theatre-home for *6a*
8. Faithful, to a Scot

DOWN

1. NBA's Marc or Pau
2. Murray, to Marty Mauser
3. Addis ____, Ethiopia
4. Most nominated actress for a *6a*
5. Massachusetts Cape

KILLER SUDOKU
BY ISAAC OLDHAM

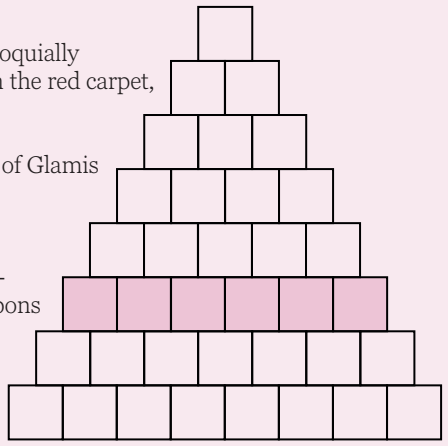


Sudoku with a twist! Normal rules apply. The numbers in each coloured 'cage' add up to the total in its corner, no repeating numbers in a cage.

STEPDOWN BY LUANA VAN ORANJE

Use the hints to fill in the blanks of the pyramid. On each step down, add one letter and rearrange to form a new word. Then figure out the blank clue... an Oscar nominee!

1. One
2. Thank you, colloquially
3. Well dressed on the red carpet, in slang
4. AGA's output
5. Macbeth's title, of Glamis and Cawdor
6. ____
7. National songs
8. Simplest single-bonded hydrocarbons



THE SAINT CLASSIC!

CONNECTIONS BY ALEXANDER WISEMAN

Find groups of four items that have something in common

BIG	FROZEN	CASABLANCA	NEWTON
SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE	EINSTEIN	NEVER LET ME GO	TITANIC
THE CROWN	CURIE	PARASITE	BORGES AND ME
CHARIOTS OF FIRE	CLUELESS	OPPENHEIMER	HAWKING

CAESAR CIPHER BY ALEXANDER WISEMAN

Shift all the letters up/down the alphabet by the same number of places to solve the clue!

Two movies involved in the 2017 Oscars 'disaster' over best picture...

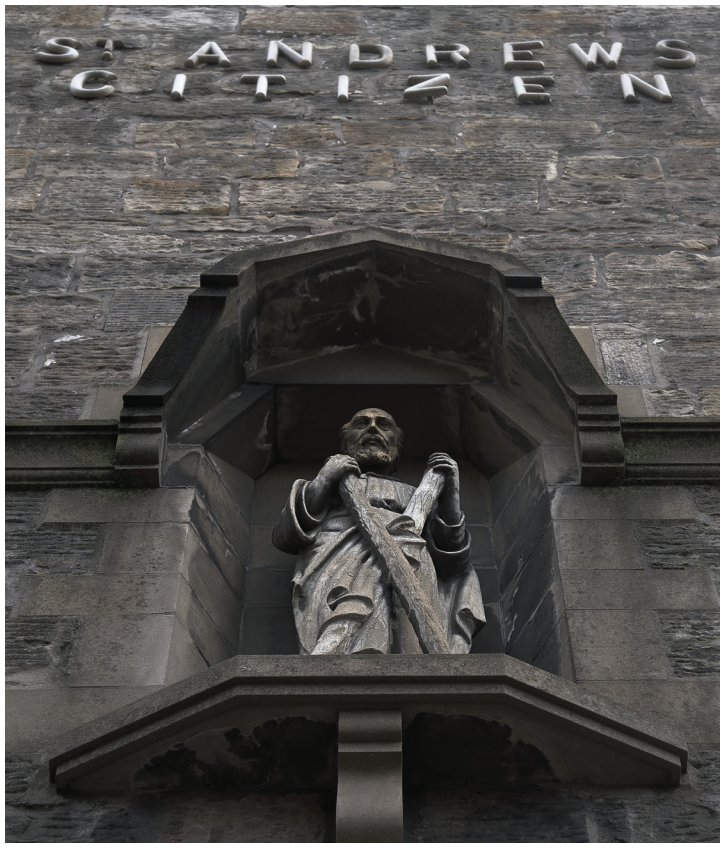
MB MB MBOE WT NPPOMJHIU

Big winner of the 2026 Oscars...

KJA XWPPHA WBPAN WJKPDAN

Saint Andrew in St Andrews

CHRISTOPHER KELLY-BROWN
PHOTOGRAPHER









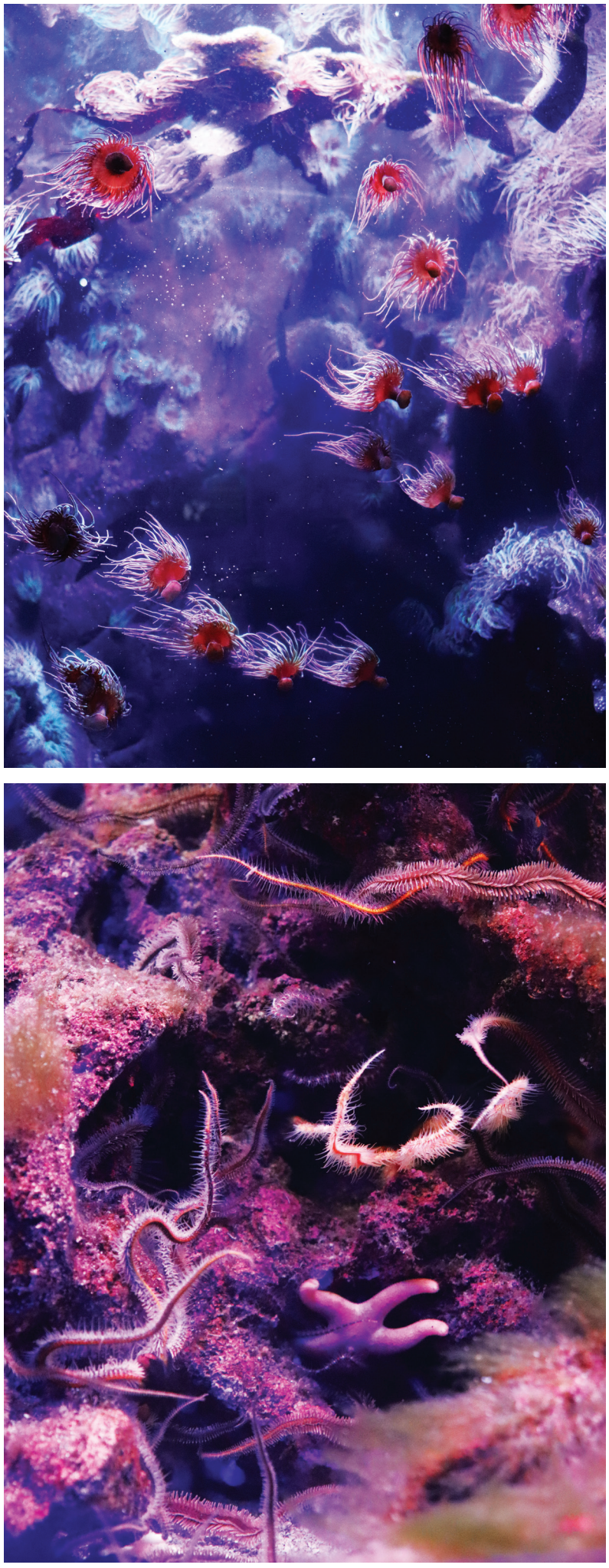






Adventures at the Aquarium

ADA NEWTON
PHOTOGRAPHER









EDITOR: SOREN RASMUSSEN

The Relic

The Saint's Arts & Culture Section



Write Drunk; Edit Sober

JAMES CARDER-GEDDES
Relic Writer

Write drunk; edit sober. These words are, somewhat apocryphally, attributed to the twentieth-century American novelist Ernest Hemingway, who was known for swigging back the odd mojito or two. But Hemingway drank in the evening, thus it is more likely that he 'wrote hungover' and probably 'edited hungover' — far less catchy. I prefer the quotation "modern life [...] is often a mechanical oppression, and liquor is the only mechanical relief," which, unlike the former quotation, we know Hemingway wrote in a letter. So, does drinking enhance creativity? Should we, as university students and artists, be inspired to do what Hemingway and many other clearly successful authors did?

"Keats wasn't the only poet to have drug-induced dreams"

In his composition of 'Ode to a Nightingale' (see quotations above) and 'La Belle Dame sans Merci,' Keats wrote under the influence of opium. When Keats took a swig of laudanum, he wasn't just trying to "keep up his spirits" (as his close friend Charles Brown claimed) but also attempting to alleviate the symptoms of his chronically sore throat. Keats wasn't the only poet to have drug-induced dreams, as, famously, Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' appeared to him as "a vision in a dream. A Fragment." Thomas de Quincey similarly published his *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, which explores both the Pains and Pleasures of Opium (as two of the sections are respectively called). De Quincey writes that, after taking the drug, he "sometimes seemed to have lived for 70 or 100 years in one night." I sometimes feel I could do with an extra 70 years when I'm trying to turn in my English essay minutes before the deadline. Famously, De Quincey writes of "the pangs that tempt the spirit to rebel."



So, drug-taking whilst writing is a form of temptation and rebellion. And the Romantics loved a bit of rebellion, that's for sure.

Further back in time, in ancient Greece, poems were recited at *symposia* (or drinking parties), and poets would write specific songs about drinking, known as Anacreontic poetry. Anacreon writes, "τί μοι μάχεσθ', ἑταῖροι,/ καὐτῷ θέλοντι πίνειν;" (Friend, spare the diatribe/ if I also imbibe). Feel free to use that when a friend is nagging you after you've had one too many drinks. Try it in Greek first, then, if that doesn't work, in English. In third-century China, too, the seven sages of the Bamboo Grove consumed wine to compose their poetry. Writing drunk allows a certain carefree application of words to paper, a loosening of the tight grip on language. As Charles Bukowski puts it, "It yanks or joggles you out of routine thought and everydayism." The bibulous imperfections are often only grammatical or syntactical and can simply be amended during the sober process (in both senses) of editing.

"Poets would write specific songs about drinking, known as anacreontic poetry."

However, this oenophilia had a darker side. Drinking was one of the things that killed Welsh poet Dylan Thomas when he was just 39. F. Scott Fitzgerald, too, died young at 44, and Hemingway's drinking was part of his depression that led to his tragic suicide. Drink and drugs led Stephen King, the King of Horror, to write the entire novel *Cujo* during a weekend binge, afterwards having no recollection of it ever having been written.

So, in conclusion, you probably shouldn't write drunk and edit sober. The writers who did seemed to be fighting their internal demons, in some cases unsuccessfully. Writing tipsily, however, is perhaps more excusable. On that note, I will put down my pen and, with it, my fifth glass of wine.

Illustration by Sandra Palazuelos Garcia

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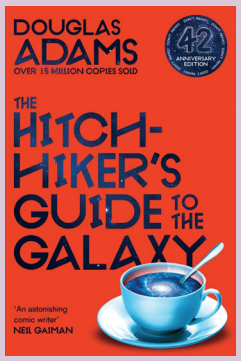




Funniest Reads with Topping & Co.

Looking for your next read? *The Saint* and Topping & Co. have come together to save the day. Find below the funniest books that our recommenders have read. All books are available locally in store.

BOOKSELLER PICKS

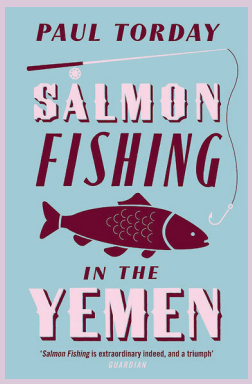


Murray recommends…

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy by Douglas Adams

If, like me, you have just returned from the Race2 charity hitchhike, you will be familiar with the pure chaos and funny stories that accumulate while travelling the world by thumb. *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* succeeds in distilling that same whimsy, energy, and joviality into a roller-coaster of a book.

Our (relatively normal) protagonist, Arthur Dent, is immediately whisked off Earth after it is destroyed to make way for a hyperspace bypass and carried across the galaxy in search of the answer to "life, the universe, and everything." Along the way Adams introduces a fantastically creative and hilariously written cast of characters, alongside a universe packed with absurd yet brilliant ideas. The result is a chaotic, imaginative, and deeply funny journey.

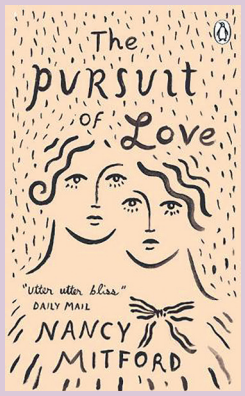


Book club recommends…

Salmon Fishing in the Yemen by Paul Torday

Salmon are a symbol of Scottish pride; tourists travel from around the world for a chance to catch a glimpse of them, or even a bite. But can salmon be globalised? This unlikely question lies at the centre of Salmon Fishing in the Yemen, a sharp political satire about bureaucracy, ambition, and the strange ideas that can emerge from government offices. The story follows an embattled fisheries civil servant tasked with turning an improbable political vision into reality. What follows is a wonderfully dry piece of British humour that tackles politics, community and culture through an innovative and modern storytelling structure. Anyone looking for a laugh, a glimpse into the minutiae of salmon fishing, or a touch of Kafkaesque political comedy will find plenty to enjoy.

STAFF PICK



Sophie recommends…

The Pursuit of Love by Nancy Mitford

When Nancy Mitford published *The Pursuit of Love* in 1945, it was, according to Mitford's biographer Selina Hastings, "an instant and phenomenal success … the perfect antidote to the long war years of hardship and austerity, providing the undernourished public with its favourite ingredients: love, childhood and the English upper classes." Eighty-one years later, the book's dry wit and effortless comic brilliance has ensured that it has never gone out of print. The plot follows the eccentric and aristocratic Radlett clan and the beautiful, overindulged Linda Radlett as she pursues her all-consuming quest for true love through a series of hilarious affairs, from conservative lords to communist revolutionaries. The book's true power lies in the way Mitford balances romance and ridicule, allowing her readers to laugh at Linda's endless pursuit of love while still being swept up in the delicious absurdity of it all.

The Senses of St Andrews

Our town through sights and seasons

EMMA INGRAM JOHNSON
Relic Writer

As you wander through the streets of St Andrews, the soundscape winds and shifts with you, never stagnant for more than a step or two. This 'sleepy' town is more tumultuous than it immediately appears.

Flapping winds, shrieking seagulls, and the crescendo of crashing waves across three beaches are all constant throughout the year. The yells of students increase tenfold on the last Monday of October, echoed in parallel on the first day of May as the students break the shiny, sealed surface of East Sands with unanimous delight (or terror). Sound (and sometimes the eerie lack thereof) scores our St Andrews experience. Join me on my journey through the sounds of the seasons in this sunny seaside town:

Spring

As I write, I think somewhat sceptically of snowdrops opening and the leggy stems of weeds shooting up, but Spring *is* on its way. As the sun finally starts to peek its nose through the muffling stage curtains of winter in northeast Scotland, the sound of amped guitars and local singers starts to infiltrate the streets, distracting students in the library and rousing sleepy pub-goers in the Keys.

A new sonic experience, however, was the buskers I came across one doorway down from Spoiled Life last week: two young men, a guitar and a microphone. So far, ordinary. The low dirge that then filled the street was novel in length and pitch, heightened by the trance-like stance of the singer. Cutting through the gossip of willow leaves brushing against one another from the gardens opposite these buskers, the droning hollowed out the avenue-like street, filling space that ordinarily only car engines briefly disrupt. It was, to my ear, only a little less melodious than the covers of Olivia Dean that perforate Market Street's corners throughout the Candlemas semester.

Summer

The nectar-sweet nattering of starlings can be heard far down on West Sands from early spring to late summer. These babbling birds are almost impossible to spot, but on a clear day, they rush louder than the wind, miles above golfers' heads. While childrens' eyes are glued upwards to the thrashing and winding of their kites in the summer winds, handled surreptitiously by parents and grandparents, the starlings remain out of sight, and instead make their presence known perhaps more metaphysically than the vengeful, inescapable, seagulls in Fife.



Autumn

A classic in what my American friends call 'fall' is the crunch of leaves underfoot alongside the Kinessburn. What Mother Nature can symphonise, however, is far superior. Compared with the North Sea, the undulating rhythms of the Kinessburn are a little tamer, but no less rich in the harmonies of rolling water. Poems about rivers are filled with "rushing," "sluicing," "surging," and "flushing," all words which encompass what it is like to be near the shh-ing sounds of a river. The word Kinessburn captures, too, this rush of consonants. Background music to many a romantic, or perhaps, breakup walk, the Kinessburn's cyclical flow is a comforting reminder of regeneration — a truly wholesome sound.

Winter

A St Andrews local once remarked to me that she can often smell the return of the students' nefarious habits before she sees them, but I think the striking sensory difference is in the stark lack of sound in the normally cacophonic echo chamber we call home. Broken only by haunting choral renditions of hymns in the cloisters and the regularity of twelve long beats at midnight and midday, a deep silence overtakes the town during the winter months. With the students gone from mid-December to late January and the golf courses closed intermittently until March, the darkest months are cloaked in a veil of stillness, which, if you happen to catch it, is meditatively soothing.

It is song, then, that defines St Andrews — the microphoned students of Spring, the pipers of August's Lammas Fair, the swallows' last melodies before they flee the north, and the hymnal silence of December and January. These buskers, whether human or natural, are not asking for pennies nor pounds (if you ignore the throat-singers' open guitar case), but joining the euphony of voices, notes, and sound that categorise this clamorous town.

Illustration by Aimee Robbins

In Conversation with Ron Carter

SOREN RASMUSSEN
Relic Editor

There are certain figures whose contributions exceed any attempt to summarise them. Ron Carter is one such figure. Since his career as a bassist began in 1959, Carter has reached and maintained a status as one of the most influential and original musicians of the last century. He is the most recorded jazz bassist of all time — playing on over 2,200 records — has won three Grammys, and continues to support many of the finest musicians of all time with his sound, both in jazz and beyond. Suffice to say, you've definitely heard his bass before. The full extent of his discography is available online at The Ron Carter Universe. His new album, *Sweet,SweetSpirit*,ajazz-gospelcollaboration with Choirmaster Dr Ricky Dillard and tribute to Carter's mother, whose favourite hymns the album reimagines. Recently, as part of our show *JazzWorks Radio* with STAR, my co-host Theo and I had the tremendous honour to speak to Mr Carter about his new album, unparalleled career, and philosophy to the music to which he has dedicated his life.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Soren Rasmussen: With your new record, *Sweet, Sweet Spirit*, what was the experience of working with Mr Dillard and his great choir like, and did it change your relationship to those songs at all?

Ron Carter: He's quite dynamic and quite visual, and I'm kind of the opposite: I just sit down and play the instrument. So it's an interesting study to view the two approaches that got the same results with the same project. It's like a nice laboratory. [...] I was always amazed at how they sounded, and their articulation of the words and the phrasing and the pitch was incredible, given all those voices spread out on the stage, and he's dancing in front of them trying to give them cues and stuff, it's just quite a view.

The more I listened to these songs — and I listened to them a ton of times — the more I understood what the words were. I came across these words when I was eight or nine or ten, going to church with my mom, as we all did back in the day of [the] early '40s and '50s; that was the church's way of maintaining some kind of sanity given the times we were living in. We the public — the African American public — just sang the words because that's what we all did. But I listened to this record back and forth, voices and pitch, and the lyrics seemed to be more and more clear. What the lyrics were saying when I was ten years old. They were saying: give us a break, give us some help, give us equality, give us some presence. And to keep hearing that message replayed in 2026 was quite an amazing emotional experience for me.

Theo Robinson: On your experience as a sideman, you've described working with Thelonious Monk in the '60s as an important experience for that week of gigs. Was there anything in the way that Monk treated the tunes that changed how you've approached them since?

RC: Well, that was my first [time] meeting him on this gig. [...] I knew who he was, and I didn't know if he knew who I was. All I knew that he knew was that Sam Jones, who was the bass player on this gig, had gotten sick. And he called me to cover for him [...] I don't know what [Monk] expected me to do other than sub for Sam Jones. Not knowing his library, I couldn't Google or go back to resources and listen to any of his tunes because I'm working at other gigs. I've got a family, I've got a life [...] So he's at my mercy too. He's gotta hope that I'm a quick study enough that if I know the song, I play it real well, if I don't, I learn it before the second chorus is over. So it taught me another view of, when you take a gig, especially with a stranger (and he's a stranger to me, he just happens to be a very famous stranger) leave my ego at home and take a special pair of ears to hear what this guy's gonna do before he does it.

TR: Miles Davis famously spoke about this idea of 'being comfortable' as impeding musicians. What's your personal relationship to the idea of 'being comfortable'? Do you think an artist can be comfortable and healthy?

RC: I don't want the guys to get comfortable with me. My job is to keep them just enough on edge that I have their undivided attention. [...] I want them to trust my judgement. I want them to understand my history with the music. I want them to understand that I've been here really a long time and I bring something to the table that maybe their bass player, as young as he may be, hasn't had a chance to experience on his own and can't bring this particular item to this particular gig with this relatively inexperienced and new band leader. Having said that, I say that very cautiously because I don't want those young people, whoever they are, to feel that I'm against new music. Or new players. Or what they call 'new concepts.' Well, there are not many new concepts that I haven't played already in the 1960s, and '65, and '70, '75 and '80, and '85 and '90, and 2002, 2003, 2003 and a half. I'm a chance for them to kind of catch up on history. [...] That's very important, and I think I'd like to see these young guys less focused on their band leading and find out how other guys did the bands. But we'll see what happens when they call me.

SR: On the subject of deciding who you're going to work with: when you approach a new project today, what are certain things you look for when you're deciding who to be in the group for a new set or record?

RC: Well, my first band was the piccolo band with Buster Williams, Ben Riley, and Kenny Barron. And anyone who's gonna follow these three guys, they've gotta be happening. So when Ben and Buster and Kenny decided to join Charlie Rouse with the Thelonius Monk project, *Sphere*, I had to get a new band. [...] I called in an audition with four or five guys who were on the scene, some recommended and some that I heard, and we had an appointment at my house to play the band book. [...] We were not jamming all night, guys; we have some parts to play that *I wrote*. And I want to hear them. I want whoever is gonna be in my band to play them and not get pissed off because it's not their music. Guys, get your own band. Right? This is not a job for you guys. [...] Right now, Irene Rosnes, or Kenny Barron, certainly if he's available, or Donald Vega; they're the piano players on call because they know the band book, they know what they're responsible for responding to. Boots Maleson has been my bass player for the nonet and for the quartet for about thirty-five years; there's a reason he's still there. If you guys want to be a sub, come by and spend two nights at the gigs to see what he does that makes him more of a sideman that I'm looking for, that I try to emulate when I'm not a bandleader, when I'm a sideman.



TR: What are your views on music and technology as a relationship? Do you see the two as compatible going forward?

RC: Well, if they're gonna electronically alter my sound on records I'm on, I would be offended. I've worked years and years, and every night I go to work to make sure my sound on this gig, for this record, is a reflection of my sound down through the years. I work on developing this sound whenever I play the bass. Where I play the bass. What notes I pick. What sound did I get from my hands that day? How the bass responds to the weather changes. With the temperature in the room, when it gets real cold, the bass gets out of tune [...] stuff that I'm aware of that I can be responsible for making that represents what I think the bass can sound like in my hands. And to find out that a year later someone has gotten this track and manipulated it through their electronic genius, I'm very offended. And I've done some of those records where I've heard the electronic stuff on and I said if I had known they were gonna have done that, I would've played a different set of notes that would allow them to have more flexibility [...] Well, I didn't have that choice so they had to bust their chops trying to make their dream of having my sound sound like Mickey Mouse or sound like a flute. That's a lot more complicated.

TR: Douglas Daniels, the biographer for Lester Young, described this mythology of jazz as existing that is hard to dispel.As somebody who has lived and breathed jazz history, do you see a mythology surrounding jazz, and do you see it as helpful to its history?

RC: Depends [on] what they're saying about the guy and whether they have had the chance to play with someone who actually played with this person. I don't know about the mythology of Chet Baker, for example [...] All I know is when I called him to do this record called *Patrão* that had Kenny Barron and Jack DeJohnette and me and some Brazilian guys, he came by my house, got the music a week early. He was at the date as I was walking to the date. I explained to him, "Chet, we have one day to make this record. Don't fool around." And we got a great, great record. I'm really happy with not just how he sounded but how he respected *my process*. That's what it is. [...]And so whatever mythology I may have heard or since from his history, I would not accept that because I played with this person, and it was fun playing with this guy because he had some ideas that I could help him best find a place to play them. So the Chet Baker mythology or whatever it was, I tell the guy, "Get out of here, you don't know him. You never saw him or played with him." So mythology does what it does, it creates images that are not necessarily accurate. Most times they are not; most times they're just a temporary idiosyncrasy and just a moment, this guy says, "Well, I'm gonna wear a red tie all week," and then he does something else; that's his mythology. C'mon man. Did he play good? Was he in tune? What kind of notes did he play? Was he respectful to the bass player? If it's gonna be like that, it shouldn't be such a derogatory point of view.

SR: I'd like to ask you about the New York scene, since you've been a part of it for so long. Looking back at how it's changed, are there things that have gotten better or things you wish were still present?

RC: I wish that we had the same accessibility to the radio waves in 2026 as we had in 1926. Because back in the day, man, when I came to New York, there were four or five stations that played jazz 24 hours. And they had knowledgeable disc jockeys, they had a great library, and they played some wonderful records. They played some that weren't so good, but I enjoyed them [...] I wish the audience had more chances to hear more music vis-a-vis the radio. And the third thing I would hope is that musicians continue to get better every night. Don't accept an off night as being okay because it's just jazz. No man, get away from here. Get out. Bye.

Read the full interview at thesaintnewspaper.co.uk

Illustration by Sandra Palazuelos Garcia

A Culture of Carelessness

A dangerous lack of drug testing in St Andrews

ALEX BRUBAKER
RELIC WRITER

Many St Andrews students use recreational drugs unsafely. I am from San Francisco, California — a city in the midst of a deadly fentanyl crisis. It is common to know someone who has overdosed from a laced drug. People test their drugs before they use them, and if they don't, they know they should have. Many carry Naloxone (known as Narcan in the US), which can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose.

I was surprised to find that testing drugs and carrying Naloxone in St Andrews is the exception, not the rule. "Last time I picked up [cocaine], I picked up with seven other people, and I was the only one who tested it," said an anonymous student I interviewed. "It's this naive, like, 'Why would a dealer make their product bad when that's how they make their living?'" A lack of testing and carrying Naloxone can be a deadly combination. This gave me the impression that people weren't going to change their practices until St Andrews saw an overdose.

These safety measures are part of a public health approach called harm reduction. Fundamentally, harm reduction accepts that people are going to use drugs regardless of attempts to punish or stigmatise drug use. Instead, education, drug testing, overdose reversal, and treatment programs reduce the potential for harm for the user and overall dampen the negative effects of drug usage.

Street drugs are not consistently pure. The latest data from the UK Department of Health in 2018 showed MDMA/Ecstasy purity levels at 76%. Cocaine was even lower at 63%, the lower-priced variety known sometimes as 'student' cocaine, at about 40%. Fentanyl contributes to about a dozen deaths in Scotland each year — comparatively low, but concerning nevertheless.

More concerning is the rising number of deaths from a new class of synthetic opioids called nitazenes. In the first three months of 2025, nitazenes had already been identified as the cause of 38 suspected drug deaths in Scotland, doubling from the same period in 2024. Nitazenes have 50–500 times the potency of heroin, and have been found as adulterants in drugs sold as heroin, oxycodone, benzodiazepines, and cannabis products.

Even for someone using a different drug, nitazenes still pose a threat. Public Health Scotland warns of a "significant risk" of nitazenes in the wider drug supply, underreported due to limited testing. Nitazenes are also difficult to detect postmortem; according to King's College London, they are estimated to go underreported by 33% in UK drug deaths. Nitazenes are permeating Scotland's drug supply in a more widespread and deadly way than is being recognised.

The only consistent source of drug tests at St Andrews is the art and music collective Szentek, which provides them before its two major events. "No one's gonna test their drugs if they have to pay to test them, so we pay a pretty substantial amount to get these kits. But I think it's totally worth it to give them out for free," said Jada Wegner, Szentek's Executive Director. "It gives me peace of mind to know that, when I'm at our events, most people have tested." For each event, Szentek provides about 100 test kits. "We've run out of them every single time," Wegner said.



The tests that Szentek provides are known as reagent tests, the cheapest and most accessible form of drug testing. This is an umbrella term for any kind of test that uses a reagent: a compound that reacts to contact with the drug. Szentek's tests can identify ketamine, estimate cocaine or MDMA purity, or identify common cutting agents in cocaine.

These tests are semi-quantitative and do not eliminate the possibility of accidental overdose. None of these tests identifies nitazenes. Yet, these tests can be incredibly helpful in determining what a substance is, if it contains something else potentially deadly, or how much to take. Using their own funds, Szentek is making a noble effort to reduce potential harm from drugs at their events.

Szentek's test kit distribution shows demand within the student body for these resources. After speaking with them, my next question was: Why are these not being provided by the Union or Student Services? Students' Unions in Stirling and Edinburgh provide free test kits upon request. St Andrews' Union website, in a typo-ridden section labelled "safe drug consumption," directs students seeking a drug test to "reach out to organisers" of the "lots of collectives and societies" that supposedly supply them. It briefly describes Naloxone and provides a link to more information, but does not mention how to obtain it.



I requested a meeting and a statement from Alex Chun, President of Wellbeing for the Union, to address my concerns about the website. Chun, to my surprise, was passionate and informed about the topic. They had spearheaded a movement to provide drink test strips and urine drug tests so students could check if they had been spiked. On drug tests and Naloxone, Chun stated, "The Union does not currently provide drug testing kits for recreational drugs. We also recommend that anyone using recreational drugs utilise the free drug testing service WEDINOS, which tests mailed-in samples of drugs for any additives — such as nitazenes [...] The Union has investigated providing free Naloxone; however, the United Kingdom requires institutions distributing Naloxone to log each instance through a specific software, which the University is not eligible to access. To get Naloxone, I recommend visiting the website Scottish Families Against Drugs, as they can provide free click and deliver Naloxone kits and digital training."

This statement shows the Union is aware of the necessity of these resources and knows where to guide people. Chun referred me to Talia Porter, coordinator of GotLimits, an initiative by Student Services focused on drug and alcohol harm reduction. GotLimits' Instagram page provides everything the Union page lacks. They have a post on reagent testing that shows where to get it and how to do it, and one with accurate signs of overdose and when to administer Naloxone.

I was pleasantly surprised by GotLimits' achievements. They helped pass a paper in December that shifts the University's drug policy towards treatment over punishment. They also helped Chun organise Naloxone training for Union staff. "There's literally a harm reduction van that comes and sits right there every Monday from four to five, and you can give your drugs to them, and they'll send them to get tested," Porter said, pointing to the courtyard outside our seat in Rector's Cafe. The van also provides Naloxone kits, safe consumption materials, and treatment advice.

When I asked Porter about reagent test kits, the answer got more complicated. They explained that GotLimits is authorised to help provide them to clubs and societies before events. However, as the main concern in the current drug market is nitazenes, there is a risk of a false negative. Again, reagent tests don't identify nitazenes. "University of Stirling has a guide to go with their drug tests," Porter explained, "and that would need to be developed. I am developing it."

This reminded me of a phrase I heard a few times during this investigation that people were reluctant to go into detail on: "insurance liability." It seemed there were voices concerned about the implication of providing a student with a drug test for the student to receive a false result and overdose. I asked Porter about this: "I just think that all of these concerns around insurance are sometimes maybe a mask for concerns around traditions. And I think it prevents us from doing a lot of good work," they said. Porter described GotLimits' relationship with Student Services as overall positive and stressed that they have students' best interests at heart. But miles of bureaucratic red tape, including these insurance concerns, seem to be stopping GotLimits from achieving the full potential of the work they want to be doing.

> "There is a demand in St Andrews for harm reduction materials, a demand that is not currently being filled."

There is demand in St Andrews for harm-reduction materials, which is not currently being met. Motivated actors within Student Services and the Union are making progress towards filling this demand. These pushes, however, currently fall short of creating easy and widespread access, leaving the responsibility on societies such as Szentek. Bureaucracy, insurance concerns, a lack of publicity, and, possibly, traditional modes of thought slow progress and limit access. Students' false sense of security about drug safety creates apathy towards seeking out the services that do exist. Hopefully, one of these can catch up to the other, and we can prevent a tragedy before it happens.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HANNA SABU AND JADA WEGNER

The Not-So-Subtle Art of the St Andrews Finance Bro

ISABEL BIRGE
Relic Writer

You've probably seen them. Whether it be the postgraduate room in the Main Library, the Central Bar, or the local Pret, they're difficult to miss. If the Patagonia gilets, Barbour jackets, quarter-zips, and leather briefcases don't give them away, the deep chorus of German being spoken might: these are the so-called 'finance bros' of St Andrews.

Don't get me wrong, I give them this label affectionately, not derogatorily, and it is my sincere hope that these finance bros wear it — and their uniforms — with pride.

Walking down Market Street feels like a fashion show: an art at which this particular group of students excels. Indeed, the streets of St Andrews are perhaps one of the better arenas where one can observe not only how aesthetically inclined the student body seems to be, but also how the many distinct niches of St Andrews students seem to visually differentiate themselves.

Everyone is prone to varying degrees and expressions of homogeneity, especially at small universities such as this one. We often think of insular spaces as promoters of conformity, and this holds true, to some extent, but here at St Andrews, I have found this is not always the case. The University, of course, has a well-established reputation for being a sanctuary of poshness and privilege: a recipe not exactly conducive to social diversity. Still, within this realm, variation exists; you just have to know where to look.



If St Andrews is itself a microcosm (albeit one that, at times, appears to be estranged from reality to a troubling degree), then the infinite microcosms that exist within it are an even more peculiar phenomenon. One can encounter the archetypal finance bro just as easily as, say, the slightly alternative literature or art history student at virtually any university. We, as university students, are attuned to noticing certain visual cues in the way one dresses or presents oneself as indicators of, among other things, one's chosen field of study. St Andrews, in particular, is a space that seems to lend itself simultaneously to conformity and self-expression.

The finance bros of St Andrews, for instance, stand out. This is, in part, because you can often find them and their luxury accoutrements spread out across one of the long tables in the postgrad room, loudly comparing pictures of the designer watches they want to buy. While I may have trouble envisioning myself in twenty or 30 years, as I listen to the stream of unbroken, polysyllabic German (this part of the library's built-in white noise machine), I can see these students very clearly as the fully grown stockbrokers they strive to imitate.

As the old adage goes, *dress for the job you want, not the job you have*. These words are sacrosanct for a demographic whose degree prerequisites apparently include the aforementioned luxury clothing items and probably a Clay Pigeon membership. While embodiment of the 'finance bro' archetype seemingly reduces all individuality into a collective identity, this identity is, indeed, a unique one, even amongst the careful swankiness of St Andrews.

Aside from their palpable attempts at sophistication, the finance bros of St Andrews seem a bit out of place in this quiet, seaside village. But perhaps we all are. We are each drawn to study here for our own reasons: the academic prestige, social reputation, and Oxbridge or Ivy League rejection. Some of these may be more commonplace than others. The St Andrews Business School's Department of Economics, Finance, and Management offers numerous MSc courses, all of which rank highly. The draw is understandable. As is the appeal of a lucrative career.

Still, the ostensible finance bro attire raises a slew of questions. For one, is their uniformity a conscious or unconscious choice? Is it a means of asserting their dominance over St Andrews by offering us a glimpse into their fashionable futures of financial prosperity? I'm not one to judge (clearly), but if I had decades of high-stress 50-hour work weeks to look forward to, I'm sure I'd be tempted to purchase a gilet or two in order to shield myself from the existential weight of my career choices.

In any case, the next time you see an army of tall, gilet-wearing twenty-somethings coming towards you, their leather oxfords treading confidently — yet precariously — over the cobblestones, you'd best be reminded: this is *not* Market Street; this is Wall Street.

Illustration by Niamh McPartlin

The Dark Enlightenment

The rising anti-democratic culture of the alt-right

ALIX RAMILLON
Relic Writer

Lovers of culture and activists often treat culture as a battlefield where progressive art, media, and pedagogy automatically counter fascism — until they read about the Dark Enlightenment, an anti-democratic, anti-egalitarian philosophy that arose in online forums in the late 2000s. At its centre sits a prominent software engineer, Curtis Yarvin, who writes under the pseudonym 'Moldbug,' and British philosopher Nick Land, who rejects the Enlightenment's core values of universal rights, popular sovereignty, and rational discourse. Land's contribution to the movement is itself a chilling read full of a utilitarian view of culture; he champions a culture that fosters hierarchy, technocratic authority, and market-driven governance.

Their vision imagines the state as a corporate entity run by a CEO-monarch who can outcompete rival city-states in a Darwinian marketplace of governance, embracing scientific racism, accelerationist capitalism, and a "Cathedral" metaphor for contemporary liberal institutions that supposedly enforce progressivism and the synopsis of egalitarianism. The ideology's emphasis on efficient authoritarian rule resonates with certain fascist leaning figures who seek to replace democratic deliberation with elite-driven, techno-feudal structures. The worst in all that? These ideas are spreading faster than ever. Government-policy pilots such as the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) and the Project 2025 proposal have adopted Yarvin's "RAGE" (Retire All Government Employees) language, telling of how a philosophy is being translated into concrete policy drafts. It goes beyond obscure blogs, having seeped into mainstream right-wing circles. Prominent tech investors like Peter Thiel or Marc Andreesen and political operatives like Steve Bannon and JD Vance have cited or praised its ideas. The irony is that Peter Thiel's public endorsements have turned the philosophy into a tech-elite meme. Thiel has repeatedly praised Yarvin and called him "fully enlightened," linking the movement to the venture-capital network known as the Thielverse.

The rise of the Dark Enlightenment marks a shift from its place within marginalised groups to significant societal impact, challenging our traditional liberal view of culture. This emerging perspective frames both media and academic institutions as tools of power that shape collective beliefs to uphold egalitarian ideals. Cultural production is being appropriated by authoritarian technocrats who utilise aesthetics,



myth-making, and digital channels to legitimise their hierarchical dominance, all while silencing works that critically question their narratives. Culture no longer stands as a guaranteed bastion of resistance; it is slowly becoming a mouthpiece for neo-reactionary and fascist agendas. This awareness compels scholars and activists to critically examine cultural practices, not just focusing on who is being resisted, but also identifying who is leveraging cultural symbols to propagate a new and anti-liberal ideology.

Our concern about the Dark Enlightenment is warranted, as it commercialises culture into a regulated form of knowledge that undermines the very principles of free thought. Take the example of the New College in Florida. Here, education, especially within the liberal arts, is increasingly facing threats from influential new pseudo-intellectuals. Our fight should begin at the foundational levels of culture itself. We must foster a cultural landscape free from the approval of tech elites, one that counters the alt-right media and actively works to recruit students like us on campuses, preventing the infiltration of the Dark Enlightenment into political systems.

Image from Wikimedia Commons

Poetry and Pints: Forspoken's Open Mic

HANNAH WILKINSON
EVENTS WRITER

"Surprise! You have found yourself in love with a kinky hobbit."

Yes — you read that correctly. And no, this is not some stray scrap of *Lord of the Rings* paraphernalia found pinned to a Tolkien enthusiast's bedroom wall. This, astonishingly enough, is the opening line of a poem by Spencer Mason: confessional in tone, brazen in spirit, and delivered with the sort of candour that makes a room full of strangers sit up a little straighter.

Mason, a poet from Dundee, took over Aikman's Bar with the air of a man who had absolutely no intention of boring anybody. His performance blended confessional poetry with theatrical delivery, accompanied by a dose of political messaging. At one point, Mason described himself as "an anarchist who votes," which seemed to neatly summarise the spirit of the set: rebellious, but still broadly in favour of filling out a ballot. Whatever one expected from a poetry night, it was safe to say that line had not been on the list.

But I'm getting ahead of myself. Mason was only one act in an evening that had already taken several unexpected turns.

Picture this: It's almost nine o'clock on a Saturday. The regular crowd shuffles in, expecting the usual raucous noises of a bar. Instead, they are greeted by the melodic cadence of spoken poetry. Aikman's Bar is hosting the Forspoken Poetry and Open Mic, a poetry night that replaces the standard pub chatter with something a little more lyrical.

The event, on 28 February, was led by Gabriela Milkova Robins and Mike Yuill, who explained to me that it had been set in motion because they were simply too excited to wait for the annual StAnza International Poetry Festival.

The evening's poets demonstrated that inspiration can come from almost anywhere — including the everyday hazards of seaside life. Poet Dan Power introduced what he described as a "scathing" poem titled 'Violence,' recounting the particularly harrowing moment a vicious seagull snatched his Gregg's pasty. Anyone who had ever paid the toastie shack's "seagull insurance" nodded knowingly.

Power, whose delivery suggested a man deeply committed to deadpan delivery, then surveyed the audience and asked, with the grave air of a man about to address the human condition, "Does anyone here worry?" A few heads nodded in the affirmative. Fortunately, he had come prepared with a poem entitled 'Don't Worry,' which seemed a sensible countermeasure.

Another poet, Mattea Gernentz, drew inspiration from a rather different source: her love for curation and art history. Her poems were inspired by the intricate interiors created by Narcissa Niblack Thorne, known collectively as the Thorne Miniature Rooms.

Her work drew heavily on place and memory, including Paris, where Gernentz spent some time as an au pair. Gernentz described her experiences in the city and reflected on the curious phenomenon known as Paris syndrome — the disorienting gap between the romanticised city and the real one.

More locally, she spoke about drawing inspiration from familiar places, from the quiet paths of the University of St Andrews Botanic Garden, to time spent in Glasgow.

The evening reached the most perilous frontier of live performance: audience participation. At one point, a poet requested that the assembled company join their voices in unison to say "welcome," adding an unexpected chorus to their poetry.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY FORSPOKEN

As the evening progressed, the microphone opened to anyone willing to step forward. Subjects ranged widely. There was a poem about a childhood dance recital, another about A-level history, one reflecting on a recent loss, and — because poetry is nothing if not democratic — an earnest meditation on eggs. Someone even invoked Ernest Hemingway's famous six-word story: "Baby shoes, for sale, never worn." A reminder, perhaps, that poetry can come in many shapes and sizes, from miniature tragedies to anarchic hobbits.

At Forspoken, although you may have come expecting a pint, you stayed to discover what strange and wonderful thing someone will dare to say into the microphone next.

Ones to Watch: Events of the Week

Madrigal Group at 80
Friday, 20 March

The 16-member St Andrews Madrigal Group has been an important part of the town's cultural heritage since its founding in 1946. Performing at venues from the Kate Kennedy-organised Gaudie to the University Holocaust Memorial, its concert on Friday 20th will celebrate its 80-year history with music from the renaissance to modern works by alumni. The concert will be followed by a ceilidh on Saturday at Lower College Hall.

Glitterball
Saturday, 21 March

For both queer students and those who simply love the chance to dress up in their sparkliest garb, Glitterball has been an important cultural staple. However, nothing good lasts forever, and this year's Glitterball will sadly be the last. So, grab your friends of all sexualities for one final night of drag, dancing, DJs, drinks and dress up. Go because this gay editor can't.

Heritage Museum Curator's Tour
Sunday, 29 March

This museum tour is headed by Museum Curator Sam Walker, for a guided tour of this North Street house's former occupants and inhabitants. With the tour, visitors have the chance to explore seven new exhibitions, and all they have to offer. Along with the tour, visitors have access to the museum itself, and all the various objects it has to offer. The tour will take place at the Heritage Museum on 12 North Street.

Ubuntu: Imbewu
Sunday, 29 March

Join the Ubuntu Charity Fashion Showcase for what they call an 'African and Caribbean cultural fashion experience'. With much more than just a runway, Ubuntu will fill the Laidlaw with a traditional band, spoken world and a sense of narrative. Influenced by ethnobotany, the show will explore our connection to the natural world, and expressions of heritage.

Sip, Save, St Andrews: Cocktail Week is Back

JOSS WILDGOOSE BULLOCH
Events Writer

This article has been kindly sponsored by St Andrews Cocktail Week

Between my weekly Shinty socials, and my friends' many 'splitting the G' competitions, I face a perilous truth: I live in a world of beer drinkers. However, for ten glorious days between 20-29 March, St Andrews Cocktail Week means I must no longer hide myself away.

Now in its fourth year, St Andrews Cocktail Week has hit upon a winning formula. Purchase a wristband online to gain access to a week's worth of exclusive deals: cocktails priced from £5, two-for-one drinks, food discounts, and each participating venue's exclusive signature cocktails and mocktails.

I had the exclusive opportunity to visit a number of venues ahead of the event, each with their own unique offerings.

12pm – Dune: As Venue No. 1, Dune had the privilege and responsibility of serving as the first impression — and needless to say, they delivered. Their signature Apple Crisp comes in at an equally crisp fiver: a blend of tequila blanco, cinnamon, and lime that makes for a refreshing taste of the St Andrews spring.

1pm – T-Squared Social: While many venues opt for a zesty summer drink as their Cocktail Week signature, T-Squared have gone decidedly against the grain with the Paddy Cake. A blend of Guinness and Baileys — inspired by the Black Forest gâteau — the cocktail is infused with espresso for an extra kick — and caused quite a stir, with other patrons curiously enquiring after it across the bar. If you're looking for something less experimental, or happen to be the designated driver, the colourful Butterfly Pea Spritz is a refreshing non-alcoholic alternative.

2pm – The Adamson: The sunny interiors of the Adamson, filled with families dining out for Mother's Day, made for an ideal spot for a relaxed daytime cocktail. The Lady Dalton — gin, orange liqueur, lemon, and crème de pêche — seemed to transport me somewhere far more tropical than a rainy Scottish spring. One of the unexpected highlights was the succulent cornbread and salted truffle butter served alongside our drinks. What more could you ask for?

3pm – The Physician: I know – another cocktail! The centre of mixology in St Andrews, the Physician adds to its existing 20% student discount with even lower prices for Cocktail Week. The classic Physician cocktail drops to £7 for ten days, combining the sweet-and-sour tang of a mojito with the warmth of an Old Fashioned. Four further cocktails join the selection for the week, including my personal favourite: a rhubarb and ginger gin infused with lemon and homemade grenadine.

4pm – Hatch: By the time I reached Hatch, the rain had cleared and sun was pouring through the windows — the perfect setting for what turned out to be the most refreshing cocktail of the day. The Lillet Spritz, at just £5, delivers a double shot of Lillet with soda and grapefruit: a perfect companion to a weekend brunch.

5pm – Ham's Hame: The home of hospitality. Tucked just a stone's throw from West Sands and the Scores, Hams Hame brings a warmth and conviviality that makes it the perfect venue for a longer, more relaxed stop on the Cocktail Week trail. Two signature cocktails really brought home the bacon: the Rosemary Grove, a twist on the classic G&T that strikes a fine balance between bitter and sweet, and the Tequila Sunset, a vivid, citrusy delight that paired beautifully with the excellent burgers that followed. Both cocktails are £6, and with food discounts available for wristband holders throughout the week, the convivial, polished surroundings of Hams Hame — and its picturesque location — make it well worth a longer visit.

6pm – Haar: "Haar, Haar, Haar," I chuckled to myself as I made my way down Golf Place after a splendid cocktail-filled afternoon. The Michelin-star seafood restaurant had condensed the taste of the sea breeze into a single glass. The Smoked Agave Sour for £7, complemented by Brown Crab Choux Buns, are perfect for the fine food connoisseur, with a steep discount on the normal £16 cocktails. All I have to say is: Bravo!

St Andrews Cocktail Week offers something more than just a booze-filled adventure. It's a chance to support hospitality businesses during a quieter time of year and to shine a light on the incredible range of bars and venues the town has to offer.

Wristbands are available at standrewscocktailweek.co.uk, priced from £9.95 for advance tickets and £14.95 for final release. Groups of four or more can grab tickets for just £7.95 each — and students can claim 50% off using the code '50off' at checkout.

Once you have your ticket, you can collect your physical wristband from Dune on North Street (80 North St, KY16 9AH) between 12pm and 8:30pm ahead of the event from 13-19 March. Simply show staff your ticket barcode, which will be scanned and exchanged for your wristband.

The real beauty of cocktails lies within the community — bring your friends, bring your family (as long as they're over eighteen!), bring whoever you'd like to any one of these excellent venues for an inexpensive, delicious cocktail — or 30!

DCA Dundee: More Than a Cinema

NATALIE CONTINI
Events Writer

I sometimes find it hard to fill my time here at St Andrews. Between coursework and — depending on the time of day — the Old Union Coffee Shop or Aikman's outings, I often spend the rest of the day rotting in my room. In my hometown, I might fill my time going to the cinema — and no, I will *not* see a film at T-Squared Social — or taking a pottery class at my local community centre, yet there doesn't seem to be an equivalent in St Andrews itself. Whilst this town has a lot to offer, it sorely lacks a space for the visual arts to thrive. However, at the beginning of this semester, I found a place that offered exactly what I had been missing.

Dundee Contemporary Arts, better known as DCA, is, at its core, a very plush cinema. Situated a nice five-minute walk from the Dundee Railway Station, DCA also offers classes from art courses in their print shop to more practical sessions, including introductory courses to Adobe Photoshop. In addition to this, there is a gallery with rotating exhibits, a swanky restaurant called Jute, and, of course, films shown daily (at super reasonable prices, with a student ticket only costing £7). It is the perfect place to spend your day off, which is exactly what I have been doing every Wednesday for the past six weeks.

> "While this town has a lot to offer, it sorely lacks a space for the visual arts to thrive."

This week, I attended *We Contain Multitudes*, an exhibition featuring artists Andrew Gannon, Nnena Kalu, Daisy Lafragem, and Jo Longhurst, on show until 26 April. The exhibition brings together sculpture, drawing, painting, poetry, and photography, all connected by each artist's lived experience of disability. Walking through the two galleries that this exhibition takes up, a few pieces stood out, including Kalu's large sculptural forms. Made from layers of tape, thread, and paper wrapped around frames, they seemed to twist and stretch across the room, as if displaying the movement of the artist's body. Conversely, Lafragem's paintings were more intimate. Created on the floor whilst the artist navigated chronic pain, the works incorporated kinesiology tape, normally used to support joints, embedding the reality of bodily care into the art itself.

The exhibition's curators did a phenomenal job of providing context, with plenty of descriptions of the art on display, and the pieces they selected genuinely flowed together. The exhibition is relatively small; I was able to accomplish it in under 30 minutes. However, due to the rotating nature of DCA's exhibitions, you are able to return time and time again to see the new artists they feature. Starting on 16 May, a new exhibition, *Francis Dosoo: Portrait of Dorothy Gale*, will open to the public.

After exploring the gallery, I headed downstairs to Jute, DCA's restaurant. While on the pricier side, everything I ordered was delicious. I had brought my roommate along on my DCA adventure, so we split a citrusy salad and salmon, a ginormous burger that is definitely enough for two or maybe three people, and some standout truffle fries. Whilst the Jute only offered a small menu, they provided the perfect entrées to split amongst people — and in my opinion, that's the best way to order at a restaurant. Although expensive, I definitely recommend the Jute to those wanting the full DCA experience.

We finished off the night with a visit to the in-house cinema to see *Sinners*, which was nominated for a record-breaking sixteen Academy Awards and won four. During awards season, DCA is showing all the Oscar Best Picture nominees, along with films nominated in other categories. I'm one of those people who believes films are best seen on the big screen. Being able to see such a variety of films for cheap is much more valuable than just watching on my laptop in my room.

DCA may initially seem like a far-flung cinema which is no competitor to the much more local T-Squared. After all, on a rainy weekday night, a trek to Dundee might seem unappealing. However, it's about much more than just the cinema: The spaces it creates for a diverse range of artists and the genuinely useful courses they offer for every age range make it a valuable common space where art lovers can spend their time without breaking the bank.

The Cheat Sheet: Is Infidelity Written in Our DNA?

BHANI KAUR
SCI-TECH WRITER

There is no single 'cheating gene' sitting on a chromosome like a ticking moral time bomb. What researchers have actually found is a cluster of genetic variants that shape how the brain processes reward, bonding, and satisfaction — and for some people, the emotional arithmetic of monogamy is, neurologically speaking, harder to balance.

At the heart of this is a hormone called vasopressin, which acts as a sort of biological glue for empathy and trust. Researchers have identified a specific variant of the AVPR1A gene where the docks for this hormone — known as receptors — do not function as effectively. For people with this low-binding version, the neurological pull toward a partner after intimacy simply does not stick as firmly. In a 2014 study of over 7,000 twins, women carrying this specific variant were statistically more likely to report extra-pair mating, suggesting that for some, the architecture of attachment is built differently from the ground up.

Vasopressin works in tandem with oxytocin to regulate the neural pathways that reinforce monogamous attachment. While animal studies on prairie voles show that disrupting these receptors causes them to lose their biological incentive to stay with a mate, the human parallel is more nuanced. It is less about a total lack of loyalty and more about a difference in the brain's reward sensitivity. That is where the DRD4 gene comes in, which regulates dopamine, the brain's 'more' molecule. Some people carry a variant that makes their brain less sensitive to dopamine, meaning routine happiness does not register with the same intensity. A study from Binghamton University found that people with this variant were twice as likely to report a history of uncommitted sex because the thrill of the forbidden provides a chemical hit that familiarity no longer delivers.

The brain's mesolimbic reward pathway drives this dopamine-seeking behaviour. When this system is chronically under-stimulated, the prefrontal cortex — the part of the brain responsible for impulse control and long-term planning — can be effectively overridden by the limbic system's more immediate demands. It functions like a metabolic rate for emotional satisfaction; some people feel full on very little, while others are perpetually, neurologically hungry. However, having these genes does not doom a person to infidelity, and understanding the neuroscience is not the same as excusing the behaviour. Cheating remains universally condemned because neuroimaging confirms that romantic betrayal activates the same brain regions as physical pain. The anterior cingulate cortex fires like a distress signal during a breakup or betrayal, flooding the body with cortisol and a physical sense of grief.

For those wired with a loud 'guilt complex' — the type of person who loses sleep over a mildly awkward email sent three years ago — the cognitive dissonance of leading a double life feels impossible to sustain. Yet, for some, the guilt circuitry appears quieter, and the reward system simply drowns out the conscience. Ultimately, neuroscience offers a way to understand why the brain is susceptible to certain behaviours, which is the first step in making conscious choices to override them.

Of course, biology is only half the story. In a town as tiny as St Andrews, cheating is less of a moral choice and more of a logistical nightmare. When a single trip to Tesco means bumping into your partner, their best friend, and a secret fling all at once in the meal-deal aisle, 'getting away with it' becomes a physical impossibility. Perhaps the best way to keep people honest is not through willpower or genetic engineering, but simply by trapping them in a small town where everyone is always watching.

A Tooth for an Eye

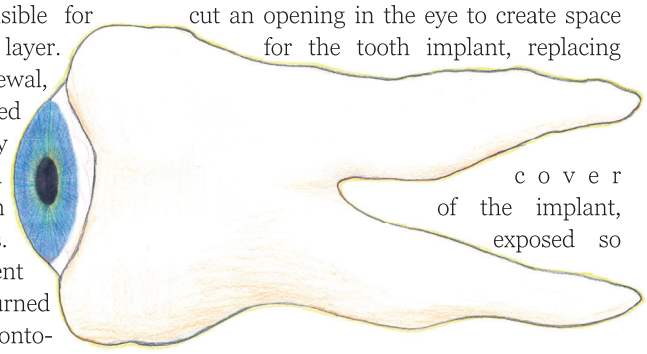
Replacing a cornea with a canine

HANNAN ANJARWALLA
SCI-TECH WRITER

Picture a harmless pre-game ritual like taking an ibuprofen before a basketball match, only for it to trigger a severe medical emergency that leaves you with burns across your body and eyes. That was the devastating reality for thirteen-year-old Brent Chapman from North Vancouver, whose life changed forever after a chemical reaction left him in a 27-day coma, ultimately costing him his vision. Countless surgeries followed, including multiple transplants that briefly offered chances of restoring his vision, but each attempt ultimately failed. However, Dr Greg Moloney, an eye surgeon and clinical associate at the University of British Columbia, became the rare hope that Chapman needed. He performed a rare tooth-in-eye implant procedure that finally gave Chapman back what he thought was lost forever: his sight.

In a healthy eye, the cornea, the transparent and dome-shaped protective outer layer, lets incoming light pass through to the lens and then to the retina, a sensitive layer of nerve tissue, which converts light into electrical signals for the brain. But Chapman's reaction triggered Stevens-Johnson syndrome, which causes severe inflammation leading the immune system to destroy eye limbal stem cells that are responsible for replacing the outer cornea layer. Without this cornea cell renewal, tissue becomes scarred eventually permanently opaque, blocking light from entering it, resulting in Chapman'scompleteblindness.

With no other treatment options left, Moloney turned procedure known as osteo-odonto-keratoprosthesis (OOKP). The canine tooth, the longest tooth in the mouth, is extracted from the mouth alongside a thin layer of surrounding bone to preserve the tooth's blood supply. The tooth is then shaved into a four-millimetre block, and a hole is drilled through it to support the insertion of a plastic optical cylinder, which is an artificial lens that lets light enter the eye again. The tooth is then implanted into the patient's cheek for a few months to allow the soft living tissue and blood vessels to grow and integrate around it, reducing the risk of bodily rejection once implanted in the eye. Once the tissue is ready, surgeons cut an opening in the eye to create space for the tooth implant, replacing



cover of the implant, exposed so retina, ultimately restoring lost vision.

"It's like watching people come out of a time capsule and reintroduce themselves to the world. It's highly emotional for us," said Dr Greg Moloney, reflecting on the remarkable medical procedure he helped pioneer. The surgery can take over twelve hours and is only performed by a handful of specialists globally, with strong long-term results. In one study, the tooth implants remained anatomically intact in around 94% of total cases. However, the intensity of the procedure requires lifelong monitoring and checkups to ensure the tooth implant does not erode. There have also been reported side effects such as mild glaucoma, an eye disease that damages the optic nerve and can result in vision loss. But this was a risk that Chapman was willing to take.

"What is the first thing you want to do after the surgery?" was a question posed to Chapman in an interview with CNN. "Just see the world and take it all in," he replied. This extraordinary procedure shows how far modern medicine has advanced in making once-irreversible blindness treatable. Chapman is just one of many patients who can benefit from this. Ultimately, it turns out the solution was hiding in the teeth all along.

ILLUSTRATION BY RAMONA KIRHKAM

Simulating the Human Brain

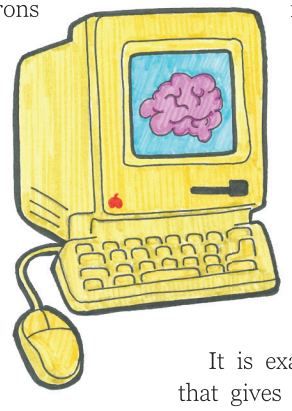
CALLUM BROWN
Sci-Tech Writer

AI has already made its place among the most influential technological developments of the modern era, but as the years tick by, it becomes clearer and clearer that growth is decelerating. Companies keep pledging to buy more chips, faster processors, and larger data centres, yet they achieve ever-diminishing returns. GPT-5 has somewhere between two and five trillion parameters — anywhere from double to quadruple the count of GPT-4 yet only achieved a roughly 20% increase on aggregate reasoning tests. Many users never even noticed the change. Yes, models keep getting better and better, but the problem is clear: companies cannot keep throwing money and parameters at the same old models to prevent them from plateauing. The solution may be neuromorphic computers.

Modern computers are built on von Neumann architecture, which emphasises strict separation between systems and components. At its core, von Neumann architecture demands two things: a central processing unit (CPU), which controls the rest of the machine and performs all logical and mathematical operations needed to run a program, and a memory unit, which stores files and instructions. Most computers now have additional parts such as the graphics processing unit (GPU) and motherboard, but they still keep the general approach the same. The CPU pulls necessary information from the memory, executes the commands given, and returns the result. This keeps computer functions clean, understandable, and less error-prone, but it has one problem. Simulating intelligence on machines like this is hard ... like, really hard.

The human brain (which is, after all, the kind of intelligence we are trying to copy) is not built like this at all. Though our brains also have small networks that are deeply intertwined with things like speech or fine motor skills, they are so interconnected that they put modern computers to shame. The problem is, neurons and their interactions are hard to simulate in real time, especially when there are 86 billion of them. They need to be strung together, column by column, and updated in small time increments, which severely limits the ways they can interact. The solution may be found in perovskite memristors.

Memristors are an electronic component first theorised in 1971 by Leon Chua that seem to mirror neurons in every way necessary to build an analogue neural network. Neurons in the human brain fire only when there are enough connecting neurons firing with sufficient strength; this required input is called the action potential. Similarly, memristors allow a signal through to the connecting memristors once enough electric potential has accumulated. Crucially, the more times memristors fire, the lower their resistance is in the future, which makes the response stronger each time, like a neuron firing over and over. Just like a brain, the longer a memristor goes without firing, the more it returns to its previous state. These two functions allow circuits to learn and forget in the same way we do. These analogue components have another upside: they don't run on a clock. When neural networks are simulated digitally, some number of input neurons fire all at once, then the next layer of neurons is updated, they all fire at once, and then the next layer is updated, and so on. With memristors, the neurons would fire as soon as they reach the potential and could update all the other neurons in the array, not just the next layer, leading to complicated feedback loops similar to those actually observed in organic systems.



It is exactly this convoluted behaviour that gives rise to the intricacy of organic thought. If this truly proves to be the way forward for artificial intelligence, it would transform the industry from the pay-to-win chip economy it is becoming, back into an innovation-driven confluence of material science, computer engineering, and biology.

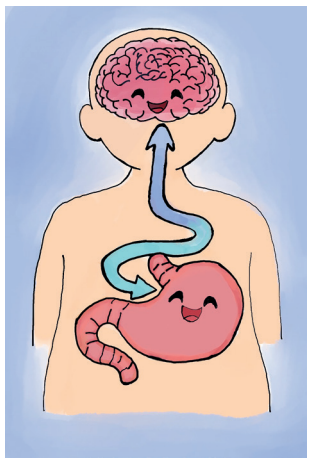
Illustration by Abigail Svaasand

Going with Your Gut

EVA SCHILTON
Sci-Tech Writer

The bidirectional pathway between the gut microbiome and the central nervous system (CNS) is becoming a major topic of conversation in health literature, given that disruption to this pathway leads to health concerns within both neurological and gastrointestinal diseases. In fact, healthcare professionals are now in the midst of finding an answer to the question: Does rebalancing of the gut microbiome work as a management option for related disease?

The gut, or inside of the intestines, hosts trillions of microorganisms, including thousands of species of bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites; ie. the microbiome. Initially inherited via breastfeeding in infants, this unique ecosystem is characterised by its environment within the body and its 'inhabitants', developing and changing based on diet and lifestyle factors. A symbiotic, or mutually beneficial, relationship develops between our bodies and microbes: we provide a host for their ecosystem, and they provide services to function in a balanced manner. Digestion plays a central role in which the gut microbiome is involved, aiding the breakdown of carbohydrates and fibres as well as providing the necessary enzymes to synthesise certain vitamins. Nonetheless, gut bacteria are also essential in metabolising bile in the intestines for what is called enterohepatic circulation. Once bile digests fats in the small intestine, bacteria and the correlated enzymes aid the breakdown of bile into bile acids for reabsorption by the liver. In the case of complications within this pathway, the body would be unable to recycle bile acids, and the liver would not have the necessary resources to produce new bile, interfering with the digestion and absorption of fats, effectively halting digestion. This ecosystem also plays a major role in immunity, as the gut constitutes the largest immune system organ in the body, with beneficial microbes in the gut training the immune system to differentiate these from pathogenic microbes. 'Helpful' gut bacteria directly compete with 'unhelpful' types for space and nutrients, preventing them from gaining an advantage over the entire microbiome. Short-chain fatty acids are an example of the byproducts of helpful gut bacteria and offer support to the body's immune system, preventing bacterial toxins from reaching the bloodstream and suppressing inflammatory reactions in autoimmune diseases.



Another point of overlap with gut microbes is via the Gut-Brain axis – the network of nerves, neurons, and neurotransmitters that run through the GI tract. The expression 'gut feeling' highlights this communication exactly, between the gut and CNS, affecting feelings, mood, and decisions, as there are more nerve cells in our gut than anywhere else in the human body. The Vagus nerve is the main link between the enteric nervous system (neural network within the GI tract) and the brain, conveying sensory information from inside the gut to the brain. Experimentation in treating related neural conditions by treating the gut microbiome is now taking place among healthcare specialists, using probiotics (live bacteria and yeast), antibiotics, and fecal microbiota transplantation (transferring a medically processed fecal sample from one person's gut to another).

Research suggests that individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) often show notable differences in their gut microbiome in comparison to neurotypical individuals. Multiple studies have found that people with ASD frequently have reduced microbial diversity, combined with an imbalance between beneficial and potentially harmful bacterial species. A 2024 study conducted by Peralta-Marzal et al. used machine-learning techniques to analyse microbiome data from multiple datasets in order to identify consistent bacterial patterns associated with autism. Researchers found that individuals with ASD showed distinct microbial signatures compared to neurotypical controls. By combining data from different studies, the analysis by Peralta-Marzal et al. demonstrated that certain microbial groups (Actinobacteria and Firmicutes) were repeatedly associated with ASD across populations. Furthermore, increased levels of Clostridium bacteria (belonging to the phylum Bacillota) have been observed – within this group, certain species produce neurotoxins and metabolic byproducts that possibly interfere with normal neurotransmitter signalling in the brain. Such microbial changes also contribute to the gastrointestinal symptoms that ASD patients have reported. However, work by Julia Yap and colleagues found no clear association between gut microbiota composition and ASD diagnosis, suggesting that observed microbial differences may instead result from ASD-related dietary and feeding behaviours.

Continued research into the Gut–Brain Axis will help determine a future strategy for managing neurological conditions, leading us closer to answering the question, 'Does rebalancing of the gut microbiome work as a management option for related disease?'.

Illustration by Mokshita Nagandla

Van-Demonium: AU Vans Deemed Unsafe

Failed MOTs and alarming incidents are putting students in danger

REUBEN GRAVES
SPORT WRITER

"We had three boys holding the door closed on the motorway to stop it from swinging open as the police drove past," former St Andrews Futsal player Will Henman told *The Saint*.

Henman recalled being one of three students physically forcing the door of an Athletic Union (AU) van shut while it sped along the motorway. Even at the time, it was clear that the vehicle was not in great condition, and at that moment, completely unsafe.

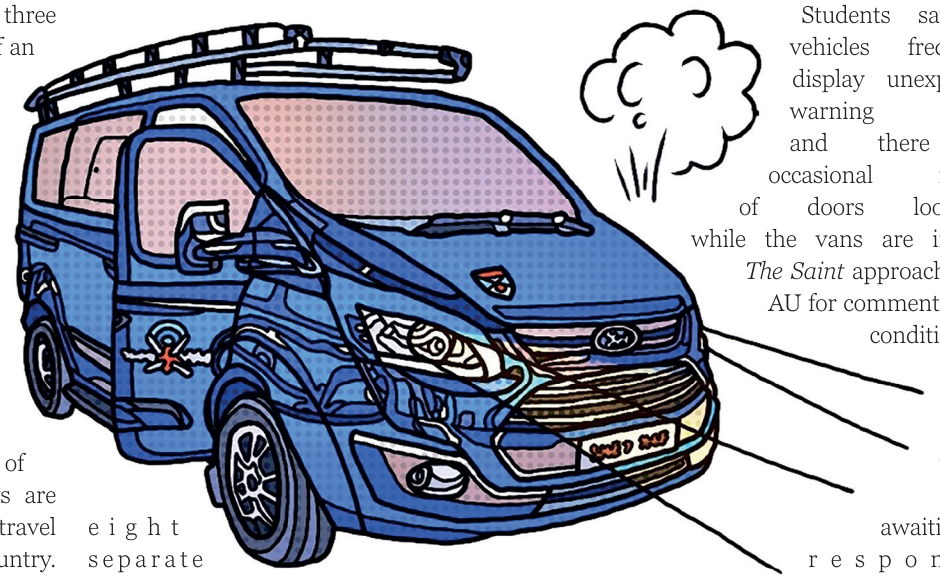
The AU, who are responsible for the vehicles, describes itself as a "student organisation for the support and development of sport at the University." While it is run by students, the body's funding ultimately comes from the University.

Through their membership of the AU, sports clubs at St Andrews are able to use university vans to travel to away fixtures across the country. However, the poor condition of several of these vehicles raises serious concerns about whether the convenience is coming at the expense of student safety.

The Saint spoke to multiple students who have travelled in AU vans, and several described concerning experiences.

"The driver lost all feeling in both the accelerator and the brakes," one student said. Their team was left stranded on the side of a road in Glasgow after the vehicle malfunctioned.

Public records show repeated mechanical failures across the fleet. One van was taken off the road this month after failing its MOT eight separate times between 2013 and 2025.



Another vehicle failed its MOT eleven times after 2011 before it was eventually removed from service in October last year.

In March 2016, that van failed the test with two faults classified as "dangerous." According to a government-approved MOT provider, a dangerous fault is one that "poses an immediate risk to the safety of the driver and other road users."

Despite these repeated failures, students were still permitted to drive the vans to fixtures across the UK in the days leading up to those unsuccessful MOT tests.

Students say the vehicles frequently display unexplained warning lights, and there are occasional reports of doors loosening while the vans are in use.

The Saint approached the AU for comment on the condition of the vans, and is still awaiting a response.

Concerns are not limited to the vehicles themselves. Some students have also questioned the adequacy of the training required to drive them. While drivers must complete a test before being allowed behind the wheel, one anonymous student described the assessment as "worryingly easy."

Despite his unsettling experience with the loose door, Henman still acknowledged the advantages the vans provide. He described them as "a luxury few universities have at their disposal." Having access to university vehicles makes travel much simpler for St Andrews sports clubs, especially compared with institutions that rely entirely on public transport to reach away fixtures.

However, when numerous clubs share stories about unreliable doors, unpredictable electronics, and tense motorway journeys, it becomes clear that improvements are necessary.

More frequent mechanical inspections, clearer limits on the age of vehicles in the fleet, and more thorough training for first-time drivers would all help address these concerns.

> "We had three boys holding the door closed on the motorway."

Physical exertion should be limited to the pitch, not to jamming a van door shut on the motorway.

ILLUSTRATION BY ISABELLE HOLLOWAY

On the Mark: St Andrews' Shooting Prodigy

GABRIELLA THOMAS
SPORT WRITER

"Look at the target. Close my eyes. Breathe in. Breathe out... Pull the trigger. Bang."

As Shawn Lin described the routine he follows before every shot, it became clear that, for a moment, he wasn't sitting at the table across from me; he was back at the range.

Lin has been selected to represent Scotland in rifle shooting as part of the Junior squad in the annual Scotland versus New Zealand match at the upcoming Junior International competition at the famous Bisley Shooting Ground.

"The discipline we're shooting at the moment is called smallbore prone shooting," Lin told *The Saint*. "Basically, we lie on the ground, aim at the target, and shoot."

Rifle shooting includes a range of different disciplines. In the smallbore category, athletes aim to hit as close to the centre as possible on a target made up of ten small circles, positioned 25 yards away.

"The selection process for the Junior squad is quite straightforward," Lin explained. "Your coach will nominate you if they see that you were born in Scotland, you're under 21, and your average score is high enough."

Lin later admitted that "high enough" actually means maintaining a near-perfect average score of around 97.5 out of 100. Despite the level of precision required, he seemed relatively unfazed by the challenge of performing consistently under pressure.

Maintaining such a high average requires commitment. Like many student-athletes, Lin has to balance his training with his academic work, and he can spend up to fifteen hours a week at the range.

When Lin first began shooting at university, he mainly saw rifle as a hobby. Since then, however, he has started to take the sport far more seriously.

"Rifle shooting isn't particularly physically demanding," Lin said. "But mentally and psychologically, it's very challenging. It's helped train me to be more focused and more disciplined."

In shooting, the smallest margins can make a significant difference.

"Every small movement you make while shooting has a big impact on where the shot lands," Lin explained. "If I hesitate even slightly when I pull the trigger, the shot won't go where I expect it to."

Lin's introduction to the sport during his time at school happened almost by accident.

"I originally wanted to do archery, but my school didn't offer it," Lin said, "So I tried shooting instead on a whim, joined a club, and I've been doing it ever since."

In his final year of school, Lin also gained experience coaching other students.

"I actually didn't shoot as much in my last year of school, but I spent a lot of time coaching," he said. "I really enjoy that side of it — helping people improve, especially beginners. I get a real sense of achievement from it."

Opportunities to represent your country do not come around often, but Lin appeared remarkably relaxed about the prospect.

"Honestly, it was really only last year that I started paying serious attention to it," he laughed. "But I'd love the chance to represent Scotland. Why not?"

With the awareness of a coach and the discipline of an athlete, Lin has now set his sights on joining the Senior squad as he approaches the end of his time in the Junior category. No doubt the St Andrews student will give it his best shot.

Diri Me, What a Fight!

Josh Diri steals the show at St Andrews Fight Night

BEN BAGLEY
SPORT EDITOR

"St Andrews, are you not entertained?"

Josh Diri bellowed the famous quote from *Gladiator* over the Kinkell Byre PA system after defeating Will Nugent in Fight Night's main event. The fourth-year's antics were more Jake Paul than Russell Crowe, but the crowd lapped it up.

> "St Andrews, are you not entertained?"

Diri-Nugent was the talking point going into this year's Fight Night. For months, the pair's feud has been the worst-kept secret in town. The fight was reportedly arranged after Nugent slapped Diri at last year's Charity Oktoberfest.

The Saint approached both Diri and Nugent for a comment before the fight, but a response was not forthcoming.

Twenty kilograms heavier than his opponent, Diri was the clear favourite.

His advantage showed in the opening round with Diri knocking Nugent's seemingly ill-fitting headguard off on several occasions. This clearly unnerved Nugent, who was on the back foot from the beginning.

The second round was similarly one-sided, with Diri bloodying Nugent's nose.

The blood-smeared Nugent heroically fought back in the third and final round of a fiery encounter, the crowd roaring as he landed several hefty blows on his rival.

There was certainly no love lost between the boxers, who fought with all the aggression of two Kinnesburn ducks scrapping over the last morsel of Hovis.

Ultimately, Nugent's comeback came too late, and the judges declared Diri the winner by a points decision.

> "Look at Carolyn's face and tell me that's a f***ing draw."

"Obviously, the heavier guy is going to win in three rounds," Cyrus Howbrook, a local boxing expert, said. "Another couple of rounds and Nugent could've had that."

Diri and Nugent shook hands after the fight in a rare sign of respect. Whether they can put their conflict behind them remains to be seen.

There was controversy earlier in the night when the judges declared a draw between Eukene 'Keke' Hernandez and Carolyn Carpenter. Hernandez was visibly enraged by the decision.

A witness backstage recalled Hernandez saying, "Look at Carolyn's face [which was covered in blood] and tell me that's a f***ing draw."

It is also reported that Hernandez said she planned to keep her blood-soaked glove as a trophy.

The biggest upset came when Lucas 'Flash' Gordon defeated the more experienced Brodie Dougan by technical knockout.



"I'm just glad Flash Gordon could save the universe," Gordon told *The Saint*. "I bleached my hair blonde. There's only so much aura you can lose in one night, so I'm glad I won."

Elodie Cowan put on a similarly commanding display, defeating opponent Eleanor Francis.

"When you step into the ring, you forget most of what you planned and just start hitting," Cowan told *The Saint*. "Looking back, I probably should have done a bit more sparring and high-pressure situations."

Whilst Cowan was reliant on good old-fashioned grit and determination, some fighters took their training regimes extremely seriously.

Greg Chang, who defeated Ektor Kantouras, employed the services of a former Marine as part of his training programme.

Oliver Clarke, Chang's coach, was full of praise for the Hong Kong native.

"I coach a lot of beginners, but Greg is different," Clarke told *The Saint*. "He worked his arse off in training and thoroughly deserved the win."

A lot of work goes into the boxers' five minutes of fame. "It's bittersweet," Ella Wilson, who saw off Liv Douglas in the first fight of the night, told *The Saint*. "After six weeks of training and getting close to the other fighters, it feels like a bit of a comedown."

The intense training regimes paid off for the winning fighters. Harriet Bayne triumphed over Eliza Tetley before Ben Gillies saw off Harry James.

Caden Ferguson and Kate Thomson were the night's other victors, warming the crowd up for the main event with edge-of-your-seat entertainment.

This year's event partnered with Conviction, a new "free-to-play prediction" platform established by St Andrews students. Ticket holders could stake points on their predictions to be in with a chance of winning a cash prize. It can't be long before Paddy Power gets involved.

Even without gambling, Fight Night is a mouth-watering proposition. Rather than standing around listening to Katy Perry, as is the case at many a St Andrews event, the audience is treated to watching their peers knock seven bells out of each other.

The pull of the event was clear as the moccasin-clad masses flocked to Kinkell Byre for the Tuesday night showdown

Some students even showed up without tickets. "We parked in a nearby woods," one punter told *The Saint*. "We managed to sneak in over a wall around the back."

Roman satirist Juvenal coined the term 'bread and circuses' to describe how gladiatorial spectacles could distract citizens from political injustice.

In St Andrews, it's more 'prosecco and circuses' but, nevertheless, the St Andrews gladiators provided the crowd with a welcome distraction from deadlines and 9am lectures.

PHOTO BY TATE SEDWICK

Sunday I'm in Love

FREDDIE COUGHLIN
SPORT WRITER

As one of Sheffield Tuesday's centre-halves, Sunday means game day.

This week we played defending champions Spartans, who nicked a late 7-2 win in the same fixture last season — time for revenge.

Tuesday legend Jake Turcan returned for the weekend — back from his loan spell in Madrid — a welcome addition to the side.

Spartans looked dangerous from the outset, playing it out from the back after their first goalkeeper, and working it up the pitch with accurate passing and delightful first touches. I've said it before, and I'll say it again, there's absolutely no place for that in the Sunday League.

Their early possession was rewarded with two scrappy goals. They managed to bundle a few more by full-time and the game ended 9-3 to Spartans. It could have gone either way.

Being the day after Oktoberfest, the lacklustre Tuesday showed just how much fun the day before had been. Rumours have been circulating that the Spartans manager had imposed a weekend-long beer ban on their squad. *The Saint* has not been able to confirm the rumour.

Elsewhere, Beavers lost a tight game to the so far unbeaten Botswana Meat Commission — no shame there.

DLL beat Butts Wynderers 4-3 with a late disallowed goal, intensifying the debate about the potential introduction of VAR next season.

Strokers and Real Sosobad drew 6-6 in their brutal 9am kick-off. Certainly rather you than me, lads.

DIVISION 1

Pos	Team	Pld	GD	Pts
1	Botswana MC	4	+18	12
2	DLL	4	+3	9
3	Beavers	4	+1	7
4	Spartans	4	+12	6
5	Strokers	4	-2	4
6	Sheff Tuesday	4	-15	4
7	Real Sosobad	4	-11	2
8	Butts Wynderers	4	-4	1

Weekend Results		
Beavers	4 - 6	BMC
DLL	4 - 3	B Wynderers
Spartans	9 - 3	Sheff Tues
Strokers	6 - 6	R Sosobad


ST ANDREWS CHARITY
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