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Independent Film Close-Up

SOREN RASMUSSEN
ARTS & CULTURE EDITOR

In the lobby of the Edinburgh Cineworld, as I doomscroll and wait for my 6:30pm screening, a twenty-something man several feet away stares down at a teal-and-orange poster splayed in his hands. *The Thelma Schoonmaker Prize for Short Filmmaking Excellence*, its heading reads, below which are ten short films each labelled with the little caption: *World Premiere*. In four days, one of those films will win the £15,000 to ensure it won't be its filmmakers' last. If he flipped the poster over, he would see the ten films in the feature-length competition, the Sean Connery Prize, that one for £50,000. But he doesn't flip it over; he isn't there yet.

Beside him, a woman of similar age timidly scans the lobby. She notices me, hesitates, turns away, scans again, glances back, makes eye contact, and finally walks over.

"Pardon me," she says with a mild Eastern European accent, "but would you mind taking our photo?" She holds out her phone.

I oblige, and she ushers herself and her companion onto the thin red carpet adhered with red duct tape along one of the lobby walls. Behind it, a black step-and-repeat backdrop displays the words "79th Edinburgh International Film Festival," interspersed among a collage of the festival's industry sponsors. The two tense and smile; the man holds up his poster and points with his other hand to one of the ten boxes. I do my best to square them up and take four or five

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University of St Andrews Ranked First in UK

NATHALIE HANZLIK-MEECH
NEWS WRITER

On Friday 18 September, the University of St Andrews was named the UK's best university in *The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2027*.

In this report, St Andrews was ranked ahead of The London School of Economics, Imperial College, Cambridge, and Oxford. It was also named Scottish University of the Year and runner-up UK University of the Year for Teaching Quality for 2027.

St Andrews also performed highly in *The Times'* subject rankings with five subjects ranked top in the UK: History, English, Art History, Modern Languages, and Physics. In addition, all subjects at St Andrews were ranked in the top six in the UK.

As the University's news report describes, *The Times* attributes St Andrews' success to "high student satisfaction scores, research quality, demanding entry tariffs, an international outlook, and the strong prospects of its graduates."

The University's report also states that it is the third time in six years that St Andrews has been placed first in the UK's longest-running university league table.

In conversation with *The Saint*, Alice Thomas, a first-year International Relations and Economics student, described how the top rankings of St Andrews "definitely played a role" in her selecting this university. Thomas explained that, as an international student, having such "definitively positive rankings helped me to get a better sense of St Andrews' reputation and ultimately helped me to justify the effort of moving abroad."

In contrast, Belle Boren, a third-year study abroad student from Baylor University, admitted that she did not know about the league table rankings of St Andrews when applying to study here for the semester. Instead, she was drawn by the quality of the academic programs and the picturesque location of the university town.

Boren said that "[as a] US study abroad student, I am not super familiar with the university system here in the UK. However, after being here for a while, I am not surprised by the rating […] I can imagine it would be hard to beat!"

On Friday 18 September, in a university-wide message, St Andrews' Principal and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dame Sally Mapstone, wrote: "Each one of you has contributed to this."

Mapstone continued: "From our demanding entry tariffs to the strength of our world-leading teaching and research, through the achievements of our students and graduates to the quality of the professional services which support our academic mission, St Andrews has proved not only that small is beautiful, it can be consistently sector-leading."

St Andrews has however dropped from second place in 2026 to fourth place in 2027 in *The Guardian University Guide*. In this report, St Andrews was topped by Oxford, Cambridge, and LSE, respectively.

The Guardian explained that its ranking system, like *The Times*, includes "what students say about their teaching and feedback in the annual National Student Survey." Unlike *The Times*, *The Guardian* rankings focus more on

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Mauled by the Saints…

GEORGE CAMPBELL
SPORT WRITER

At 7:27pm on Friday 18 September, 2026, the Saints went marching in, again. The Hive Stadium was energised by a glorious rendition of 'Flower of Scotland', which swelled around the sold-out 7,800 seat arena.

A minute later, students' echoes grew louder, the stands filled back up, plastic cups brimmed with Tennent's, and the mighty shadow of Murrayfield hung over the players.

With a few seconds to go, the flapping sound of the corner flags silenced the chants as the referee brought the whistle to his lips.

St Andrews to kick off.

The ball rippled through the air — the wait was finally over — the oldest rivalry in Scottish university rugby was ready to be renewed once more.

For the first ten minutes, the hosts applied the pressure. Yet the cohesion and spirit of the away players proved sufficient an antidote as Edinburgh probed for an opening that, crucially, never arrived.

A thirteenth-minute Edinburgh line break carried a whiff of devilment, seemingly fitting for the number on the clock, but this once again was thwarted by the Saints' defence.

At the 21-minute mark, Keenan Mills charged down a box kick on halfway, then won the foot race that followed, with a fortunate bounce that allowed the Saints to touch the ball down for an unconverted try. Amazing chase, how sweet the ground!

St Andrews were first to strike — no lecture halls involved. 5-0. This

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EDITORIAL

Over the course of the previous week, the University of St Andrews has been confronted with an onslaught of media attention. The University was lately ranked the best university in the UK by *The Sunday Times*, a designation charged with controversy across the academic sphere. More personal to the student body, perhaps, has been the coverage from various outlets investigating the University's distinct student culture. *The National*, *The Guardian*, and BBC's 'The Bubble' have, within the past week, published reports of the anti-Scottish prejudice, elitism, snobbery, and hedonism that line this town's three streets.

Thus the year is off to quite a start; shrewd media insights have called the nature of student social activity into question. But the press is a capricious thing, and an imposing one too. To write for a public audience is to insist on your own views, to raise an unflinching argument. Joan Didion called writing "the tactic of a secret bully, an invasion." Writers may often tell you what to think. Your job is to decide how you must.

Though criticisms of local culture are justified, they are not wholly representative of St Andrews — no single article will ever be. No student body is as homogenous as a media narrative might make it appear.

It is not unreasonable to describe St Andrews' student culture as a 600-year tension between tradition and revolution. Like the annual storms that punish this town's cliffs and sands, the centuries have accumulated and washed away the superficialities of our St Andrean identity, occasionally revealing the pure limestone silver beneath. Though seemingly unchanging, this town operates in cycles. Now is again the time to cast off the aspects of our heritage we now find obsolete.

We ask you to consider what indeed it means to be a student at this University. More than world-class academics and generous university rankings, perhaps our reputation lies within our values, our character, and our actions as a student body.

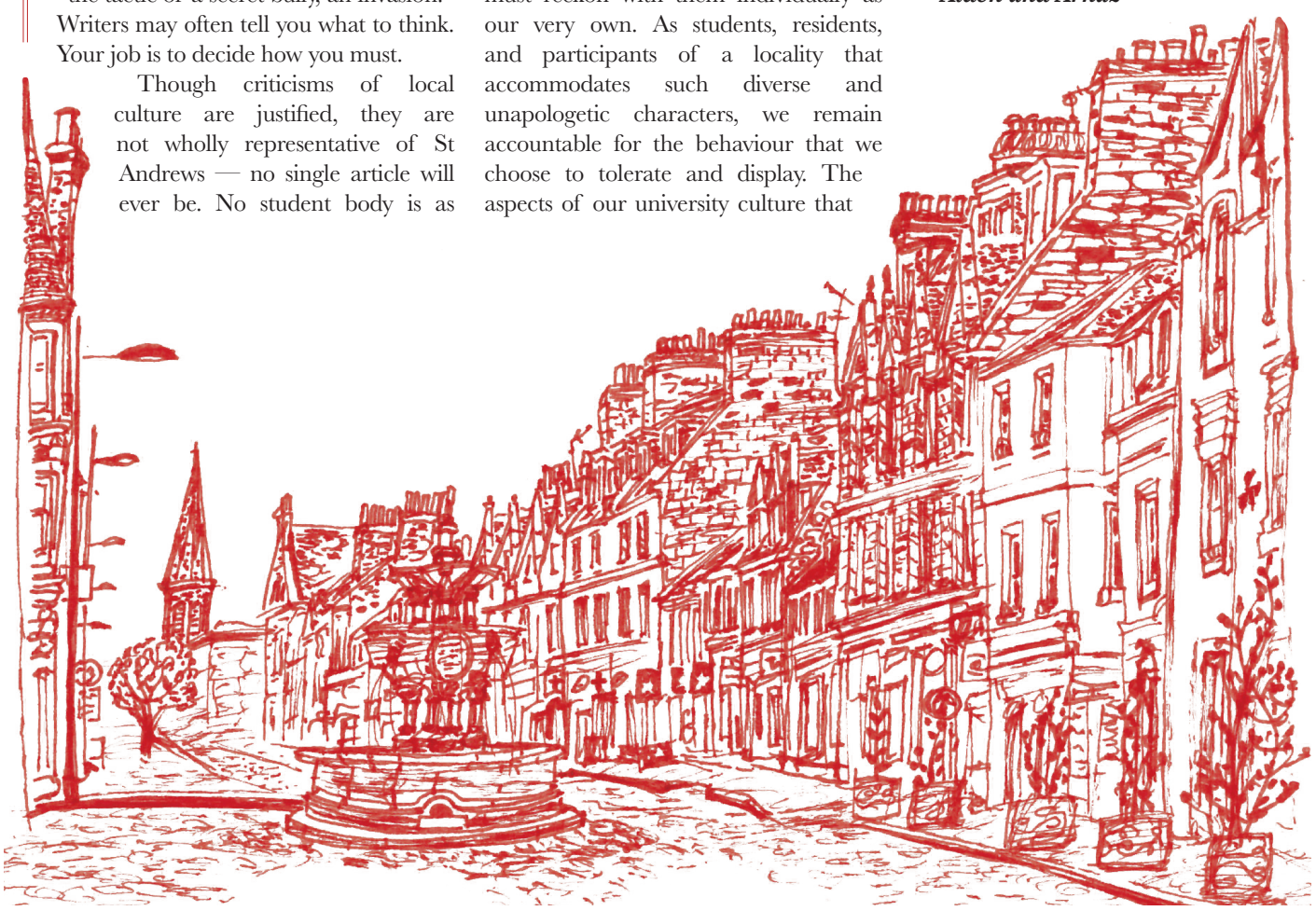
Whatever qualities the students of this university present to the world, we must reckon with them individually as our very own. As students, residents, and participants of a locality that accommodates such diverse and unapologetic characters, we remain accountable for the behaviour that we choose to tolerate and display. The aspects of our university culture that warrant preservation, and those we can in good conscience discard, lie in our hands — their fate is for us to determine.

You will know by now that St Andrews is a peculiar place, that it has its drawbacks. At The Saint, our work is simply to make things known: the good and the bad, the outrageous and the mundane, but all nonetheless significant and worthy of reporting.

We are none of us real scholars or professionals; rather we are the opposite, a group mostly made up of inexperienced undergraduates voicing their opinions, reporting their findings.

Yet that we, every other week, can put together 32 pages — of news, controversy, culture, the very undercurrent of St Andrews' life and ideas — is meaningful. It tells us that there is something here to be discussed, prodded, questioned. We will put it forth — we ask you to consider it all.

Alden and Arnaz



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Corrections

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University Welcomes First Cohort of New Fulbright Award Programme

ANNABELLE MACKEY
NEWS WRITER

The University of St Andrews welcomed the first cohort of Fulbright-University of St Andrews Scholar and Distinguished Scholar awards. Scholar Dr Samantha Allen of Tennessee Technological University and Distinguished Scholar Professor Manuel Díaz-Ríos of Bowdoin College were selected for the 2026-27 academic year.

The US-UK Fulbright Commission is part of the broader US Department of State-funded Fulbright Programme, which aims to promote cross-cultural diplomacy by sponsoring American citizens' research and professional work abroad through grants and scholarships. The Scholar and Distinguished Scholar awards are administered through the Fulbright Commission, which specifically focuses on strengthening US-UK relations primarily through academic grants. This is the first year St Andrews will sponsor the Scholar and Distinguished Scholar awards — however, the University previously hosted undergraduate and postgraduate students through the Fulbright-St Andrews Summer Institute and Postgraduate Award initiatives.

"The University has a long history of working with US institutions and researchers, and expanding our partnership with the US-UK Fulbright Commission was a natural next step," a spokesperson in the University Global Office told *The Saint*. "Building on the success of our existing partnership, these new awards will help strengthen connections, support new collaborations, and create opportunities for scholars to share expertise and ideas."

According to the spokesperson, the "Fulbright Scholars are hosted by an academic School and supported throughout their visit by the Global Office." This includes supporting and promoting their research, integrating them into the wider university community, and encouraging the Scholars to engage in student-facing activities.

Allen, who started her fellowship this month, is working with both the Carbon Neutral Islands project and the School of Geography and Sustainable Development project to research the impacts of environmental changes on landscapes and freshwater ecosystems.

Díaz-Ríos begins his programme in January. He will work with the School of Psychology and Neuroscience and the Institute of Behavioural and Neural Systems to study the effects of plastic pollution and rising temperatures on the nervous system. To do this, he will conduct experiments using *Drosophila* larvae to observe the neurons' response to these environmental stressors.

Díaz-Ríos described to *The Saint* his enthusiasm to collaborate with Dr Stefan Pulver, who has conducted extensive research on neuroethology in small animals, including *Drosophila* larvae. "[My] primary reason to apply for this prestigious award [...] is due to the exciting research being conducted by Dr Stefan Pulver and how much I could learn from his research model," Díaz-Ríos said.

> *"Environmental neurotoxicology is one of the most critical and rapidly growing areas of scientific study*

Díaz-Ríos also explained the broader impacts of his research. "Environmental neurotoxicology is one of the most critical and rapidly growing areas of scientific study today because it addresses several major global health concerns," he said. "I am drawn to this field by the urgent need to understand how lifelong exposure to environmental toxins — such as heavy metals like lead and mercury, pesticides, and air pollution, including particulate matter — may contribute to the rising rates of neurodegenerative diseases such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's."

He added, "The field is also especially important because the developing nervous system of fetuses and children is extremely sensitive, and studying how even low-level chemical exposures affect brain development can help shape public health policies and protect future generations."

In a University press release, Professor Tom Brown, Vice-Principal (Research, Collections and Innovation), commented on the programme launch: "As St Andrews continues to build its world-leading research activity, attracting outstanding researchers from around the globe remains central to our ambitions."

He continued, "We are delighted to welcome Dr Allen and Professor Díaz-Ríos to St Andrews and look forward to the new collaborations, research insights and long-term partnerships their visits will help to foster."

North Fife and East Neuk Under Water Scarcity

ELSPETH SCHOONOVER
NEWS WRITER

North Fife and the East Neuk continue to experience significant water scarcity following a prolonged period of below-average rainfall throughout the spring and summer.

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has introduced temporary restrictions on licences allowing water to be abstracted from the environment in areas affected by significant scarcity.

North Fife and the East Neuk are among several areas in eastern Scotland currently affected by low water levels. SEPA's Drought Risk Assessment Tool continues to monitor conditions across Scotland and is used to identify areas where water scarcity is developing.

The restrictions currently affect 136 licences across North Fife, the East Neuk, Stonehaven, and North Esk, primarily relating to agricultural irrigation and other operations. The restrictions also affect agricultural users. SEPA said the majority of abstraction licences subject to restrictions are associated with agricultural irrigation, although some licences relate to other activities.

SEPA published its latest assessment on 10 September. The report showed that North Fife and Fife (East Neuk) remained at significant water scarcity. The agency monitors the river flows, groundwater levels, rainfall, and soil moisture when assessing water scarcity across Scotland.

Restrictions were first introduced across Fife in July after a period of prolonged dry conditions that resulted in low river flows, with the River Eden particularly affected. SEPA reports that the Kemback gauging station recorded its second-lowest flow in its 60-year record earlier this year.

Although recent rainfall has improved conditions in some areas, it has not been sufficient to restore water levels to normal.

In a SEPA press release on 17 September, the SEPA Senior Leader in Compliance Eilidh Johnston said that recent rainfall had not reversed the effects of the prolonged dry period.

"Looking out of the window, it may feel as though Scotland has had plenty of rain," Johnston said. "But our monitoring shows that showers passing through have not reversed the effects of the prolonged dry weather."

SEPA said that sustained rainfall is required to replenish groundwater and restore river flows following an extended period of dry weather.

The effects of the scarcity period are particularly relevant for rural communities in North East Fife where some properties rely on private water supplies rather than the public water network. These supplies can include shallow wells, springs, and burns, which are more vulnerable to falling water levels during prolonged dry periods.

Fife Council has identified a concentration of properties using private water supplies in rural areas north of the A92. Private supplies are regulated differently from the public water network, and households can be responsible for maintaining their own source and treatment systems.

SEPA has advised people with private water supplies to report problems with their water supply to them, and has encouraged all water users to prepare for the potential impacts of prolonged dry conditions.

The restrictions also affect agricultural users. SEPA said the majority of abstraction licences subject to restrictions are associated with agricultural irrigation, although some licences relate to other activities.

The agency has said that the restrictions are intended to reduce pressure on rivers and protect the environment while water levels remain low.

SEPA has advised water users to increase their resilience to prolonged dry conditions and to take steps to reduce the potential impact of water scarcity in the future.

The current restrictions will remain in place while conditions continue to meet SEPA's criteria for significant water scarcity.

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

this recorded student experience, incorporating metrics of "how much universities spend on teaching each student," as well as students' A-level grades — or equivalent — and whether their academic performance improves at university (termed as the value-added score).

The rankings come at a point when universities across the UK are facing economic constraints. As reported by *The Guardian* in August, 2026, many UK higher education institutions currently face a "financial crisis" amid a collapse of foreign student enrollment.

According to a June, 2026 UK House of Commons report, this decrease in foreign enrollment is partially due to increased visa restrictions for international students.

This development will be exacerbated by a levy on international student fees — set to take effect August 1, 2028 — imposed by former UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer. This charge will require English universities to pay a flat fee of £925 per international student per year. As reported by a *Guardian* article written in August 2026, certain universities, like the University of Exeter, have already been forced to discontinue academic programmes due to this increased financial pressure.

Asked to comment on the student experience of the University of St Andrews' financial situation, Olivia Simpson, a second-year Scottish student studying International Relations, said:

"I have personally worked for the University and have witnessed firsthand the University attempting to save large amounts of money, which isn't shocking. But from a current student perspective, I have never felt like my educational experience has been hampered by cost-cutting exercises."

Dame Mapstone concluded in her email: "We must use our agency as individuals, and collectively as the UK's leading university, to not only defend our sector and advocate for better state support, but to describe and design the changes that we ourselves must undergo to retain the confidence of a society which we exist to serve."

Scottish Government Announces Proposal For East Coast University Arc

MRUNMAYI KAMERKAR
NEWS WRITER

As part of its Programme for Government 2026-2031, the Scottish Government announced proposals for an East Coast University Arc between Aberdeen, Dundee, and St Andrews.

The proposal, paired with a similar structure for Glasgow and Edinburgh, recommends greater coordination between the three towns to "boost productivity and innovation by linking research, universities and businesses" through a new cluster development organisation.

Willie Rennie, Member of Scottish Parliament for North-East Fife, raised concerns about the proposal in Parliament, asking "what additional value [the Arc] will bring" on top of existing structures. He cited the Tay Cities Deal and an existing coordinated framework between universities for financial sustainability, noting that existing proposals serve a similar purpose.

"Collaboration is absolutely essential to ensuring we realise all the opportunities in enhancing our productivity," Business Minister Tom Arthur said in response.

The Arc contributes to a section of the Programme dedicated to backing increased growth across Scotland. In a process of local regeneration, the stated aim of the Arc is to help local communities and businesses "have a greater stake in, access to and benefit from the wealth our economy generates."

"The central issue I have with the East Coast Arc is the lack of any kind of detail on what it will do. It seems like a gimmick for the manifesto rather than a serious proposal," Rennie told *The Saint*. "To create a new structure at a time that the government is going through a process of public service reform seems rather contradictory."

On 26 September, the government announced a Public Reform Proposal for the reform of local governance. This outline details a mission to declutter the public sector. For Rennie, the Arc is counterproductive to these aims.

Rennie also commented on the lack of funding attached to the scheme. "St Andrews University already collaborates with other universities, and I therefore don't understand why they would need any extra help to collaborate with institutions in Dundee and Aberdeen," he explained.

In coordination with the Scottish Funding Council, St Andrews is involved in research pooling across Scottish higher education institutions. This involves the agreement and coordination of a pan-Scottish research strategy within defined individual research areas, the sharing of major facilities and equipment, and joint doctoral training programmes.

The East Coast University Arc also lacks precedent. A similar initiative was proposed in 2021 by the UK government, creating a link between Oxford and Cambridge Universities. The Oxford-Cambridge Arc was proposed to involve infrastructural development, including a new road link between Oxford, Cambridge, and Milton-Keynes.

In 2022, the central government withdrew from leadership of the proposed Oxford-Cambridge Arc. This came after the Department for Transport scrapped plans for an Oxford-Cambridge Expressway, stating that the "benefits the road would deliver are outweighed by the costs associated with the project."

While spatial clusters like the Arc are designed to boost national economic development, they are often hindered by challenges of regional development.

Uber Application Approved to Operate in Fife

IONA CARRUTH
NEWS WRITER

On Tuesday 22 September, Fife Council's Regulation and Licensing Committee called a special meeting dedicated to discussing the application of Uber Scot Limited to operate from Rosyth Business Centre in Dunfermline. The application has faced backlash, with 431 objections, all of which were deemed invalid during the meeting on Tuesday, resulting in the approval of Uber's application.

According to *STV News*, many of those who raised concerns were "taxi operators, drivers and associations from across Fife," who highlighted that Uber's arrival "could damage existing taxi firms and drivers already facing difficult trading conditions." Around 25 people were supposed to present their concerns in person. However, the representative for Uber, solicitor Kevin Clancy, quickly halted proceedings by bringing attention to the legal invalidity of the objections.

Clancy explained that legally, the objections needed to specify the grounds for the objection, stipulate the names and addresses of objectors, and be signed. It was then confirmed by Council solicitor Kimberley Langer that none of the objections received were signed.

After a prolonged recess, Councillor Tom Adams motioned for the application to be approved, stating, "I will put forward a motion under the legal advice we have been given that we cannot take these objections." Councillor Donald Lothian seconded the motion, and the application was approved

Since the meeting, concerns have been raised over how the situation was dealt with. Kirkcaldy North councillor Carol Lindsay, a member of the Regulations and Licensing Committee, told *STV News*: "Whatever the eventual outcome of an application, everyone should be able to have confidence that the process used to reach it was clear, robust, transparent and fair."

Lindsay continued: "What concerned me was that we were being asked to determine whether a very substantial number of objections met the necessary legal requirements, while we were also told that there had not been sufficient time to carry out individual checks because of the volume involved."

"If there are capacity issues in processing applications, this should have been raised long before we were advised today."

The Courier reported that around eight taxi companies have already come together to consider legal action. East Fife Taxi Association secretary Linda Holt told *The Courier*, "We think it's possible the way the council has behaved can be challenged." She continued, "we have written evidence where someone has emailed their objection and asked if it was okay like that. They were told it was fine."

Holt also co-owns St Andrews Taxis with her husband James Glen. They told *The Courier* that they have already contacted a solicitor. Holt also added that other companies have also agreed to not hire drivers who work for Uber — "They will be black sheep," stated Holt.

Man Pleads Guilty to Raping Fourteen-Year-Old Girl in St Andrews Nando's

ELEANORA NUCCI
NEWS WRITER

A man has pleaded guilty to raping a fourteen-year-old girl in the St Andrews Nando's restaurant after lying about his age when the pair met online, the Glasgow High Court has heard.

Then twenty-year-old Liam Burns told the girl he was eighteen when communicating with her online. After Burns suggested it, the two arranged to meet in person in March 2022 and went to the Nando's restaurant in St Andrews, according to *The Courier.*

According to *The Herald,* Burns pressured the girl to go with him into a toilet cubicle against her will. He then ushered her inside, locked the door, exposed himself, and raped her, calling her degrading names throughout, such as "s**t" and "b***h". The girl later said she felt "uncomfortable" and "panicked" during the assault.

According to *The Courier,* the Court heard the incident ended when a waitress became suspicious about how long the pair had been away from their table and went looking for them. The staff member found them and the girl claimed she was "okay" at the time, but she later said she felt "distressed and humiliated" by what had happened. Prosecutor Graeme Jessop KC said she "did not want him to do these sexual things to her, but she felt she had no choice once in the cubicle."

> *"He then ushered her inside, locked the door, exposed himself, and raped her, calling her degrading names.*

A Nando's spokesperson told *The Saint*: "This was a terrible crime and our thoughts are with the victim and her family. We assisted the police with their enquiries at the time and, as legal proceedings are ongoing, it would not be appropriate for us to comment further."

The two remained in contact after the initial incident, and Burns persuaded the teenager to meet him again at another location in Fife. During that second encounter, he slapped her across the face, spat on her and made further "sexual advances," where he inappropriately touched her and attempted to have sex with her, despite her pleas for him to stop, according to *The Herald* and *The Courier.*

The Court heard that Burns was later confronted by another person about his conduct towards the girl and admitted that he had known she was fourteen and that he had "raped" her.

In 2023, Burns contacted the girl through Facebook and apologised for what he had done, according to *The Herald*. He wrote: "I am sorry for what I did to you. I took advantage of you and made you feel vulnerable when that was wrong for me to do."

Burns also admitted that he had lied about his age, writing: "In truth I was 20. It is disgusting what I [had] done," according to *The Courier.*

Burns pled guilty at the High Court in Glasgow to the rape and attempted rape of the teenager, as well as a further sexual offence involving another girl. The supplied reports do not give further details about that offence. The identities of both victims have not been disclosed.



PHOTO BY ZARA SLIME

According to the Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service, sentencing has been adjourned for reports and is due on Friday 23 October, 2026.

The supplied Scottish Courts and Tribunals Service information identifies the case as *HMA v Liam Burns, SCS/2025-034701*, at the High Court in Glasgow.

If you have been affected by rape or sexual abuse, support is available through Rape Crisis Scotland's helpline on 08088 01 03 02, or through Rape Crisis England & Wales on 0808 500 222. Advice and support on reporting sexual assault from the University can be found by visiting https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/students/sexual-misconduct/.

New Private Members' Club Opens Alongside T-Squared Social on North Street

JAY FLEISCHMANN
NEWS WRITER

As part NEXUS Luxury Collection has launched a private members' club alongside T-Squared Social on North Street, occupying the space formerly home to Lupo's, an Italian restaurant, cocktail bar, and student nightlife venue.

The club, named NEXUS Club St Andrews, opened in September 2026 at 119 North Street and joins the firm's existing private members' clubs in locations including New York City, London, and the Bahamas.

T-Squared Social St Andrews, co-founded by Tiger Woods and Justin Timberlake in partnership with NEXUS Luxury Collection, first opened to the public in October 2025. Housed within the New Picture House cinema, the upscale sports, entertainment, and dining venue features golf simulators, electronic darts, and a large screening room.

Although NEXUS Luxury Collection also acquired the lease of the former Lupo's venue alongside its 2025 redevelopment of the New Picture House, until now the space had been used as an additional upstairs bar for T-Squared Social and for private events.

In a statement provided to *The Saint*, NEXUS said the private members' club was "created with both students and locals in mind, offering an elevated yet accessible place to socialise, study, work, and dine."

The club is open daily, except for selected blackout dates, and offers a full menu, seasonal dining series, and bar.

On its website, NEXUS Club St Andrews is presented as "St Andrews' first private social club, located in the heart of town."

Two memberships are available for those living in St Andrews: the Arcana Student Membership and the Local Membership. Both allow members to bring up to three guests per visit. The Arcana membership, priced at £1,200 a year, is available exclusively to St Andrews students.

> *"NEXUS Club St Andrews is presented as "St Andrews' first private social club, located in the heart of town."*

NEXUS told *The Saint* that "not only does this provide students with a third space outside of their dorm or the library to study and socialise, but it also helps them get ready for professional life, providing access to learn from and network with business and cultural leaders across several industries."

Professional development sessions will be hosted in St Andrews during university terms and at the company's New York and London clubs throughout the summer, giving members access to a wider network. Sessions will feature speakers from industries including finance, consulting, sport, design, and music.

Arcana membership also includes students' parents, granting them limited access to NEXUS Clubs in St Andrews, London, and New York.

The Local Membership, priced at £2,400 a year, is designed for non-student St Andrews residents and includes membership for the primary member and their spouse or partner. Local members also receive selected access to the wider NEXUS Luxury Collection.

Both membership fees are fully redeemable against food and drink at NEXUS Club St Andrews and T-Squared Social, giving Arcana members £1,200 and Local members £2,400 in credit to spend across the two venues.

NEXUS also told *The Saint* that whilst membership is "strictly by invite only and a referral is required," prospective members who do not know a current member can arrange an interview with a member of the executive team.

An American student spoke to *The Saint* about purchasing an Arcana membership, saying, "I think it will be nice to be able to bring friends for drinks and food with a menu that changes every month."

They added: "It's good that you get your membership fee back in food and drink credit, and it will be great to have early access to T-Squared Social events, which sell out super quickly."

Blank Street to Open St Andrews Venue

REESE COLBERT
NEWS WRITER

US coffee chain Blank Street is set to open a new location in St Andrews. Based on planning documents submitted to Fife Council this past August, the coffeehouse plans to carry out extensive renovations to a unit on Market Street that currently houses another US food chain, Subway.

Blank Street's planning documents propose both internal and external alterations to the unit, including the partial demolition of the ground floor and basement as well as significant changes to the unit's exterior.

The timeline of the project is unconfirmed, as Blank Street has not yet announced any official dates for the start of construction or the shop's opening.

Founded in Brooklyn, New York in 2020 and now operating over 100 shops across the US and UK, Blank Street already has two Scottish locations in Edinburgh and Glasgow. The plans submitted to Fife Council depict a site that, once finished, will be roughly the same size as the chain's other locations, which prioritise a "fast takeaway service," according to *The Courier.*

Though the chain has not made any formal announcements about its new St Andrews location, Blank Street's intention to open a shop in the Fife town first became known through a job advertisement that appeared on both LinkedIn and Indeed.

The listing, which is still open, announced that Blank Street is currently looking for a general manager. It reads: "At Blank Street, we're on a mission to become the defining food and beverage brand of our generation. From the very beginning, we've set out to add a spark to ordinary experiences through elevated products, attention-to-detail, and a commitment to making every moment memorable."

"We're motivated by the millions of customers we serve across cities, and know that our potential is unlimited. It all starts with our people and their commitment to make magic happen each and every day," the post continued.

According to the job description, the shop's general manager would be expected to "lead Blank Street's expansion, overseeing new store openings and scaling operations."

Known particularly for its matcha and viral drink flavors, Blank Street targets the eighteen to twenty four-year-old demographic, according to Consumer Edge, with *The Times* reporting in April that the chain's popularity has been "fuelled by the matcha craze among Gen Z customers."

However, despite largely falling within Blank Street's target demographic, the town's students remain torn about the idea of a new coffee chain in St Andrews.

When asked about the chain opening a St Andrews location, third-year student Holly Reid told *The Saint*: "I personally think that it's nice to have a variety of different coffee shops, but having another chain coffee shop in town when we already have multiple, I think it will take away from independent businesses, which I think could be detrimental to our local community."

On the idea of Subway closing, Reid said: "I think it is an affordable place to eat, and we already have quite a few coffee shops. Do we really need another one?"

However, fellow third-year student Annabel Hathaway had a different perspective on the prospect of Blank Street replacing Subway, telling *The Saint*: "I'm excited. I've never been to Blank Street, actually. We do have a lot of coffee shops in town, but I think it'll be an interesting addition, and I love matcha."

"I love a good Subway, but I'm not that upset about it closing. I don't think it'll be missed that strongly," continued Hathaway.

It remains unclear what Subway plans to do after closing its Market Street location, as it has yet to announce any formal relocation or permanent closure in St Andrews.

Historic Whyte-Melville Fountain Restored

ELLEN JORDAN
NEWS WRITER

The historic Whyte-Melville Fountain is flowing once again. On September 8 a ceremony was held on Market Street to commemorate the completion of this major restoration project.

Funded by the St Andrews Pilgrim Foundation and overseen by Fife Council, the campaign to restore the fountain was, as described by the Foundation's Chair Dita Stanis-Traken, "the greatest conservation project undertaken" by the organisation.



Earlier this year, members of the North East Fife Area Committee approved funding of £7,250 from the St Andrews Common Good Fund to support the restoration process. The Foundation additionally invested approximately £130,000 in the project.

The Fountain's total restoration is the culmination of over a decade of work and cooperation; in 2015, former Fife Councillor Bill Sangster campaigned for the fountain's complete repair. The fountain, erected in honor of Scottish novelist George Whyte-Melville in 1880, had originally fallen into disuse in the early twentieth century. For almost 90 years, the defunct fountain had served as a flowerbed.

Sangster's campaign ultimately restored the fountain to its former purpose; however, the repair effort "lacked a methodology," Stanis-Traken told *The Saint*. The same year, a vehicle struck the fountain and dislodged a basal coping stone, making further repair necessary.

In response, Stanis-Traken founded the "Friends of the Whyte-Melville Memorial Foundation" in 2016. The following year, he brought a proposal for the fountain's complete restoration to the St Andrews Pilgrim Foundation.

Stanis-Traken recalled that obstacles such as the COVID-19 pandemic and planning around the town's tourism scene delayed the work of the Foundation for many years; only this summer was the bulk of the work to restore the fountain completed.

While the return of the fountain's flow has been a welcome sight for town residents, some have expressed complaints that the fountain's spray extends far beyond the structure's perimeter. "Especially on windy days… it's [the fountain] just soaking everybody," town resident Jackie Broadford told *The Saint*.

First-year student Naomi Ingersoll shared a similar perspective: "You can see the extent of the fountain's spray just by looking down at the cobblestone in the area it occupies — it's all completely drenched."

PHOTO BY THEA SPRAWSON

Skylight Yoga Space by Sarah Brannen Opens in St Andrews

AYESHA ZAINI
NEWS WRITER

Skylight Yoga Space, founded by local yoga instructor Sarah Brannen, opened its doors last weekend on Saturday 19 September.

In an interview with *The Saint*, Sarah discussed her history with yoga, the creation of the space, and her goals as a yoga instructor. Sarah is a University of St Andrews alumna who has lived in the town since 1999. She's practised yoga for more than twenty years, and began teaching in 2013. Sarah described yoga as her "support" through various phases of her life, inspiring her to learn more about its history and philosophy.

Her hobby evolved into a career, and Sarah became a full-time yoga instructor in 2018. She said that opening her own yoga space in St Andrews has "been a dream for a long, long time."

Sarah is especially passionate about making yoga accessible to others while maintaining the practice's authenticity through the traditional elements of Ashtanga yoga in her classes. She chose St Leonard's Church Hall as the location of her space for its accessibility to the community.

She said, "I like the fact that it is our space now, but it's not an intimidating yoga studio. It is a place that people find familiar." She maintains that she is not a typical fitness teacher or an exercise coach, but a yoga teacher — her classes involve not only movement and postures but also breathing, chanting, and philosophy.

For the student community at the University of St Andrews, Sarah's space offers an opportunity to develop a yoga practice that can become incorporated into their lives by graduation. She said that it wouldn't be "just a class that they come to every week, but a practice that is theirs."

Sarah Brannen's Skylight Yoga Space is located in St. Leonard's Church Hall, Hepburn Gardens, St Andrews.

More information about the yoga space is available at https://www.warmheartsyoga.co.uk/.

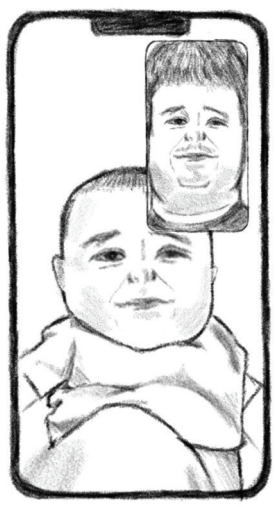
The Death of Jekyll and Hyde

DESDEMONA SMYTH
VIEWPOINT WRITER

I have long since deleted Snapchat off my phone, but the other day they emailed me: "*Desi*, Remember This?"

The memory that Snapchat imposed was from 2021, five years ago. The unease I felt is not at the marketing strategy — rather at the realisation that I *had* forgotten the memory. The memory was of my friend and I on a weekend trip at school, one of our many 'us' against 'them' moments on the bus back to campus; being jostled around on highways and dirt roads as our peers blew mango smoke under the seats. I only remember this because I sat with the photograph and reconstructed our entire bus journey until I was sure I had the memory again: but did I? I was disturbed by my own forgetfulness. I had a joyful Mr. Hyde inside of me, a self that I do not identify with, rearing up its head. The forgotten self has returned! I do not know if it is genuine remembrance, or details extracted from the photograph, because a photograph is the *evidence* that something happened, not the memory of experience.

I remember expressing, on the bus, gratification for the present with my friend. My life discarded, in favour of circling the drain with embarrassment's greatest hits. Even this event, which I consciously tried to preserve, photograph, and remember, slipped from my mind. I did not remember my joy until Snapchat prompted me with the photo, and I had to solve the memory's mystery from the evidence I was given. The persistent digital archive and algorithmic curation has blurred the distinction between documentation and memory, and the algorithm decides what of your past is returned to you, inevitably influencing your current and future self.



Do I remember anything that has not been photographed? I think I do: waking up next to my boyfriend, the mad dash between the pub and the 601 queue when it is pouring rain, the way the sun hits my eyes when walking to my seminars in Castle House. But how long will I remember for?

Because a photograph is not a memory, neither is the archive, nor Snapchat's 'Memories'. Snapchat has named their archive feature Memories, which collapses the distinction this article attempts to make. There could be no Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in the 21st century: Mr. Hyde would have a finsta! He *could not* disappear, because there is little option today to keep things unarchived.

On the flip side, forgetting is part of maturing. The ability to outgrow oneself, to morph, change, and learn is powerfully human and necessary in the transition from adolescence to adulthood. We used to have the ability to outgrow versions of ourselves that became less vivid with time, as our newer, more relevant selves form. This is not to say that the violent child must be immediately forgiven, but holding our present selves hostage by our past is no way to live. And we *must* live. The uncomfortable truth is that forgetting is necessary for growth while remembering is necessary for accountability. Technology preserves the memory but destroys the forgetting, turning subjective experience into objective record.

Self-reflection is essential to growth, but being algorithmically prompted by Snapchat to revisit a stale version of yourself is not reflection — because Snapchat makes that important leap for us, deciding when to resurrect something from the past. The machine chooses the memory, and its choice is based only on what exists in the archive. Reflection cannot be passive. A photograph of someone crying could mean grief, happiness, exhaustion, relief, drunkenness, or none of the above. The algorithm has no idea what the photograph meant to you; it only knows that the pixels exist.

The problem with this documentation is that it appears to be definitive. The danger is not exactly that we archive *too much*, but that the archive might teach us what to remember. Our technology erodes the distinction between "who I was" and "who I am". We forget versions of ourselves in order to become who we are meant to be, and digital archives prevent some of this forgetting, often for better. When the algorithm comes in and reintroduces those past selves, the technology is not preserving memory. It is participating in the construction of your identity.

ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE O'SULLIVAN

Rage Against the Screen

The problem with ragebait marketing

OLIVIA SKYE GRAY
VIEWPOINT WRITER

If you've been on the internet recently, you've probably seen an advert by the sports trading app, Novig. It features a scantily clad Sydney Sweeney, perched upon various basketball hoops as she hides her body behind strategically placed sports equipment. As she smolders into the camera, Sweeney coos to the viewer about how focused the company is on "just sports" (a phrase she repeats, over the course of the advert, about sixteen times), rolling around on snooker tables and unoriginally displaying the idea that sex apparently sells.

Novig's advert seemingly lit the internet on fire, from sportswomen rightfully outraged at their profession being sexualised, to others debating Sweeney's inclusion, as a woman, as "her body, her choice." However, in the vast sea of reactions, there was one particular type of response that caught my eye that went along the lines of: "Why are you angry, it's just ragebait!"

And my response to that is … well, *obviously*! Sweeney's presence in anything these days seems to start some kind of debate, and this flippant sexualisation of women in sports pretty much confirmed it. The "it's not that deep" mentality dismisses any valid critiques of the advert. You can't just denounce something as ragebait and magically wave away its impact — and such dismissals put the onus on the outraged viewer rather than on the company creating said outrage.

Ragebaiting as a marketing tactic is nothing new, just a new form of 'any publicity is good publicity.' In fact, in the last year, Sweeney's presence in another advert swept up controversy when American Eagle was infamously accused of promoting eugenics. Whether or not the brand set out to anger the world is unknown, but the heated debate it caused it raged on for months, keeping American Eagle in the public consciousness. That's the point

In the age of algorithms, it seems that controversy gets the most views. I mean, how often have you read a tweet spouting something offensive or watched a reel where an influencer deliberately ruins what they're working on? It's all intentional: they want you to be angry. Because everyone — including you — has run to the comments to express their annoyance, that video now has more attention. Online, the loudest, angriest, most controversial takes are what's under the spotlight.

> *"Online, the loudest, angriest, most controversial take are what's under the spotlight.*

That's where the real problem lies with ragebait marketing, because while we can argue that it's "not that deep," this kind of ecosystem bleeds into the real world. In an increasingly angry political climate, it has become a strategy of those in power to value provocation over facts. Not only does their ragebait become part of their political brand, à la "owning the libs," but it helps to cultivate an environment that caters to their most extreme supporters who are looking for a reason to be angry.

So yes, a company using ragebait as a marketing tactic really is "that deep." And as for the company that started this all, their new tactic hasn't entirely paid off: according to Peak Metrics, in an analysis of posts made about the advert, only 4% were focused on Novig as a company. With much of the publicity going to Sweeney, this suggests that the ragebait has overshadowed the company that created it in the first place. As for the next advertisement campaign, I would stick to "just sports".

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New College Needs an Old Approach

DANIEL BEARD
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Over the summer, work began on the University's £142 million New College project on the former site of Madras College. The main building, built in 1832 in a Neo-Jacobean style, will be renovated, while new buildings will occupy the rest of the site. It will also become home to the Schools of Business and International Relations. While the investment in this project, including the renovation of an excellent building, is admirable, there is one glaring issue: it's ugly. The proposals are bland, faceless, and totally unfaithful to the architectural heritage of St Andrews. The more avid fans of royal quotation will recognise the then-Prince of Wales' label, "a monstrous carbuncle on the face of a much-loved and elegant friend," under which these designs unquestionably fall.

The current designs are similar in style to the Arts Building, Powell Hall, and those awful new flats by the Old Course, the construction of which slowly ruined my view from John Burnet over the course of last year. They are flat and out-of-proportion, lacking the right detail and texture that makes traditional architecture so pleasing to the eye.

New College should take on a traditional style. The quadrangle and the cloister are not cliches, but the hallmarks of collegiate architecture, which is essential for a strong and coherent community. People want to linger on the beautiful lawns and under the great arches that show a university is serious about its links to the students of the past and future. The importance of these links is long understood, and was passed on in good faith for generations, just for it to run into the unremitting, destructive forces of modernism, which, when unchecked, have a tendency to look only with contempt upon that which came before.

> *"Ugly buildings are not loved; no one fights to preserve them when they outlive their original purpose.*

Campuses of the eastern United States — some of the most attractive in the world — were built in a neo-gothic collegiate style, often centuries after their inspirations at Oxford and Cambridge, and even as recently as 2017 at Yale. These attempts were not pastiche, but sincerely inspired by what had already been cherished for generations. Now, new students do not see a beauty-venerating world that they want to contribute to, but rather one that ignores the environment in which we live, starving us of everything but the practicalities of studying for a degree.

St Andrews had an opportunity to go against the increasingly drab grain. A commitment to new traditional architecture would show the academic world that beauty means something. An attractive New College could become the most charming part of the University, and would be a project of truly international significance in its stance against the uglier aspects of modernism. Despairingly, it is an opportunity that has not been taken. We will be left with a space that is nothing special, used but unloved — an architectural tragedy.

It is very rare that beauty is given any serious priority in new developments, but it is a quality deeply desired in the built environment. Surveys show that the public overwhelmingly prefers traditional architecture to contemporary designs. The modernist architect ignores this, decrying beauty as overindulgent and illogical. This view dismisses the lesson of architectural history that aesthetic sensibility is a necessary condition for good building. The new school of thought laughs in the face of the past. Ugly buildings are not loved; no one fights to preserve them when they outlive their original purpose. Beautiful architecture is cherished and reused for centuries, becoming increasingly charming with age. After all, why has all but the oldest part of Madras College been knocked down?

Who is St Andrews Really For?

HANYA LOFTY
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Ask me what makes St Andrews feel like St Andrews, and I definitely wouldn't say the golf course. I'd say sitting in The Rule while playing cards with friends, getting an extremely overpriced toastie from Cheesy Toast Shack, or having the loveliest strawberry danish from Fisher & Donaldson as a treat for actually completing my assigned readings. These are the places that have made St Andrews feel like home to me. But lately, I've started to notice a new picture of the town emerging in the background, and I wonder who it is being created for.

The character of St Andrews is noticeably changing. If you like golf, tweed, or expensive candles and soap, this is excellent news for you. For everyone else, it is perhaps a little harder to see where we fit in.

It is understandable that businesses are going to go where the money is, and I don't think there's anything particularly sinister about that. What has started to bother me is how many of these changes seem to be pointing in the same direction.



The former New Picture House is now T-Squared Social, where golf simulators, dining, and entertainment sit alongside semi-flattering portraits of Justin Timberlake and Tiger Woods, reminding us all that JT is a true businessman now and not just the guy who sang 'SexyBack.' The cinema, granted, is still there, but it feels exceedingly different. There is something charming about a small town with a famous golf course, but there is something different about a town where that fame itself becomes part of what is being sold.

Once you start noticing it, the shift is difficult to ignore. A tweed shop appears where a vape shop used to be, despite there already being two other tweed shops in town that I never see anyone in. Amber, a restaurant where I can never seem to find a seat, replaces BrewDog. Increasingly, new businesses seem to offer a refined version of the quaintness that made St Andrews appealing in the first place. There is something almost ironic about it: with thousands of students and residents living here, the town seems to need another place to buy an awful tweed jacket more than affordable places to eat or shop.

What interests me most is how these changes are helping curate a specific image of St Andrews. A town's identity is shaped by the places that fill it, and the more St Andrews fills itself with golf-themed stores and places to buy regular items at luxury prices, the line between everyday St Andrews and the image it sells becomes harder to distinguish.

Nevertheless, the St Andrews I have grown attached to is not particularly polished. To me, it is where I can spend far too much money in a bookshop or watch my best friend emerge from a charity shop wearing something I had just told her I wanted to buy. These are fairly unremarkable parts of the town, but they are what make it feel lived in. I don't think they will disappear, but if enough of them are replaced, at what point does the version of St Andrews we are selling become more recognisable than the one we actually live in?

That is why I keep coming back to the question of who this version of the town is actually for. Not because tourists and golfers do not belong here — they obviously do — but because I would like St Andrews to remain somewhere that feels like a home to the people who live here, rather than just a remarkably convincing idea of one.

ILLUSTRATION BY ANNA DICKSON

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Is Nostalgia A Sign We're Losing Our Creativity?

AVERY IM
VIEWPOINT WRITER

"2016 is coming back in 2026."

This thrilling sentiment is echoed throughout online forums, social media trends, and even the corporate realm. 2016 to Gen Z is like the 1980s to Gen X: the "good times," marked by brilliant innovation, booming community, and cultural revolutions that romanticise an increasingly connected and expressive future. Nowadays, the most-viewed videos on TikTok — of squishy stress toys, bold and highlighted makeup looks, slime businesses, mukbang culture, boho-chic Pinterest boards, and imitations of Kourtney Kardashian's LA wellness lifestyle (complete with Voss water bottles, of course) — all recall the trending hashtags from ten years ago.

Though I myself have been enjoying the resurgence of these memorable aesthetics, I worry that this return to the past points to our lack of modern creativity rather than being an innocuous reflection of better times. 2026 — defined thus far by political conflict, global war, and several humanitarian crises — offers little stable cultural footing upon which a coherent generational identity might be built.

Surprisingly, this phenomenon is not uncommon. In the 1970s, amid the disillusionment of Vietnam and Watergate, American audiences flocked to *Happy Days* and *American Graffiti* for sentimental portraits of a 1950s dream. Four decades later, *Stranger Things* performed the same service for a generation of millennials unsettled by economic recession and political fracture. Nostalgia, it seems, intensifies proportionally to current instability. Our increasingly vague social identity manifests as a desperate scramble for some artistic purchase following years of societal stagnancy.

To dismiss this longing as mere escapism, however, would be reductive. Psychologists have found that nostalgia functions as a genuine emotional resource, providing a buffer against loneliness and restoring a sense of continuity when the self feels fragmented. For a cohort whose adolescence was interrupted by a pandemic and whose adulthood has been defined by economic and political uncertainty, retreating into the iconography of 2016 may be less a creative failure than a coping mechanism.

Contrary to how earlier generations defined themselves against their predecessors, contemporary culture increasingly recycles them. Punk repudiated the bloated excess of arena rock; grunge later scorned the synthetic gloss of the nineties. Unlike these previous oppositional dynamics, our prevailing aesthetic impulse circulates old cultural fragments with painstaking fidelity, which seldom generates anything new.

This impulse is inorganic. Online algorithms recommend the familiar and amplify content that elicits instant recognition. Corporations have seized upon nostalgia as a reliable commodity: when Starbucks released its Unicorn Frappuccino for just a few days this year, it earned millions from young adults indulging in the kind of sugary treat their parents never let them have as kids. This feedback loop, in which consumer desire and corporate strategy reinforce one another, narrows the space in which authentic experimentation may occur. Thus, the past also becomes the most profitable export.

It is worth remembering that all art is, to some degree, derivative. Hyperpop cannibalised the tinny ringtones and glitchy textures of the early internet, yet produced its own novel tunes. The Y2K revival yielded not only low-rise jeans but an inventive digital, hot-pink fashion scene. Nostalgia does not need to equate to creative exhaustion. The distinction lies in whether or not we will be able to put our own spin on these popular resurgences of the past. I remain optimistic that — especially considering our heavy dependence on digital media for social connection — we will not treat nostalgia as refuge, but rather rework these memories into a distinct vocabulary of our own, even in the midst of conflict and chaos. The same networks that reinforce our longing for the past also enable unprecedented collaboration across borders, disciplines, and identities.

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DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

Should Student Societies Be Democratic?



71% YES

ALDEN ARNOLD

NO 29%

EMMA MCVITTE



Winston Churchill famously called democracy "the worst form of Government except for all those other forms that have been tried." I tend to agree with Winnie; democracy may have its faults, but they become peanuts when compared to more dictatorial alternatives. These debates, however, are as old and worn as antiquity, so let us apply them to something a tad more familiar: the student society.

St Andrews may be a haven for student royalty, but even its most partisan student societies are a far cry from hereditary monarchies. Fashion shows, music collectives, and ball committees are organised by top-down appointment, as graduations compel annual executive turnover. These clubs better resemble oligarchies than dynasties, but the question remains: should committee members be hand-picked by the elite few or elected by the masses?

I won't beat the dead horse and bore you with a list of democracy's prudential advantages; these are praised to death, and it's impossible to prove that an appointed student committee is wiser than an elected one. I will even concede that St Andrews' most successful events are more often run by these oligarchies. The moral debate is a bit rich for a Devil's Advocate, isn't it? It's instead in their institutional durability — counterintuitive as it sounds — that democratically-elected societies outperform their counterparts.

No AGM is without drama; I've watched running mates defect, friends challenge one another on the ballot, and overcompensative campaigns leak into meetings and socials. Such is life, however, no oligarchic committee is immune to these trivialities.

In democratic societies, these pre-election theatrics are dispersed across many heads, and nominees are forced to gain favour through populist means. Nominees may pander to their voters by deepening their involvement within the society — displaying their commitment and building recognition — and delivering additional flattery to its voting members. So be it if it's grossly ingenuine. Oligarchic candidates, on the other hand, must battle with favouritism. Campaign tactics tend towards gossip, sabotage, in-fighting, and disruptive personal politics as rivals vie to impress their appointor.

Likewise, in a democracy, a lost election cannot be blamed on a single committee member, and the decision must instead be accepted as the general will of the society. Oligarchic appointments conversely risk social and political schisms, and verdicts can only be taken personally, as decision-making power is concentrated in the elite few. Committees are thus subject to annual fallouts, jeopardising the society's collective continuity.

Institutional practices, however, do get passed down more directly in these centralised student societies. This can be as much a guiding virtue as it can be a damning vice. The same processes that protect organisational understandings may also encourage the inheritance of sinister practices. Corruption, embezzlement, and fraud may very well lurk undetected across St Andrews student societies, kept hidden through secretive appointments and back-door agreements. Absolute oversight of succession all but guarantees from future committees censorship of financial misdoings. Such rackets are almost impossible to maintain in a democracy. Elections throw dynastic predictability out the window, and con artists are thus barred from institutionalising corruption.

Our student democracies are resilient to these petty and ruinous trifles. They may be inefficient, and they may be superficial, but elections safeguard student societies from political, financial, and reputational collapse. More intangibly, they enforce a positive social culture. AGMs simultaneously constrain noxious behaviour while promoting societal engagement, community, and discourse. It's not simply enough to certify that a student society survives into the next academic year, but democratic structures ensure that the societies which endure, the societies that provide our student body with its social backbone, are *worth keeping*.

At what point do student societies stop having votes and start making decisions?

Let's get one thing straight: I'm not campaigning for a dictatorship. After all, we need something to populate the 'experience' section of our LinkedIn profiles — and we know that for the majority of St Andrews students the notion of a part-time job is inconceivable. After surviving several years of student society committees, however, I'm convinced that democracy, in this context, is wildly overrated.

I'm all for a good AGM. I love listening to shaky speeches about community and improvement, and pretending that committee roles are meaningful professional experience. Once the AGM ends, though, the voting should too.

Instead, every week, in the circle of hell known as committee meetings, an hour is wasted listening to updates on parts of the society that have absolutely nothing to do with my role. I'm routinely forced to weigh in on matters I'd happily never consider again. What merchandise should we buy? What theme should our fundraiser have? In two separate societies, I have voted on what we should wear at competitions. Seriously.

These decisions need to be made, yes, but that is why we have merchandise officers, charity reps, and captains. We elected them for a reason. Now let them do their jobs. For most committee members, these things are irrelevant to their roles. So why do they get a vote?

> *We chose someone for the job, and maybe — just maybe — we should let them do it.*

In fact, I'd go so far as to say committee voting is undemocratic. Simply holding a committee role does not make a person more enlightened than the average clib member is about any given issue. So why shouldn't that club member get a say, too? Why not have whole-club votes for every decision?

We all know why not. It's impossible to routinely gather hundreds of members, and even if we could, people do not always vote with the long-term interests of the society in mind. Take sports clubs: elite competitive teams receive benefits from Saints Sports, including increased funding. Imagine a club on the brink of performance sport status. The sensible choice might be to invest in the competitive squad this year to secure that standing. However, put it to a vote of the whole club and the majority may prefer subsidised Christmas dinners. A worthy cause, but not in the best interests of the club in the long run.

> *Democracy without competence leads to bad outcomes (Brexit, anyone?), hence my belief that we should nip it in the bud.*

The same faulty reasoning infects committees. Democracy without competence leads to bad outcomes (Brexit, anyone?) — my belief is that we should nip it in the bud.

My convictions may raise concerns over the consequence of one person having too much influence. In many cases, over-voting creates power hoarding. It gives irrelevant voices equal weight, especially if there are individuals with sway over other committee members. Considering the prominence of political manoeuvring and alliances in real governments, it doesn't take a cynic to believe that people will vote with their friends in student matters.

We chose someone for the job, and maybe — just maybe — we should let them do it. Everyone else can read about it in the weekly email, along with all the people who still haven't figured out how to unsubscribe from the mailing list (you have to email the society).

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Conform to the Dorm

Shared living as a tool for success

SONJA PEETZ- LARSEN
VIEWPOINT WRITER

"I'm the 'American-in-St Andrews' starter pack," I tell people. Whether an effort to remain self-aware or to separate myself from the frat boy epidemic, I'm not sure. Nevertheless, my horribly unoriginal introduction goes as follows: I study International Relations and Economics, I'm from Boston, and I live in McIntosh — a hall with a population primarily from the U.S.

My hypothesis as to why McIntosh is so American is that the idea of having a roommate, sharing a bathroom, and eating in a dining hall is inherently American by nature. While it may seem as though American students opt in to the dorm-living style in an effort to remain rooted in familiar customs, I actually find that most of us choose the communal lifestyle for one outstanding reason: the fellowship that comes with dorm living.

At the core of maintaining such a community lies the dining hall. While I don't always make it to the 8:30am breakfast, having three times a day when I can join some friends for food is, simply put, nice. An expansive wooden table groaning under the weight of 50 kids prompts the opportunity to ask about each other's plans, or perhaps make some together. Last week alone, I found myself knee-deep in sidequesting culture after just a few brief dinner conversations. I bedazzled my plant pot, I tried my hand (and failed dismally) at life drawing, and I got three friends to join me for a highland dancing class. I'm a big believer that spontaneous decisions lead to the best friendships.

Secondly, there's that roommate-and-shared-bathroom thing. While, yes, I must admit that I occasionally envy my DRA friends — primarily the fact that they have showers with hairless drains and a designated space to call 'theirs' — I wouldn't trade my roommate or shared bathroom for the world. For starters, the bathrooms are almost always empty and immaculately clean (aside from the aforementioned shower drains). And, on the roommate front, it's as though I had a built-in friend upon arrival. My new favourite part of the day? Spilling nightly tea — both literal and figurative — with my roommate. I'm eager to see just how long we keep that ritual running, but nevertheless, it's a reliable delight.

The connections reach further than just within the dorm, though. I can confidently say that I recognise the majority of my fellow McIntosh residents' smiling faces (names — not so much) after attending numerous dorm socials during Freshers' Week. Even out on the deceivingly vast streets of St Andrews, I always find myself passing someone from McIntosh with whom I can sit and grab a quick coffee between lectures.

Within the dorm, walking down the McHallway from the McLift to my McRoom, it's nice to exchange a smile or brief moment of small talk with a friendly face, as well. I mean, Charlie — the Porter for McIntosh Hall — is the jolliest guy I know, always asking about your day and giving you that little midday pick-me-up everyone needs. Those small exchanges of humanity, however minuscule or irrelevant one might tell you they are, amount to something substantial: a feeling of belonging, perhaps even of home. Even for those who live an hour's drive from St Andrews, the transition to university can be a massive challenge — let alone for those who come from Singapore, Australia, or Los Angeles. Having that feeling of home, whether it be for the sake of self-preservation or the occasional sensation of familiarity, is priceless.

Plus, McIntosh has a resident dog, Marlowe. I'll let that speak for itself.

So please, call us stereotypical, cast a raised eyebrow at the idea of a shared space, and say that we're catered because we're not responsible enough to cook every day (true). However, I chose this unglamorous, communal lifestyle for myself, and that's a choice I'd take any day of the week. Especially if it comes with nightly tea.

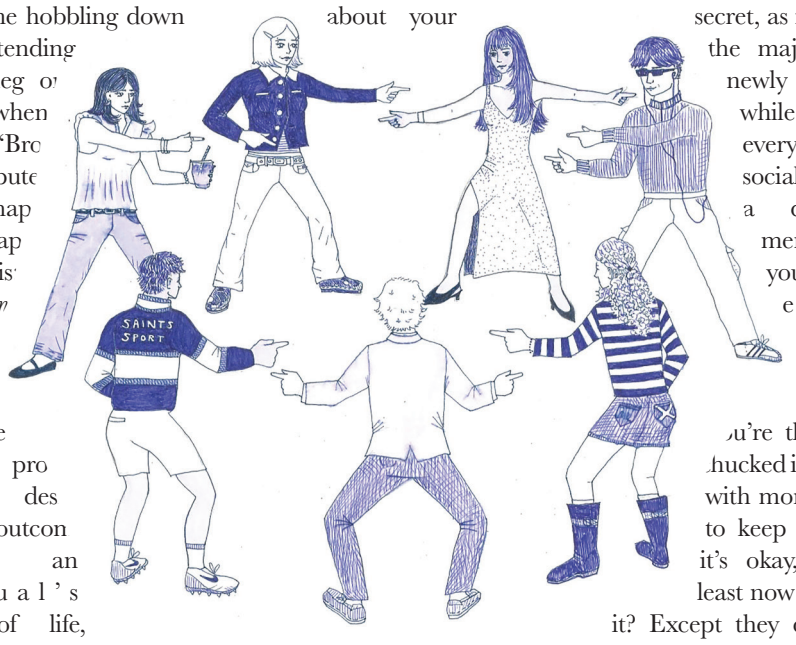
Autism: The Dying Diagnosis

CHARLOTTE CHILDS
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Having a book on *hygge* lifestyle thrust into my hands by my flatmate, upon moving into our new house, was — while unexpected — welcomed. Now, as I sit writing this, surrounded by 20 candlesticks rammed into old wine bottles and an unlimited supply of soft furnishings, I feel as though I've been conned. Where was the book on autism as a desirable life aesthetic, and why was it missing from our coffee-table collection? Apparently I missed the memo that, along with tabis and wired headphones, autism is an up-and-coming trend that everyone should adopt. I don't believe it's a secret that anyone exclaiming, "Bro, I'm so autistic," to their friends is probably not *actually* autistic. However, it raises an interesting question: why is a disability being appropriated? I don't see anyone hobbling down the street pretending to have one leg or announcing when they fall over, "Bro that is so amputee of me," so perhaps the more ap question is why is a *hidden* disability the butt of a joke?

> *"I don't see anyone hobbling down the street pretending to have one leg or announcing when they fall over, "Bro, that is so amputee of me."*

The diagnostic pro seemingly des to give an outcon validating an individual's experience of life, is notoriously uncomfortable. The assessment involves putting someone who's uncomfortable meeting new people and making eye contact in a situation where they have to … meet new people and establish eye contact. Then explain, in detail, to underpaid professionals why they feel different and don't fit in. So different, in fact, that they have sought professional support. When you have enough gems to level up, you are introduced to long waiting lists and disbelief about your condition, a common experience for high-masking women. Upon receiving a diagnosis, you are then sent away with the promise of impending doom: yes, you are different, congrats; and no, we offer you no help. You are still alone in a room full of people who all appear to be part of an inside joke that excludes you: neurotypicality.



Going through such a process is exhausting and tumultuous, let alone attempting to keep it a secret, as is the case for the majority of the newly diagnosed, while convincing everyone that socialising for a day doesn't mentally exhaust you. It isn't an experience you'd expect anyone to want. u're then suddenly hucked into university with more social rules to keep up with, but it's okay, because at least now everyone has it? Except they don't. Or do they?

With so many claiming to have a diagnosis, telling the real, diagnosed troopers from the impersonators becomes challenging. Whilst we are seemingly normalising autism (a win after years of stigmatisation), someone trying to express their *actual* diagnosis may now unfortunately find themselves a victim of others' excessive and inauthentic claims. "Wait, like, actually for real?" isn't exactly what you want to hear when confiding in someone.

Ironically, one of the most understated traits of a hidden disability is the *hidden* aspect of it. Earth-shattering, I know. Thus, it is nearly impossible to know who, in a room of people whom you are so casually dropping the 'A-bomb' around, is actually diagnosed. A true comedian knows their audience. So, in a situation like this, where you actually *can't* know your audience, it may be wise to refrain from making a comment that can trivialise someone's disability for the sake of a few chuckles.

With skinny jeans back in fashion, perhaps pair them with some faux-fur boots. They would go far better than with faux autism.

ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCESCA JEFFS

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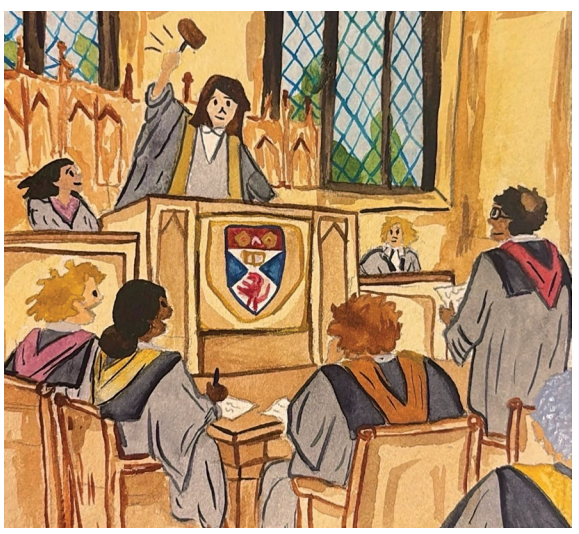
THE SAINT'S REVIVED halo! SATIRICAL CORNER

What's a Rector?

MINA KRISTIANSEN
VIEWPOINT WRITER

If I had a genie's lamp, my first wish would be to understand what a rector is. My second would be to understand what the University Court does. My third would be to understand the discord between the two. Most students are aware that there has been a conflict between the university's current rector and the University Court. If you were hoping this article would clarify the matter, you will be disappointed. Feud aside, the real question is whether the student body has adequate motivation and knowledge to participate meaningfully in the upcoming rector's election.

Some terms desperately need defining. The Rector is a student-elected representative who advocates for student interests in the University Court, the University's governing body. The University Court oversees the University's financial planning, senior appointments, and strategic direction (whatever that means). The current Rector, St Andrews alumna Stella Maris, was elected in 2023. The term is three years, ending in October 2026. The Rector attends Court meetings, presents student perspectives, and votes on decisions that are nearly all boring but nonetheless important, like the annual budget. All from the University's website — you're welcome.



Many students seem to lack a basic knowledge of how the university is run. My own study involved asking my friends over the week whether they knew what the rector or the University Court does. Most had no answer. Before anyone accuses me of biased statistical inference, my study aligns with other engagement patterns. The 2024 Students' Association elections had a turnout of 32.9%. Although it was a 4% increase from the year before, two-thirds of the student body did not vote.

While a Bravo producer would jump at the chance to make a reality show of St Andrews' recent university politics, there is, in all *reality*, no good in belittling the seriousness of the situation. Confusion from past controversies makes it harder to build an informed student community. Public back-and-forth statements between the current rector and the University Court point us in different directions. In the end, no one wants to go any direction at all. It feels like choosing a side when your friends break up. The communication we receive is as tedious and ineffective as that 1930s research paper you're assigned for your tutorial, the kind only available as a photoscan. Without an understanding of how our university operates, students are less equipped to assess leadership decisions or participate critically in university life.

Ignoring university politics can also be a stepping stone to ignoring other politics. Many have colourful opinions of policymakers and governments. I know few who could tell you what any main party's programme actually says. A culture where opinions are shaped more by sensational media coverage than by a substantive understanding of policy is dangerous. Most of our interaction with politicians comes from the tabloids' daily shockers about what colour socks they're wearing, distracting us from their actual work and impact. Make of it what you will, but this could help explain the UK's staggering "PM-per-capita."

Students are, however, equally responsible for recognising the importance of participating in any democracy, including the Rector's election. So, think before you archive that union email the millisecond it hits your inbox.

On that note, I want to revise my third wish: for us all to cast an educated vote during the upcoming Rector's election. If my third wish proves to be too ambitious, I'll suggest a more humble proposal: world peace.

The Rector's election will take place on 15 and 16 October. Information on voting and nominations can be found on the Union website.

ILLUSTRATION BY TESS BARBEY

Student with Landlord Ambitions Relieved by State of St Andrews Flats

"I thought much more would be expected of me"

WILLIAM HVISTENDAHL
VIEWPOINT WRITER

Laird Waldo, an American second-year student at the University of St Andrews has known for a long time what he wants from life "I always saw myself as a guy with a lot of money" he tells *The Saint*. "Not doing anything necessarily. Just having a lot of cash."

Thus it comes as no surprise that his favourite childhood game was Monopoly. "Luck doesn't really matter in that game. It's all about being smart with your money. And scaling. I f***ing love scaling, man." Through tabletop fervour and an avid study of entrepreneurial self-help YouTubers, Waldo has realised that owning properties and renting them out might be the best way to go about building up his wealth.

Still, there have been times when Waldo has felt doubt regarding this endeavour. While he takes pride in his ability to make his little sister cry when tricking her into taking the electric company card in exchange for the orange property he needs, he is unsure whether it's wise to bring this approach into his real-world plans.

"Even though all these entrepreneurs keep telling me to treat life like a game, other people in my life are telling me that I shouldn't do that. Like my mother. Whatever."

His main concern was about the workload. "It seemed like a lot of work. People told me I would need to be on call and stuff. Like if something broke I would have to fix it. I don't know."

However, after listening to what other St Andrews students have said about their flats, he feels much more comfortable committing to the landlord lifestyle.

"This one guy was telling me that their flat had, like, tons of problems when they moved in. There was mould, the shower sucked, they had a gas leak, the door to his room broke, the kitchen fan was broken, the list goes on. None of it is fixed. And he's still staying there! What a sucker! And he's not the only one."

Others claim to have lost deposits over mysterious "wear and tear", and some were paying £900 a month for a flat where the shower is in the kitchen.

For Waldo, this was inspiring. "It's quite smart.

People need a roof over their head just like they need to eat. Neat stuff." The low bar of expectations sealed the deal on his second-semester plan.

"Next semester I'm renting out this apartment that my parents bought me to my buddy Güstav."

The Saint was invited to the flat which he intends to let, located on North Street. On his way in, Waldo knocked his head on the doorframe. "It's a cosy place. That's a selling point I've picked up from my research." Similar studio flats located on North Street can be rented for around £1200 a month, but Waldo has decided he will rent it out for the sum of £1150 to his friend Güstav Sint.

"I just think it's the right thing to do."

With his new perception of the property market, Waldo only looks forward to the life he is embarking on. It remains to be seen what he will use all his money for, apart from buying more properties.

"I just know that I want to be rich. And at this point, that's all I need to know. You know what I'm saying?"

Sint was not reachable for comment.

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Will Scottish Labour's Michael Marra Make Waves?

In conversation with St Andrews political societies

CELIA IRVING
FEATURES WRITER

Scottish Labour has elected their new leader, Michael Marra. No, Americans, this is not an out of the blue Andy Burnham replacement. He is to lead Labour in the Scottish Parliament — a political party that has lost the last five elections — where the Scottish National Party (SNP) reigns supreme. So was this missed BBC headline really all that important? I spoke to representatives from four St Andrews political societies: the St Andrews Conservative and Unionist Association (STAUCA), St Andrews Labour Society, Scottish Independence Society, and the Society of Socialists — for their reactions, and what bearing Marra really has on UK politics.

Predictably, Chair of St Andrews Labour, Jonah McConnell, a fourth-year Computer Science student knew about Marra's election before I contacted him. Even so, he wasn't notably more informed than the other students I spoke to. "In all honesty," he admitted, "I only knew because there is a nomination process for the chairs of university Labour societies." Representatives from Scottish Independence, the Society of Socialists, and STAUCA echoed this same vague awareness of the election, and a general lack of familiarity with Marra as an individual.

> *"In the face of SNP dominance, and Scottish Labour's comparative irrelevance, is Marra's election a non-event?*

In the face of SNP dominance, and Scottish Labour's comparative irrelevance, is Marra's election a non-event?

"The SNP have such a massive presence overall that it doesn't matter how dynamic [or] how new and shiny a politician is — they're all going to be overshadowed by the fact that the SNP and Greens have such overwhelming power to block any attempt at preserving the union," said Monty Saunders, a second-year History student representing STAUCA.

Acknowledging Labour's "serious problem" connecting with Scottish voters, fourth-year International Relations student Henry Phelan considers Marra's election symptomatic of changes in Westminster. "It does just seem like a symptom of Starmer getting replaced by Burnham," Phelan said, adding, "Marra's echoing a lot of the same rhetoric Burnham uses about local governance over a more centralised government."

Phelan continued: "I honestly don't think it's significant. Just changing the person at the top won't have any substantial effect."

The Burnham parallels don't stop there. Inspired by the new Prime Minister, Marra has expressed his intent to reprioritise "people and policy," building "movements and alliances" instead of reaching for the "political attack line." St Andrews students aren't so sure of Marra's sincerity. "In my view, it's a bit of an empty slogan — no method will really work, no matter which way they go, left or right, because of the overwhelming presence the SNP has in the chamber," said Saunders, adding, "Labour have shown time and time again that they'll say one thing and do another."

Across the political spectrum, the Society of Socialists similarly framed Marra's election as a product of Labour hypocrisy. "Members have been reacting to this election from the perspective of criticising Anas Sarwar," said an anonymous representative. Sarwar, Marra's predecessor, resigned as MSP and Scottish Labour leader in July 2026 to become Minister of State for Trade under Andy Burnham — accepting a peerage in the process. "He'd previously said the House of Lords should be abolished, but has now accepted a peerage to become a minister in the British government. Again, that shows the Labour Party and its leaders acting hypocritically."

McConnell, by contrast, expressed sympathy for Marra while acknowledging the strategic ambition behind his words. "He's clearly trying to appeal to a wide base, and it seems he's trying to move beyond constitutional questions — though obviously, they're still so important." The challenges don't end there. "With SNP, Reform, and the recent Conservative win in Aberdeen South, it's a particularly difficult environment for him and Scottish Labour." McConnell added, "I feel for him, but I am very optimistic about Labour's future."



Could Marra bring an era of unforeseen change through coalition-building? Saunders has doubts, but sees an opening on the unionist front. "There's a viable case for cooperation, but everyone has different goals and targets — it's very difficult to ask a left- and right-wing party to work together purely to bat out a nationalist group when everything else they want is so entirely different." Still, he'd welcome fresh opposition leadership. "There hasn't been a strong Leader of the Opposition since Ruth Davidson led the Conservatives," said Saunders. "If Michael Marra can stand up and hold the SNP to account, then he has my support in that regard."

Phelan sees different, more altruistic prospects for partnership. "He's done work in the past with the SNP government on poverty and healthcare. That's promising." He continued: "At heart, he probably has the same idea as everyone else in government — to make Scotland a better place."

The Socialists have separate demands if Marra wants to court support further left. "He'd need to spearhead a change in foreign policy," said the society representative. "Scotland can, to some extent, dictate what foreign policy it believes should be conducted. To garner more support from the left, the First Minister — which he isn't yet — would need to more firmly recognise the state of Palestine, and be more active in boycotting and divesting from Israel." There are domestic hopes too: fighting off Reform and shoring up public services. "This country has serious issues with poverty, and the NHS is very underfunded," said the representative.

Labour's failures in Holyrood have long revolved around the Scottish independence question — the party has historically opposed both independence and a second referendum. Marra's stance is more ambiguous. "He's said independence would be granted if that was the 'settled will' of the Scottish people," Phelan said. "But unlike Northern Ireland, Scotland has no statutory trigger for a referendum, so it's unclear what that actually means in practice."

Saunders views this nebulousness as a Conservative opening. "Labour has repeatedly shown they don't always care about preserving the union — various leaders have put other things above it. If you care about the union, the Conservative Party is the only true option."

> *"In my view, it's a bit of an empty slogan — no method will really work, no matter which way they go, left or right, because of the overwhelming presence the SNP has in the chamber.*

McConnell hopes independence questions can be set aside. "So much SNP support is focused on that debate, and I'm glad Marra reaffirmed self-determination," he said, "but Scotland has a lot of other problems, and I'd love to see work on those instead." Here, students across ideological lines converge — a rare point of agreement.

On the question of Michael Marra, perhaps the answer is to observe without expectation. Despite Scottish Labour's recent record of defeat, McConnell believes the party may still be one to watch: "Any change in the Labour Party in Scotland has to be noted with significance. The SNP have been in power a long time, but Labour has a strong tradition here — in Scotland's history, its industrial past," he said.

McConnell added, "A lot of the Labour Party, even in Westminster, still feels Scotland as its heartland."

ILLUSTRATION BY SANDA PALAZUELOS GARCIA

Paddling Out

How The Wave Project helps children gain confidence

FIONA GRAHAM
FEATURES WRITER

While walking on West Sands, you may stumble across children balancing on surfboards. What you may not notice is that many of the children you see are neurodivergent or disabled, and this may be the first time they've been able to participate in a sport.

2026 marks fifteen years of The Wave Project, a charity that introduces children aged eight to eighteen with anxiety, low confidence, or other emotional difficulties to surfing. The first step in the program is a six-week Surf Therapy course in which participants are paired with a volunteer mentor. This mentor stays with the child throughout the session, catching waves with them and making sure they stay safe in the water.

> *While these complementary techniques may not replace medication and traditional talking therapy, they do offer a new way to look at health.*

The program's next step is the Surf Club. Similar to the Surf Therapy course, members' goals include building friendships and confidence while offering ongoing support.

The final step in the program is becoming a Surf Mentor. This optional opportunity is open to members once they are fourteen. According to Derek McDonald-Lee, the project coordinator for The Wave Project in St Andrews, about 50% of those who participate in Surf Therapy continue to the Surf Club, and a small percentage become volunteers.

McDonald-Lee joined the St Andrews branch at its launch in 2021 after his dad sent him an article on the project and encouraged him to sign up. McDonald-Lee volunteered for three years and has now been the project coordinator for two. "I was doing the nine-to-five, working from home… but I've always loved surfing," McDonald-Lee said. "I signed up as a volunteer, came down to a training, and then was sort of hooked ever since."

For McDonald-Lee, volunteers are one of the most important parts of The Wave Project. In St Andrews, the project brings together a diverse volunteer base — the youngest volunteer is fourteen, and the oldest is 75. The steps to volunteer are simple: contact the charity, attend an online training session, complete a Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) background check, and finally, complete an in-person training session in the water at the chosen location.

According to the project's website, in 2024-25, 70.5% of those who joined the program felt more resilient, 70.3% gained confidence, 66.2% felt calmer, and 52.5% developed more trust. "A big thing we try and teach our kids is the lesson of resilience, being like 'It's okay to fall off, but it's getting back up again and

> *There are lots of different modes of somebody being able to process their feelings, their emotions, their sensory needs through loads of different modalities that don't necessarily need to be talking therapy.*

then having another crack at it,'" McDonald-Lee said.

Even though the sessions are only two hours long, progress is made. A girl currently on the course at St Andrews is nonverbal and uses an augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) device to communicate. When her mother came down to West Sands recently, she informed The Wave Project that her daughter had recently spoken to her teacher for the first time in three years. The words: "Surfing, let's go."



Though many don't realise just how effective these methods can be, these kinds of therapy are nothing new. According to a 2024 National Institutes of Health (NIH) study, the effects of surf therapy are equivalent to those of other "nature-based exercise interventions" such as hike therapy. Surf therapy, hike therapy, and art therapy all fall under the umbrella of complementary health, which combines a non-mainstream approach with traditional health techniques. A 2026 NIH study found that outdoor hiking effectively alleviates stress, improves moods, and enhances overall well-being. While these complementary techniques may not replace medication and traditional talking therapy, they do offer a new way to look at health.

"There are lots of different modes of somebody being able to process their feelings, their emotions, their sensory needs through loads of different modalities that don't necessarily need to be talking therapy," Dr Hollie Burnett, a senior lecturer at the University, said. Burnett specialises in clinical psychology and works closely with The Matrix, a Scotland-based psychological organisation that helps clinical psychologists choose the therapy that best suits their patients.

Burnett's son is disabled and participates in skiing, swimming, and horseback riding, all tailored for people with disabilities. "One of the biggest barriers I've had with my son is the equipment," Burnett said. "He doesn't like the shoes they make him wear; he says they dig in. So you have to get all the groundwork right for the intervention to work. Unless somebody understands the needs of the individual, often you can't get to that therapy as well."

Burnett says traditional sit-on-a-couch therapy isn't suited for everyone, and it's important to remember that. If someone struggles with communication, forcing them to look at you and talk might not be the most effective strategy. However, because many of the alternative therapies don't have licensed therapists assisting them, it's a struggle to get people to view these options as equivalent solutions. "There has to be more value and understanding about how these things help and work," said Burnett. "It's like, oh, you'll get a nice hand massage. People don't see it as anything meaningful."

In the future, The Wave Project wants to become more integrated with the University. Some students already engage with the charity, but McDonald-Lee hopes for even more to join, especially those studying psychology. "I just think it would be so beneficial for people to see in real time [what] beneficial alternative forms of therapy [...] look like," McDonald-Lee said.

Within the St Andrews community, the Surf Society volunteers regularly with The Wave Project, said Alexa Vinton, a fourth-year studying Economics and Sustainable Development and the society's charity officer. Surf Society holds several charity events throughout the year to support The Wave Project, Vinton explained. "We do this big bingo night where we raised around £1,000 last year, and we donate our fall fundraising efforts in December because they match the donations."

Outside her role on the society's committee, Vinton is a Wave Project volunteer alongside many other Surf Society members. Because of the constant turnover rate with university volunteers, the society tries to maintain an active relationship with the current project branch managers to continue getting St Andrews students involved.

> *At its core, The Wave Project's goal is "to create a space where kids can come down and just be themselves and have fun with no pressure to perform."*

As for the project's future, McDonald-Lee hopes more people will volunteer, help fundraise, and raise awareness to those who may benefit from surf therapy.

Sport is "such a big thing that could be missing in so many young people's lives," McDonald-Lee said. At its core, the goal of The Wave Project is "to create a space where kids can come down and just be themselves and have fun with no pressure to perform."

PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE WAVE PROJECT

Why Walk?
Munro-bagging in Scotland

EMMA INGRAM-JOHNSON
FEATURES WRITER

On a July day atop Ben Hope, a mountain on the north coast of Scotland, I wasn't the only St Andrews resident sheltering from the freezing fog that had followed us on our ascent. David O'Hagan, a Chemistry lecturer at the University of St Andrews, was also climbing that day. This marked my first ever 'Munro,' while it was O'Hagan's 128th.

Munros are a group of Scottish mountains officially classified by their peak elevation of above 3000 feet. Munros receive their name from Sir Hugh Munro (1856-1919), who listed tables detailing all the peaks in Scotland above 3000 feet in the sixth edition of the Scottish Mountaineering Club's (SMC) triennial journal in 1891. Ben Hope is the most northerly Munro, isolated from its 281 counterparts by a distance of 32 kilometres.

> *To me, this was a casual hobby, but to some, it is a competitive and tightly-regulated sport.*

One of O'Hagan's fellow climbers was only ten more hills away from completing their circuit; the rest of the group had climbed Ben Hope earlier that year, and were re-summiting it to help their friend achieve another 'tick.' To me, this was a casual hobby, but for some, it is a competitive and tightly-regulated sport.

The SMC helps maintain Munro regulations by keeping a record of all confirmed Munro finishers. To log a completed Munro or full list, you must contact the Club's Clerk of the List and if you are accepted, you earn the title of "Compleator."

Memorabilia is exclusively available to registered Compleators: a tie, a brooch, and two different colours of snood. So, are walkers climbing 282 mountains just for bragging rights? What exactly motivates Munro-baggers?

Professor Kenneth Falconer, a Maths lecturer at the University, has climbed every Munro twice, finishing a full list first in 1985 and again in 2008. He is well on his way to a third round of Munros, with 208 "ticked off" the list so far. "I've been walking since I was a lad," Falconer said, adding, "My parents didn't have a car, so I got used to walking." He lived in Bristol when he first began counting his Munros in 1979, so even getting to the bottom of a Munro was challenging. "I would get the night train from Bristol up to Glasgow and put my bicycle on it," Falconer said.



These days, motor traffic makes cycling between Munros practically impossible. For most of his first two circuits, Falconer relied heavily on public transport and his bike to access these mountains. Falconer does not drive, and more recently, has been hitching lifts from friends to the Highlands.

Falconer's lifetime of hillwalking has withstood a barrage of change — even within the list itself. "There were 284 [Munros] the first time I did them," Falconer told The Saint. New technology allows more accurate measurements, so "the Scottish Mountaineering Club occasionally decree[s] that something doesn't really deserve to be a Munro, or that something else does," he said. When they discover that a Munro top is actually mere millimetres from 3000 feet, it is removed from the list.

Today, Munro-bagging is much more widely known than when Falconer started up his first mountain. With a hint of pride, he told The Saint that he was only "number 408" of official compleators, whereas "there are now about 9000" in total. In 2023 alone, 251 people completed the Munros, according to SMC's 'Munro Matters.'

This upsurge of Munro-baggers is partly due to the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic, according to Falconer. For him, searching for a way to connect without coming "too close" to anyone else pushed people further afield, and into the hills.

Like any popular sport, there is a 'trendiness' that makes certain mountains paradoxically too famous to boast about, yet so famous that if you haven't climbed them, you're not a serious bagger. Mike Dixon, an Inverness resident who was awarded the 2025 W.H. Murray Literary Prize for his exemplary articles in the SMC journal, finds this troubling. The "laybys full of cars at the bottom of Munro [starts]" are off-putting, he said.

Dixon manages to "see the quirky side" of the sport. He told me of unprepared walkers being "lured by social media, by pictures" into dangerous situations, stating that "rescue teams are busy" as a result. He tends to "go out midweek" in the shoulder seasons to avoid too much footfall. As Dixon points out, the renewed interest in the Highlands has its positives — there is a "fantastic range of literature: biographies, guidebooks" now increasingly in print.

For Gabby McIntyre, Vice President of St Andrews' Breakaway Hillwalking Club, before climbing her first Munro, the online image of super-athletic Munro listers was "intimidating." McIntyre added: "282 of the tallest mountains in Scotland? That sounds a bit crazy." Completing her first Munro, Ben Lomond, she says, has helped her feel more physically "capable."

McIntyre said that Breakaway has also improved her confidence, how "there's a good culture of not being too competitive about it, but then also encouraging people to [...] get their counts up and do the Munros."

For McIntyre, part of the allure of studying at St Andrews as the proximity to the Highlands. Munro peaks remind her of the mountains in her home, North Carolina: "It was [part of] the same mountain range [...] when it was Pangea," she said.

> *Reichert found it outrageous that the mountains aren't more popular among students when "you can see them from the library!"*

McIntyre's fellow committee members, third-year student Mary McKeegan from Pennsylvania and fourth-year Kathi Reichert from the Black Forest, Germany, worried that "not being able to drive" would hinder them, but Breakaway has made getting into the mountains easy, they shared. Reichert found it outrageous that the mountains aren't more popular among students when "you can see them from the library!"

Breakaway's Fudge Fund provides free rental kits to students attending trips so that everyone can enjoy the outdoors, regardless of their financial situation. Loaning weather-proof jackets, trousers, and backpacks is essential to Breakaway's accessibility policy.

> *McIntyre said that Breakaway has also encouraged this confidence: "there's a good culture of not being too competitive about it, but then also encouraging people to [...] get their counts up and do the Munros."*

In 2023, women comprised just 28% of Munro compleators, according to the SMC, but McIntyre and McKeegan both told The Saint that among student walkers, the split is "relatively 50-50." Though the sport was historically male-dominated, Falconer observed that Munro-bagging is "certainly less" of a boys' club today. McIntyre suggested that walking in a group can create a sense of security for those who might otherwise feel daunted by the prospect, opening up this once exclusive outdoor activity to a wider crowd.

ILLUSTRATION BY MOKSHITA NAGANDLA

Everyone Wants a Job

Who actually gets hired in St Andrews?

CECILIA TERRENO
FEATURES WRITER

It's no surprise that in a town of over 10,000 students, landing one of the few available part-time positions is no easy feat. But how selective *is* the part-time job market in St Andrews? How come some students find a well-paid, flexible position, while others struggle to find a job that works with their studies, activities, and social life?

When speaking to various students and employers about what makes the St Andrews job hunt so hard, a few factors kept coming up.

> *"How come some students find a well-paid, flexible position, while others struggle to find a job that works with their studies, activities and social life?*

First, a fairly obvious component: the requirements. Some of the better-paid jobs will ask for a certain degree of qualification in the sector. For second-years Abigail Svaasand and Orla Smout, swim coaches at Swim World in St Leonard's School, having a Level 2 qualification in Teaching Swimming was a necessary prerequisite. According to them, the previous training was the most important requirement for the job, as there is high demand for swim teachers and they landed the positions easily.

Smout pointed out, however, that "getting the qualification in the first place? That's a privileged position." Her parents put £600 towards her training with the caveat that she paid them back as she worked.

If you don't have £600 to spare for specific qualifications, experience is an important advantage. In the hiring process, experience is "first and foremost," said Marc Anderson, Tailend's general manager.

If you haven't got five years of food service work already behind you, though, don't panic: some other local businesses are prepared to invest in workers without any previous experience. Charles Mair, general manager of Cromars, said that he doesn't really mind if students have no experience in hospitality because he can "train them from start to finish."

Many standard student jobs, like working behind the bar at the Student Union, also don't require any previous training. Second-year Nella Zorawska, who applied for a bartending gig at the new Red Gown Wetherspoons, explained that "[the Union] was very open to hiring people with no previous job experience because they said that they would be providing schooling on bartending."

However, in most cases, students believe that having previous experience undoubtedly implies some advantage in the hiring process, if only because it's the norm. As Svaasand explained, "the majority of people I know from my high school worked in their last year of school at the very least. Most people did a hospitality or retail job."

The normalised practice of working during high school can vary a great deal from country to country. International students from cultures where it is rare to work before eighteen might then have a disadvantage when applying to hospitality jobs if there's an implicit bias favouring 'previous experience'.

> *"In such a small community, your personal contacts may matter just as much as your qualifications.*

Regardless of experience level, some international students worry that visa restrictions on work hours are a big factor in employer hiring decisions. In reality, both at Tailend and Cromars, restrictions on international student work hours don't affect hiring decisions during term time. Mair said that he currently has multiple students working on visa restrictions, and it doesn't impact the business.

At the same time, being an international student might make it harder to work outside of term time. Yves de Courcy-Ireland, a student employee at Cromars, mentioned that "a lot of people go away for summer, which doesn't help" if a business needs workers during the summer months.

Aside from nationality, availability to work could also depend on the degree you study. Amy Koster, a student employee at Janettas, said that availability in work hours is important when applying for a job there: "for instance, a Medicine student who needs more hours of study might be disadvantaged in getting a Janettas job that requires flexibility with shifts."

On the other hand, what may be the most significant component in the St Andrews job search is, perhaps unsurprisingly, who you know. In such a small community, your personal contacts may matter just as much as your qualifications.

Local students with previous ties to the town see this as a big advantage in successfully landing a part-time job. It's a pretty simple calculation: "It's easier to get a job if you're local because people know you and have known you for a while," said de Courcy-Ireland.

Svaasand also noted that having mutual connections was an important part of her job search, and she believes that "capitalising on a network of connections is essentially the easiest way to find a job in St Andrews."

Brando Esposito, a golf caddie at Kingsbarns Golf Links, agreed. His brother gave him his employer's contact, after which Esposito was invited to participate in the caddie training course, ultimately getting the position.

Students and employers alike agree that personality and in-person impressions make all the difference in receiving a job offer. For Mair, a good personality is the most important requirement: if someone fits "well" in his team, "it'll make everyone's lives ten times easier." Anderson also said that he greatly values the personal relationships formed among colleagues and that an enthusiastic attitude is key to getting hired at Tailend.

When students go online to look for jobs, sometimes this personal aspect of the process is lost. While online tools like Indeed are natural resources for students deep in the job search, they can make the initial stages of the application process impersonal.

Sean Lowry Cummings, a golf concierge at the Royal & Ancient Golf Club, thinks that by "passively" sending out a job application, "you completely lose control of the whole process." Instead, he much prefers going out and speaking to employers

> *"For Mair, a good personality is the most important requirement: if someone fits "well" in his team, "it'll make everyone's lives ten times easier."*

so that they can "put a face to a name," because it "shows engagement with trying to get a job, [and] that you really want it."

If you can't go in person, Koster recommended reaching out digitally. She explained how she drafted an email to send out to multiple St Andrews retail businesses, expressing her interest in working if anyone happened to have a vacancy. "Indeed is great, but the reason I emailed is because I thought everybody would be using [Indeed], and I kind of wanted to stand out," Koster said.

The scramble for student jobs may feel overwhelming at times, and standing out in a town full of high-achieving students is no easy challenge. But breaking the job search down to some actionable strategies can be the key to success. The most important tip from student employees? Present yourself as enthusiastic, available, and willing to reach out — and start working on those precious connections.

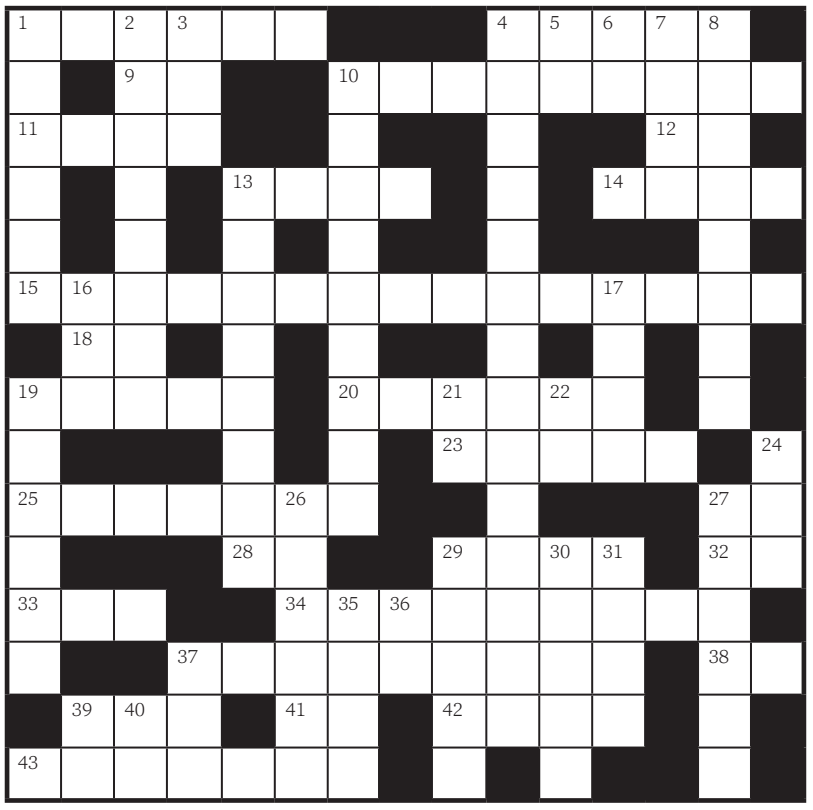


ILLUSTRATION BY MOKSHITA NAGANDLA

PUZZLES

EDITOR: JULIA EMERY

BLAST FROM THE PAST



CROSSWORD *BY MADELEINE OLIVER*

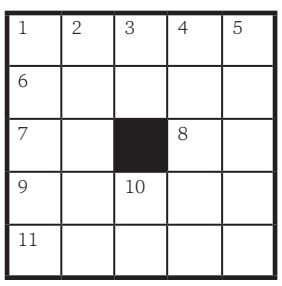
ACROSS

1. Bobby Brown of *Stranger Things*
4. Monty Python's specialty
9. Stevie Wonder hit song
10. TikTok predecessor
11. Longest African river
12. Dubai internet country code
13. Judy of Brooklyn 99
14. "__ of Seventeen," Stevie Nicks
15. One seeking a second degree (8,7)
18. Largest intergovernmental organisation
19. __ to the metal
20. Jilly, Author of *Rivals*
23. Golf course by the coast
25. Tight double bend on a road
27. Undergraduate degree abbr.
28. And __ forth
29. Remarkable individual
32. Singular article
33. Host of the 2016 Olympics
34. Challenge that had everyone frozen on video
37. Percussion kit piece (5,4)
38. Collapsing blow
39. French personal pronoun
41. Coup __ grace
42. "Make it snappy!" acronym
43. Lower, vibe-wise

DOWN

1. Bitcoin activity
2. 2016 film wrongly announced as Best Picture (2,2,4)
3. Non-STEM University in London
4. Banned in primary schools circa 2016-18 (6,8)
5. Cooling abbreviation
6. Egyptian sun god
7. Dressed
8. Poise
10. Popular millennial finger tattoo design
13. Serve a second function (6,2)
16. Regret
17. __ Diaries, Rachel Renée Russell
19. Marathon runners who keep a constant speed
21. Frank Sinatra AKA "__ Blue Eyes"
22. Shorter of the two dashes
24. Camper, maybe
26. Roamers
27. Graffiti name
29. __ one, at the start of a journey (2,3)
30. Same
31. Roast Cut
35. God of war
36. Norway from us, cartographically
37. "Aaron Burr, __" from *Hamilton*
39. English personal pronoun
40. Reddit user who created the main post

MINI CROSSWORD *BY MADELEINE ABIGNALE*



ACROSS

1. ___from the past or this issue's theme
6. Broadcasting device
7. @
8. Sweat smell, abbr.
9. Record
11. Sherlock's sister

DOWN

1. Courageous
2. Caesar's tongue
3. Endorsement
4. Ancient prophetess
5. Frigid fictional planet from *Star Wars*
10. Expression of disagreement

SUDOKU *BY RUBA ALABED*

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

CONNECTIONS *BY CHARLOTTE CHADWICK*

Find groups of four items with something in common

BREAK	TIMBER	VINE	DAB
MAKE	TIKTOK	ROOT	CHECK
LEAF	SLIME	TUMBLR	FLOWER
RIGHT ROUND	GROWN	STEM	BACKSTABBER

QUICK CRYPTIC CLUE *BY KOLB SUN*

Use definitions and wordplay to work out this clue!



Boxy Container Set Behind Cover For A Throwback Event? (5)

WORD SEARCH *BY JULIA EMERY*

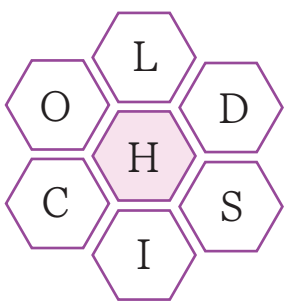
Find the words below in the letter grid

COACHELLA
BLOGGER
FLOWER
CROCHET
FRINGE
PEACE SIGN
BOHEMIAN
GLITTER

G	A	W	I	C	O	E	L	R	A
E	C	A	A	E	O	L	E	P	L
B	R	L	E	T	H	T	F	E	L
L	O	E	C	I	T	O	L	A	E
O	C	O	G	I	A	R	O	C	H
G	H	R	L	N	T	O	W	E	C
G	E	G	I	E	I	B	E	S	A
E	T	L	E	R	E	R	R	I	O
B	Z	C	I	H	S	R	F	G	C
J	B	O	H	E	M	I	A	N	T

SPELLING BEE *BY CHARLOTTE CHADWICK*

Make 4+ letter words. Words must use the center letter, letters can repeat. There are 57 words.

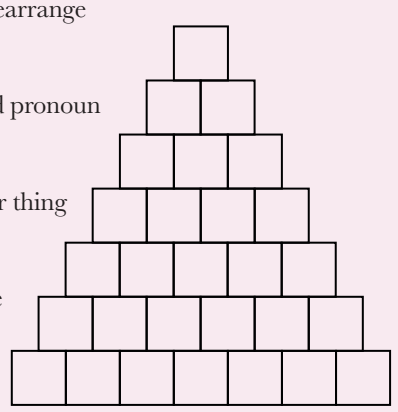


THE SAINT CLASSIC!

STEPDOWN *BY JULIA EMERY*

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.

1. Texter's shorthand pronoun
2. Peacekeepers' org.
3. Convent member
4. A person, place, or thing
5. Home of 601
6. Vatican envoy
7. Frappuccino craze flavour



Faces and Their Favourite Places

CIARA LORD
PHOTOGRAPHER













Frozen in Time: The Statues of St Andrews

YUSHI ZHANG
PHOTOGRAPHER













The Relic



Issue 301_LVO.inddc 20 29/09/2026 01:49

Independent Film in Close-Up

A Seat at the 79th Edinburgh International Film Festival

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

to give them some options. Not professional grade, but I like to think they're not bad.

"Now one without the poster," the man says (same accent), tucking his poster-clutching arm behind his back. I take a few more before lowering the phone. Everyone exhales, and they step off the carpet, perhaps afraid to overstay their welcome.

"Do you guys have a short in competition?" I ask as the woman takes her phone back. By now, I've recognised them from the Q&A after yesterday's screening at Filmhouse, where I sat with a packed and bubbling audience of mostly young people for three hours, watching all ten competition shorts one after another with no intermission. To decide the winner, everyone was given a paper ballot with which to rank each film from one to five by tearing at the dotted lines. A coda of surreptitious ripping accompanied the end credits of each film. One of the shorts, a documentary titled *Finding Home at the Pianodrome*, followed a community of craftspeople and musicians who restore and upcycle disused pianos in Edinburgh. When the final short ended and the lights returned, I

> *Everyone exhales, and they step off the carpet, perhaps afraid to overstay their welcome.*

noticed one of its cast members sitting three seats to my right. The woman beside me was with him; she'd given most of the other films low ratings.

Back on the Cineworld's glossy tiles, the two smile timidly at my question, as though still unsure what face to make in this scenario. "Yes," the woman says, "it is *Surplace*?"

"I saw it yesterday," I say, "I really enjoyed it." It is, oddly, the same tone I would use to thank an aging veteran for their service — the kind you know will never convey everything you wish it might. They smile, thank me, and



shuffle away, their final screening over and their big day complete.

A perfect ending would see their film go on to win the competition, after which my amateur handiwork would wind up on some Lithuanian film website, but not every dream comes true.

Earlier that day at Central Hall, the first-ever UK Film Conference commences with a conversation between Picturehouse Creative Director Claire Binns and BFI CEO Ben Roberts. The atmosphere is palpably coarse.

"Lots of people have come up to me and said, 'Give Ben a hard time.'" Binns says to open the discussion. She's referring to money, specifically the National Lottery Good Cause funds, a public fund directed by the BFI that, among other functions, supports a finite number of independent productions. Early into the discussion, Binns asks everyone who works in film to raise their hand: a majority of the audience.

"So I would imagine some of you have been turned down," she says.

"Including you," Roberts retorts.

Binns goes on to break down the BFI's financial plan for its £150 million three-year budget, scrutinising the percentages and the institute's involvement in everything from promoting cinema attendance to managing the world's largest film archive. Roberts spends most of the ninety minutes playing defense, justifying the BFI's many avenues of investment, or everything it funds instead of the unsuccessful applicants in the room.

While Binns and Roberts debate the BFI's bookkeeping, two pairs of elephants loom in the rafters. Everyone can smell them. On one side are *Obsession* and *Backrooms*, early summer's breakout sensations that seem to prove independent filmmaking is alive and well (albeit possibly dependent on new media for its oxygen). On the other, there are August's big-budget behemoths Binns calls out by name ("It's really hard when you've got *[The] Odyssey* and *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* in a twelve-screen cinema and twelve screens are playing those two films"). The dream is still alive, it seems, but not without the same oppressive forces as always, drowning out most newcomers in oceans of commercial cash.

The night prior, I sit down for my final screening of the day at Cineworld in the centre of my row. The row in front of me is marked "Reserved". With the exception of a few who miss the

EIFF: FIRST CLASS STANDOUTS

Ten Highlights from this Year's Edinburgh International Film Festival

Marking Scheme
16.5-20: First Class | 13.5-16.4: Upper Second Class (2:1) | 10.5-13.4: Lower Second Class (2:2) | 7-10.4: Third Class | 4-6.9: Fail (with right to reassess) | 0-3.9: Fail (without right to reassess)

Feature Films

The Incomer (dir. Louis Paxton) ***16.5***

Out There (dir. Simon Ryninks) ***17***

Capsized (dir. Lindsey Ryan) ***17***

First Zone (dir. Thom Lunshof) ***17.5***

The Arrow at Rest at Every Instant of its Flight (dir. Theodore Schaefer) ***19***

Two dissatisfied arcade employees concoct elaborate schemes to get rich quick. A love triangle between a professor, a divorce lawyer, and a dentist afraid of gum disease unravels to surreal proportions. A suicide note leads a savvy pickpocket to a high-stakes poker game. These three interconnected stories, all set in New York City and starring the outstanding Gus Birney, unfold in director Theodore Schaefer and co-writer Patrick Lawler's jazz-fueled, greyscale kaleidoscope of a film that is equal parts hilarious and profound. A soon-to-be cult classic in the footsteps of arthouse giants like Robert Downey Sr and Luis Buñuel, *Arrow at Rest* is like the best kind of drunken escapade: an absurd, dizzying, and philosophically enlightening rollercoaster of emotions, from which you will emerge baffled yet entertained, only without the crippling hangover.

Short Films

Grief Room (dir. Sindha Agha) ***16.5***

Finding Home at the Pianodrome (dir. Devon Peterson) ***17***

Hidden Trees (dir. Sophie van Bree) ***18***

Small One (dir. Anne-Sofie Lindgaard) ***18.5***

Abuela, (dir. Mónica Echevarría) ***20***

From the festival's Screen Academy Scotland Shorts, Mónica Echevarría's documentary short investigates the untold story of her grandmother, the Spanish writer Maria Jesús Echevarría, and her remarkable life before her death by suicide at just 30 years old. The film uses all the standard ingredients of biographical documentary (interview, voiceover, archival material) but rearranges them in bold, refreshing ways through layered generational narratives and an editing style that transforms stacks of withered papers and photos into an arresting collage of a life held back from its potential. At once a brilliant lost chapter of literary history and intimate gift to Echevarría's own father, the short is exactly what festivals like EIFF are for: to amplify the stories and artistic voices of those capable of moving audiences — now and in decades to come — in need only of material support and a big enough stage.

sign and are politely informed of their mistake, the row fills with a group of all ages who greet each other with warm enthusiasm, handing each other popcorn and spare bottles of water. Taking their seats, they lean forward and eagerly raise their eyebrows at each other. One of them keeps the seat in front of me open.

The lights dim, and someone from the festival comes out to introduce the film. A few people in the row ahead record from their phones as she delivers soaring praise of what we're about to see before welcoming the film's director to the stage. The quarter-capacity audience applauds, and the row before me cheers. It's his sophomore feature, so the film isn't among those up for the fifty grand (which would go to *Skintown*, a funny

> *The quarter-capacity audience applauds, and the row before me cheers.*

and arresting story of two young men's risky venture to escape a narrow life in Northern Ireland amid the Troubles), but that's on no one's mind. He says little, thanking the audience so much

> *The dream is still alive, it seems, but not without the same oppressive forces as always, drowning out most newcomers in oceans of commercial cash.*

for coming, what an honour and a joy it is to be part of this festival, all the hard work done by so many people to make this happen, how much this film means to him. As the audience applauds, he hands back the microphone, walks up the steps, and takes his seat directly in front of me. Along the row, people lean forward to smile, reach out a hand, and give him a thumbs-up.

ILLUSTRATION BY DARCY BATESON



Fig. 1 Reading required readings

Fig. 2 Reading Signpost Magazine vol.II

Riddles: Why We Love Them

SYLVIA COVACI
ARTS & CULTURE WRITER

I'd like to think that if I were Bilbo Baggins, lost in the hollows of Gollum's cave, I'd be able to outwit the slimy creature in his game of riddles. However, I have trouble enough with the Monday morning crosswords, and often feel as though my life *is* on the line while staring at the niche pop-culture clue for 39-down. I hope my riddle, posed above, isn't causing a similar clamminess; read carefully, and you may find the answer right before you.

Tolkien's *The Hobbit* reveals the sacred wager of the riddle, but also the heart of its deception. Gollum intends to eat Bilbo after failing to solve the hobbit's riddle, despite an earlier oath to free him (I've never been *that* angered by my linguistic inadequacy). The book was famously inspired by medieval literature, of which riddles were a fantastic portion. *The Exeter Book*, dating to the late tenth century, contains circa 100 riddles, anonymously written and without solutions. In my second-year module on Medieval and Renaissance texts, we read these enigmas in their original Old English. This tongue, though the mother (or rather, great-grandmother) of our modern language, feels mysteriously foreign; when my lecturer read the riddles aloud, I felt as if some ancient enchantment had descended like a mist upon the hall.

The genre's lineage is ancient, without an evident genesis. But the most faithful way to begin, I think, would be with the etymology of 'riddles' (aren't words, these strange clusterings of lines, these erratic and patterned markings, riddles in themselves?). In Old English, there are *kennings*, poetic compound words. Two kennings for 'man' are *gæstberend* (soul-bearer) or *reordberend* (voice-bearer) – these cryptic compounds create riddles within

> *I am carved in the skin of broken trees*
> *I change on the tongue of he who holds me*
> *I fall from thought to wrist and reed*
> *My body bleeds on its white steed.*
> *Find me, father, utter your progeny;*
> *I bear your voice as you bear me.*

riddles.

The modern English word 'riddle' descends from the Old English *rædels*, meaning riddle, imagination, or conjecture. *Rædels* derives from the verb *rædan*, which means to read, interpret, guess, or advise. Curiously, the modern English 'read' shares this ancestral root. The etymology of 'riddle' reveals its essence: an imagined medium from which truth can be divined.

Riddles abounded in the ancient world, woven into Sophoclean tragedy, Egyptian mathematical papyrus, and Biblical parables. They seem to be as old as language itself. Though I cannot claim to know the secret of the riddle's endurance, I can, with my little knowledge, begin to guess. Riddles are endlessly flexible, orating all aspects of our reality and supra-reality: animals, elements, tools, dreams, and divinities. Riddles are a form of poetry, of song, of mathematics, and of logic, appealing to both the radical and the rational. Their ambivalence, moreover, is irresistible; while riddles strive to tell a truth, they also love to lie.

At the riddle's core is a secret, secret knowledge, whose unknown we have reached for since the fall from Eden. It is no wonder, then, that the Exeter riddles often open with *Ic eom* (I am) and close with *Frige hwæt ic hatte* (find what I am called); they are endowed with the human quest for identity.

So while I love solving the wordle and pouring over crosswords, I think a revival of their ancient ancestor, the riddle, is due. Why not compose a few lines in the cavernous cellar of Aikman's, and spill your deceitful spells into the hot, mead-laden air? Free pints for the finest riddler — and may your foes be friendlier than Gollum.

Rao's at the Rusacks: Red Sauce and Ruined Dreams

ANNA-MARIE REGNER
ARTS & CULTURE WRITER

What's red, has one room, four letters, and only ten tables? Ask a New Yorker, and they may answer you: Rao's, the old Italian restaurant in East Harlem, famous for its intimate dining room, red facade, and, above all, impossibly unattainable reservations.

But we are in St Andrews, not New York...right?

These days, it can be hard to tell. At every corner, one hears the bellow of an American accent; rents are soaring to £1,200 for a single room in a dingy share-house; fashion shows are abundant, as are the fashionable people who keep them alive. And now, we even host a New York institution.

> *"But we are in St Andrews, not New York...right?*

For a limited time, Rao's has opened a pop-up at the Rusacks. The crowds went wild. My expectations went with them.

We began with the 'famous' meatballs. Two steaming, fist-sized spheres (I'm being generous) arrived at our table, smothered in luminous red sauce. For a moment, I thought: *this looks tremendously appetising*. Then I remembered they cost £22 and were about to be shared among six girls.

A writer for *The Courier*, who had these same meatballs, declared: "These are insane." I think *that* is *insane*. I would have gone with "these are unremarkable". Moist and tender, yet almost entirely flavourless mounds of meat in a pretty but equally flavourless red sauce. Rao's is also known for selling jars of its marinara in supermarkets. I suspect that is what they dumped on these.

The pasta followed a similar trajectory. The penne alla vodka arrived in a disappointing sauce, lacking both the richness one expects from the cream and the tartness one hopes for from the tomatoes. Perhaps its provenance is also a jar.

The veal ragu casarecce was the sole redeeming moment: the pasta was cooked to perfection, and the veal was fragrant.

We had made our reservation months in advance, curious to discover what lay behind the mystical curtain of New York's most exclusive restaurant. We had not, however, prepared ourselves to spend a small fortune for the privilege.

We were eventually persuaded into dessert, which, in retrospect, was a positive. The affogato, served in a martini glass, did slightly elevate my mood. Then again, how difficult is it to scoop vanilla ice cream and douse it in espresso?

At these prices, one hopes to be paying for an *experience*, where every detail has been thought through. It did not quite feel that way while eating off the same cutlery and dinnerware as the One Under, the restaurant Rao's has temporarily replaced.

They at least attempted to manufacture the atmosphere of its New York counterpart, in what felt like a movie set. The usual One Under golf photographs were replaced with pictures of Frank Sinatra and the families who frequented the original Rao's in East Harlem. It is, after all, a family business, famous for its unusual "table ownership" tradition: families and celebrity regulars have effectively claimed particular tables on particular nights for decades, with coveted spots sometimes passed down through generations. There is even a legend that the mob was willing to shoot one of these patrons to secure a table.

None of this mystique or urban legend quite survived the Atlantic crossing. It is difficult to transplant something whose entire charm depends on being impossible to enter.

And so, our little Scottish seaside town has plunged further into absurdity. Following in the footsteps of T-Squared, Justin Timberlake and Tiger Woods's golfing venture, comes the latest American import: a restaurant whose entire business model is essentially *you can't sit with us*.

They know their clientele. Apparently, it's here.

> *"And so, our little Scottish seaside town has plunged further into absurdity.*

In 1977, Rao's famously received a gushing three-star review from *The New York Times*'s food critic Mimi Sheraton, transforming the restaurant forever. I'm afraid the Rao's pop-up at the Rusacks will get anything but.

For now, it is just another expensive American gimmick washed up on the shores of St Andrews.

Holy Trinity, Secular Use

Why are churches St Andrews' public venues?

MORDECAI WATSON
ARTS & CULTURE WRITER

My first evening of Freshers' week was spent not carousing in "Spoonion," but 300 metres away in the equally hallowed nave of Holy Trinity Church. I had made the consciously identity-fashioning decision to attend Gordon Brown's talk for his new polemical treatise *The Future Starts With Us*. What first struck me was the Gothic building's intoxicatingly muscular atmosphere: a rhythmic march of parallel stone piers pinned the central nave in their guard of honour formation. The site's storied history had seeped into every ledger stone and cross-slab. It was at Holy Trinity Church in 1559 that Reformer John Knox delivered a sermon on the Cleansing of the Temple, inflammatory enough to flush the dull sandstone red. His instruction to purge the city of its idolatrous monuments was duly followed. Townspeople and bailies alike tore down wooden altarpieces and Catholic ornaments to be burnt in public bonfires.

Basking in the space's severity, I awaited Gordon Brown's saturnine brow and baritone voice. It was only once he rose to speak that the room's true allegiance revealed itself: one of its stalwart piers, apparently sharing Knox's suspicion of idols, positioned itself between me and the great man's face, leaving me the whole address in voice alone.

The rest of my Freshers' week was coloured by repeated encounters with the odd marriage between parish halls and secular events. Beyond Topping's talks, various commercial uses populated the town: the riotously popular poster fair at the New Kirk and the Headlock Vintage Clothing Sale at St Mark's Parish. The Church of Scotland's contraction, with hundreds of churches slated to close, converges with the physical deficiency of space in St Andrews. Crucially, the spaces become an asset almost exclusively when put to non-religious uses. As venues, they are staggeringly beautiful; as churches, they rely on a shrinking donor base and an equally shrinking institution. The pattern is unlikely to relent. Sites once frequented by the likes of John Knox and Samuel Rutherford will house authors' lectures and bric-a-brac sales.



This dependency, though, has never meant the surrender of discretion. Churches do retain decisive control over who they house. The Kirk Session holds statutory responsibility for spiritual affairs and an absolute right of refusal. As religious organisations, they are vested with unique powers of exemption from the Equality Act 2010's prohibition of discrimination.

John Knox would surely shudder that a discretionary power indebted to his Presbyterian polity now welcomes the market rather than bars it. While lacking Knox's zealous conviction, I still feel that a once-tempestuous grandeur has been extinguished. The burning-hot sandstone has returned to its characteristic grey; the building has become simply a building. A notion of *banalisation* permeates much of life at St Andrews. The Opening Ceremonies saw Younger Hall scarcely half-filled by the singing of 'Gaudeamus'. Fittingly, our Wetherspoons is named after a 17th-century red gown once used to deter underage drinking.

Yet the banalisation I mourn is itself a kind of romanticism, one that risks freezing the past to indict the present. Knox's purge was not the building's inevitable purpose but a grand intervention. The site's stripping, endorsed by council and congregation, reads as the contemporary authority's answer to its moment, no different from the Kirk Session that now lets out the nave. Since its 1144 founding, the church has been relocated, rebuilt, and restored; its present medieval face is a twentieth-century reconstruction. Each change answered the tension between inherited form and the day's pragmatic needs. To mourn what's lost is to ignore that we are this negotiation's latest party; it is ours to enter and reshape, not to lament.

ILLUSTRATION BY ELLA BURROW

TOP TIPS FROM TOPPING & CO.

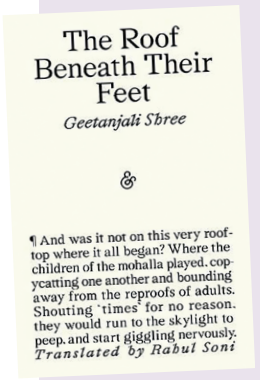
Literature from the East

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

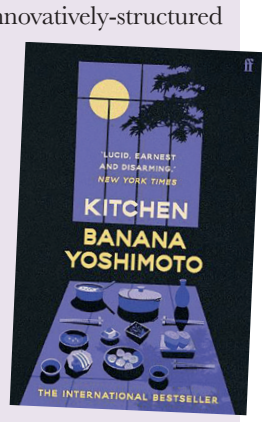
BOOKSELLER PICKS

Mikey recommends...

The Roof Beneath Their Feet by Geetanjali Shree



Translated from the original Hindi, International Booker Prize-winning author Geetanjali Shree's *The Roof Beneath Their Feet* is a non-linear story of a female friendship, formed and played out on the rooftops of their neighbourhood in an unnamed Indian city. These rooftops are a space free from authority and patriarchy where they can indulge in playfulness and imagination; the novel itself is, in turn, playful and imaginative. It swims between perspectives roves freely across time and memory, creating a fluid psychological landscape to accompany the landscape of the rooftops. Recalling Elena Ferrante's *My Brilliant Friend*, this innovatively-structured novel takes you in the depths of a community, and the depths of women as they negotiate their place in them.

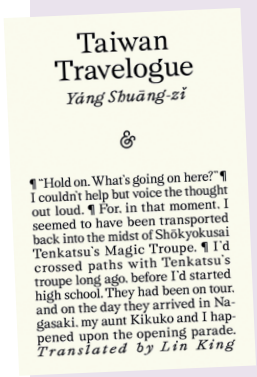


Sanna recommends...

Kitchen by Banana Yoshimoto

Kitchen features two novellas on identity, loss, and love in 1980s urban Japan. The title story follows Mikage Sakurai, a young woman reeling from the death of her grandmother, her last living relative. Her life shifts when Yuichi Tanabe, a kind acquaintance, invites her to live with him and his mother, Eriko. The companion piece, 'Moonlight Shadow', follows Satsuki, a young woman mourning the sudden death of her boyfriend. She takes up jogging to cope with her insomnia. Her routine leads her to Urara, a mysterious woman who introduces Satsuki to the "Weaver Festival Phenomenon": a mystical, once-in-a-hundred-years event where the barrier between the living and the dead thins, offering Satsuki one final chance to say goodbye.

STAFF PICKS



Sam recommends...

Taiwan Travelogue by Yang Shuang-zi

Taiwan Travelogue by Yang Shuang-zi dares the reader to resist getting comfortable deciding what's real and what's not. It's the same challenge it poses to its protagonist, Aoyama Chizuko, a young Japanese novelist on a writing trip through Japanese-ruled Taiwan in the 1930s. Chizuko appears at first to be probing Taiwanese reality with an egalitarianism verging on something ham-fisted, excessively enthusiastic. For one thing, she demands to eat local food, demonstrating an inexhaustible appetite for genuine cuisine. Though Chizuko purports to be staunchly opposed to the furious 'Japanization' brutalising Taiwanese life, the exemplary relationship that evolves throughout the novel goes beyond time and place, mediated by asymmetrical power and colonial image.

So You Think You Can Sing?

What does it take to make the cut in St Andrews' A cappella scene?

PIPPA BOOT
ARTS & CULTURE WRITER

Every university possesses a unique trigger that sets a fresher's imagination into overdrive. Perhaps it is the dream of scoring the winning point for the varsity team or landing a coveted role in the university musical. At the University of St Andrews, however, there is an unexpected object of fresher fascination: becoming a member of one of its a cappella groups.

St Andrews' A cappella scene has been developing for decades. The oldest current group, the Alleycats, was founded 25 years ago. Since then, the university's groups have built legacies of their own, with the Other Guys, the Accidentals, and the Hummingbirds, among others, competing in championships such as the International Championship of Collegiate A Cappella. What began as a distinctly American collegiate tradition has, over the years, found its own place in the heart of St Andrews.

Freshers are introduced to these groups almost immediately at the Freshers' Fayre, where the A Cappella Society has its own stand, vying for attention among hundreds of other societies. Before long, they are confronted with the same voices again at the Opening Ceremony, where the Other Guys take to the stage. By the end of the first week, the groups have managed to insert themselves rather thoroughly into the fresher consciousness, whether anyone asked them to or not.

Questions like "How do I join?" or "Where do I audition?" soon arise. Students start testing their own voices, marvelling at the prospect of performing an entire song without instruments or sheet music, yet somehow making it look effortless. But what does it actually take to make the cut? I spoke to several university a cappella groups to find out.

The audition process begins with the more technical side of singing. Auditionees are asked to prepare a verse and chorus to perform in front of the group, an understandably daunting prospect for many freshers. This allows selectors to assess fundamentals: pitch, rhythm, and breath control.

But this is only part of the equation. Selectors also listen for how naturally an auditionee's voice blends with the others. In A cappella, the magic lies in how individual voices harmonise together to create one sound. Members spend hours rehearsing each week, sometimes returning to the same phrase again and again until every voice sits exactly where it should.

With members spending so much time together, it is perhaps unsurprising that musical ability is not the only thing under scrutiny. Joseph Hall, a member of the Other Guys, told me that the audition is "as much a vibe test as it is a musical test." James Carder-Geddes from the Alleycats similarly described an "unconscious bias" when considering whether someone will simply "fit in the group." This raises an interesting tension in the audition process: is it really just a singing test or is it also, consciously or not, a test of personality?

> *By the end of the first week, the groups have managed to insert themselves rather thoroughly into the fresher consciousness, whether anyone asked them to or not.*

Perhaps this is the true appeal. The audition is not simply about finding the best singer, but finding someone who can 'fit in' the group — and freshers want that someone to be them. For those navigating an entirely unfamiliar social world, an A cappella group offers more than the chance to sing; it provides something to hold onto: a regular group of people, shared rehearsals, socials, and, eventually, friendships. Perhaps the polished performances capture their imagination, but the prospect of finding a community drives them to make the cut.



ILLUSTRATION BY MIA FERNANDES

An Afternoon at Amber

Finding St Tropez in St Andrews

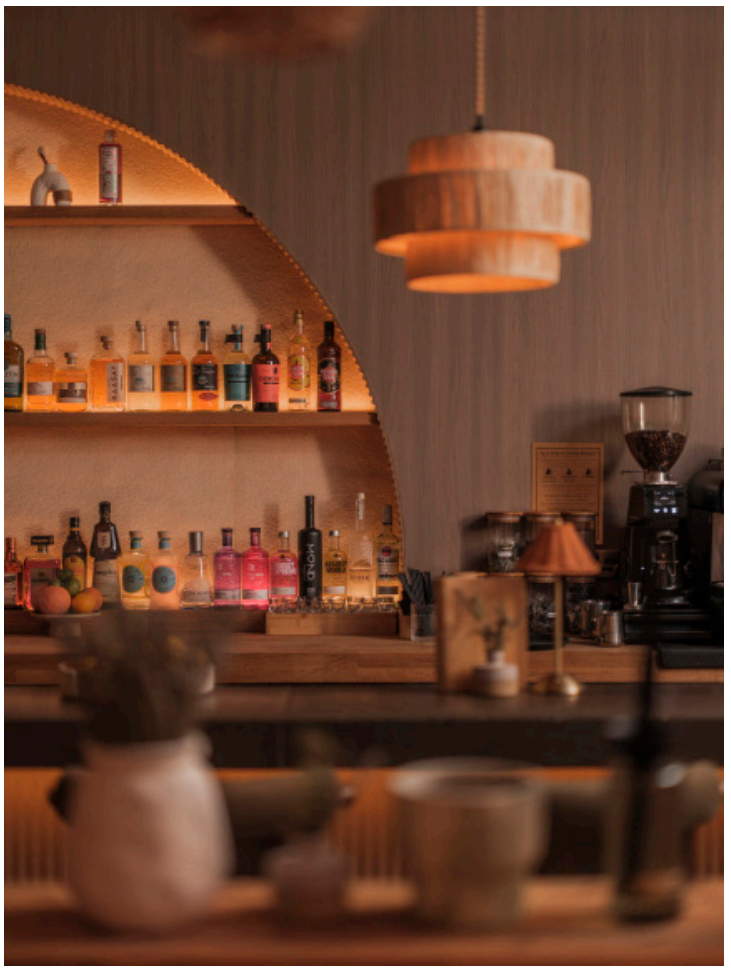
SAM SPENDLOVE
DEPUTY EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

This article has kindly been sponsored by Amber Restaurant St Andrews

When I got back to St Andrews, the words on the street were 'tiramisu' and 'window.' Since the word on the street is usually something like 'meningitis' or 'ecological catastrophe,' my interest was piqued. At first, I wondered if people were just inventing new ways to cope — hallucinating heavenly windows from which Tiramisu dropped down to us lowly mortals. As it turns out, though, the window is very real — it was opened by Amber, the new restaurant on South Street, which I visited this week in the hopes of capturing some cocoa-dusted bliss for myself.

> *Thankfully, the dining space seems built to counter St Andrews' natural affinity for gloom.*

I visited Amber for a late lunch on a grey, windy afternoon. I was feeling cold and a bit mournful at the loss of the warmer months. Thankfully, the dining space seems built to counter St Andrews' natural affinity for gloom. It's lit with low, golden lighting that strikes as inviting and warm. Where possible, the fixtures in place are made from natural materials like light wood and organic-looking fabric, serving to elevate the room while infusing it with compelling intimacy. All of this might have lent itself towards a stifling, claustrophobic feeling, except that the space that Amber now occupies is one with ample depth; contrasted with other establishments on South Street, it has one of the bigger dining spaces, extending to include a bar and three seating areas. Amber has filled this extra space with decorations like a tree and hanging plants, which make the space feel airier and natural. It was through these touches that I felt cozy without feeling like I'd sat down to lunch in someone's living room — a problem that can sometimes arise with a warmer colour-palette.





Altogether, despite being situated in the grey heart of St Andrews, Amber felt distinctly mediterranean, a place to go for a little warmth. There're plenty of opportunities to get it: Amber's Ibiza white nights and St Tropez brunches are already extraordinarily popular amongst students.

> *Done poorly, mocktails can taste like little else besides juice, but my peach bellini was done very, very right.*

Now, the fun part: food. Well, actually first: drinks. Amber's expansive drinks menu had something to offer people of all tastes at any time of day. Since I'm not big on alcohol, I asked my waiter about some of Amber's non-alcoholic options. Wanting to chase more tropical dreams, I ended up ordering a zero-alcohol peach bellini. This was the right choice. Done poorly, mocktails can taste like little else besides juice, but my peach bellini was done very, very right. Worth the occasion, it felt fun and special, something delicious in its own right.

And *now* for food. Sipping on my bellini, I looked over Amber's mediterranean-inspired menu and selected the bruschetta as my starter. Though I was expecting a simple dish, what I received exceeded expectations. The plate was beautiful, with a balsamic glaze drizzle and a crown of prosciutto. Light but still substantial enough for a starter, incorporated a wide profile of flavour.

For my main, I ordered steak frites. Steak frites is a perfect dish with which to demonstrate the beauty in marrying high and low food cultures. Steak is what showrunners give male characters with signet rings and cigars, and frites are what toddlers order on Disney cruise liners. The challenge I put to Amber was marrying them effectively, making it feel like part of a worthwhile meal out. Happily, the dish went above and beyond its constitutive parts; surprising flavour was added by a chimichurri sauce spread generously over the steak, as well as by a garlic aioli for the frites. The steak was impressively cooked — tender and tasteful even without the other elements of the dish. By the end of the course, I was cutting frites in half so that I could prolong the whole experience.

When that was done and my bellini was finished, I figured it was time for desert. Once and for all, I would figure out what was drawing the town up to Amber's open window. The lovely wait staff offered me the dessert menu, but I simply held my hand up — I already knew what I wanted. They smiled, nodded, and came back with a plate of Amber's claim to fame: the tiramisu. Multi-tiered, sweet, and a more than generous portion size — I now understood that everything I'd been told was true. Yes, the window opened for me.

> *The lovely wait staff offered me the dessert menu, but I simply held my hand up — I already knew what I wanted.*

Afterwards, I asked to see the *actual* window. I was brought up to the front of the restaurant, to the wall of glass just beyond the maitre-de's station. My waiter explained to me that, on sunny days, they could open up the glass entirely. Non-alcoholic was an option, but also distinct flavours like lemon drizzle. I was filled with excitement at the thought of the town being blessed, routinely, by the tiramisu.

I left Amber full and excited. It's not every day that our town receives an exciting new venue, and Amber is definitely exciting.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY AMBER RESTAURANT

I Dreamt of a Man in a Star and a Technicolour Wool Coat

Starfields 2026 in review

ALDEN ARNOLD
EDITOR IN CHIEF

Christ, what a queue. Effervescent chatter travels down the human chain, narrowing from the chapel's main entrance to an imperceptible point at the end of North Street — summer catch-ups and months-waiting reunions, spilling into the road. Tennent's cans and sequin tops upon cowboy boots stream into Lower College Lawn, each bobbing to the undulating beat within.

It's my first and final Starfields, a St Andrews institution that I've managed (and now failed) to dodge throughout my undergrad. Its formula is quite simple — venue, open-air, music, bar, dance — and this has been the root of my three-year trepidation: why pay a ball-fare for something I can find at a garden party?

The quaking vibration in my inner ear promptly answers my question. On the Lawn crouches the beast, a tent resembling some Spielbergian spaceship or Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim. A guttural EDM roar draws us into its jaws — but no, first a drink.

The bar accommodates a fair selection of spirits, beer, and the crowd favourite of the evening, Hooch. Blue tongues beware. Bartenders raise their arms to the evening sky like antennae, card readers in hand, hoping for bank signals to synchronise. The thirsty folk are becoming a tad impatient with this dance, but never mind them — simply order dessert with your main.

In its execution, SF achieves something rare for high-attendance events in St Andrews. A sense of familiar intimacy surrounds me. I was in class there yesterday, just through that window in the Irvine Building. This lawn, I played frisbee on last week. People I attended pres with and those I've seldom seen since sub-honours, each face and every name, all are here, beaming. I know every corner of this place.

A certain wardrobe dots the grass — Coachella-adjacent, perhaps. Thanks be to the meteorologists, for the warm weather has accommodated our linen trousers and lace tops. Headscarves and velvet smoking caps float across to the catering trucks. It's FS, St Andrews Charity Fashion Show, that's hosting this year's festival. They've done well to find their crowd.



Thwump-thwump-thwump now fills my head again, my fingers vibrating on the front barricade. Smoke machines and strobe lights intoxicate me, distorting my senses, inducing a kind of euphoria. Three headliners rotate off stage — Paris, Italy, Scotland — quite an international group. Funk, hip-hop, house, techno: the crowd doesn't seem to mind, they won't stop dancing. Balloons and inflatable beach balls fly across the tent, bouncing off heads.

Dew cools my back, leaned against the Lawn hill, out from the humid dancefloor. From above, we can see the evening scene unfold under the maturing twilight. We're chatting, laughing as others roll like barrels down the slope. Monoculture is seldom found in this town, but the 2,500 ticket holders below provide me reassurance. All the start-of-term optimism, double-parked and chummy, was brought out tonight. I'm filled with a certain nostalgia — yes, that's exactly what this evening provided, nostalgia. My first Starfields, my final year, but for the first time in ages I feel young and likewise optimistic, gazing, for the last time, at the term ahead. It was as though, for one final night, I was permitted to experience Freshers' again, just as I had years ago.

PHOTO BY NOAH LAM-PO-TANG

Hardest Adventures Run (& Pub) Club

LAURENCE HEPWORTH
EVENTS WRITER

It's 3:42am, and you find yourself standing outside the kiln-like Tarasca bar on the Rúa de Entremuros. After a night supping Estrella Galicia and licor café, a chance acquaintance can seem like a very good friend, perhaps even one of your new favourite people. And so when Sonny D'Souza tells me that he'll be visiting St Andrews in six months' time to get a new run club off the ground, I naturally extol the glorious virtue and limitless potential of the project whilst pledging my unwavering support.

Fast forward four months and Sonny is calling me as I collapse, crumpled, and clammy into an Edinburgh flat after a day's interning. He wants to know what venues to partner with, what the run club landscape is like in St Andrews, etc etc. "S**t," I thought, "He hasn't forgotten about it." Having been away from the town for a year, I supply all the info I can and put Sonny in touch with people who will know more than me. Soberly, I once again reaffirm my faith in the project.

> *"S**t," I thought, "He hasn't forgotten about it."*

Another two months go by, and I'm shuffling along Watson Avenue pumped full of Ventolin instead of Lucky Strikes as I desperately try to stave off a cold that my flatmate kindly brought with him all the way from Dartmouth. It's gorgeously warm and windless, deceivingly so for Sonny, who I hope doesn't expect to see these conditions again. He's been delivering info sessions all day in the Irvine Building when we met in the car park by West Sands with a gaggle of other runners/soon-to-be drinkers.



Sonny is part of Hardest Adventures, the new project of Russ Cook, who's better known online as "Hardest Geezer". Russ is the guy (ginger, big beard) who ran the length of Africa a while ago. Hardest Adventures, meanwhile, is effectively an adventure tour operator that will sort your logistics for trekking Machu Picchu, Everest Base Camp, or some equally rugged pursuit. Now the company is marketing directly to students, which is where Sonny comes in: he's leading several of these run clubs all around the UK in order to raise awareness of the company and what it offers.

The run attracts a healthy crowd even without the presence of Russ himself, who has been known to appear at uni runs when they take place closer to his native Brighton. We lope out a 5K along West Sands before heading up to The Rule, where two-pound pints slip easily down the back of parched throats in the lovely if rapidly cooling beer garden. All enjoy the run and the discounted drinks and promise to bring along someone else next time.

There is also a pause for thought about the running scene in St Andrews. Somebody says that their friend was interested but ultimately didn't come because they didn't want to be seen running through town. That's a real shame. On the other hand, though, nobody seems to care too much about being red and sweaty around others after a pint here in the beer garden.



Back by popular demand, there'll be another Hardest Adventures Run (& Pub) Club on Monday 5 October.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANCESCA JEFFS

Watch Out Fife, the East London Creatives Are Here

Carnegie's Celebration of the Arts garden party

HANNAH WILKINSON
EVENTS WRITER

While creatives look to East London to cultivate their super intimate, authentic, underground vibe, to develop DIY spaces where they 'do things a little differently', and to display a general commitment to being 'in the scene', a hardy few skip north — all the way to St Andrews.

Yes, that's right: the East London creative has ventured far beyond the familiar haunts of Broadway Market and Hackney Wick. In fact, they've crossed the Anglo-Scottish border and established themselves in Fife. And on this particular sunny Saturday afternoon, they were all gathered in the expansive gardens of 64 Hepburn Gardens.

The Carnegie Club hosted several societies, bringing together an eclectic selection of student groups, publications, and creative collectives. As I wove my way around the stalls, I was met with hordes of people eager to "create a space". There was Szentek, whose philosophy is that "music is an experience" — their words, not mine. Craft House, an arts collective supporting individuals in their artistic pursuits, and Stereoscope, a photography publication, were also present. At one point, I even watched a friend attempt to prise open a Corona with a marijuana-print lighter, which felt like a fairly comprehensive summary of the afternoon.

> *"The Carnegie Club hosted several societies, bringing together an eclectic selection of student groups, publications, and creative collectives.*

Naturally, it is very easy to stereotype these groups. The obligatory pack of cigarettes strewn over the table (indicating a collective smoking problem more than anything else). An obscure band playing somewhere in the background and lengthy conversations about the importance of community: it has been the formula that the internet has been parodying for years. Throw in a tote bag and someone explaining that they "don't really like labels", and you have the full set.

But what do the E2 warehouse and the KY16 student accommodation have in common? In other words, what is it about St Andrews that allows these communities to flourish?

I would argue that this is precisely the kind of town which facilitates the formation of such groups. St Andrews houses a permanent population of amere 16,000 people, yet its student population overruns the town, exerting an enormous cultural presence. St Andrews lends itself naturally to the flourishing of communities around even the most niche of interests. Here, a shared passion can become a society or a collective overnight.

There is a deeper irony here. This university brings together people from vastly different backgrounds, yet we must acknowledge the privilege that its students possess. This is what makes these creative collectives so comparable with the East London crowd: there is a particular freedom that comes with knowing your fall is cushioned, and that allows for experimentation.

Having said all that, it might be overly critical to write them all off. It is worth acknowledging that, for all pretension, these groups are doing something valuable. The Carnegie Club itself follows in the legacy of Andrew Carnegie, a major patron of education, the arts, and sciences. The Club seems to have shouldered the responsibility to promote publications like *Agora*, publicise The Roosevelt Group, and give voice to People You Know Productions. "Creates a space" may be the most overworked phrase, but, admittedly, it is rather accurate here — The Carnegie Club *has* created a space for all these groups to exist, collaborate, and occasionally, to take themselves a little too seriously.

The Roosevelt Group, a think tank and publication, was asking attendees for their hot takes. A friend of mine (although he was too much in the way of cowardice to ever pencil it in) had a good one: "This whole thing is pretentious". He probably has a point. That being said, aren't we all?



ILLUSTRATION BY ALICE O SULLIVAN

Mountaineering Society Outdoor Climbing GIAG

Hanging out has never been so literal

SAKURA MOGAMI
EVENTS WRITER

It's not often that a soothing appreciation for nature and a harrowing fear of an imminent plummet can be conjured in such rapid succession — yet beside a towering crag alcoved by bushes and flora, the Mountaineering Society's outdoor climbing Give It a Go session provided just that.

About 50 kilometres north of St Andrews, the Mountaineering Society hosted the event on Sunday 20 September. Open to all students regardless of climbing experience, the day trip offered a chance to try outdoor climbing before committing to a membership for the year.

Free and hosted every year, the event has consistently proven popular. Sign-ups were held in person a week prior, and by the designated time of 18:00, the queue had already swelled to dozens of students. With limited gear and transport, only around twenty were selected via a randomised poll.

The day began at 9am, as participants rallied beside the Saints Sport football pitches, at a building members affectionately call the "gear shed." From there, climbers piled into cars and vans for a scenic hour-long drive to Kierrie Hill, trading nervous introductions — or catching up on sleep — along the way.

Experience varied widely. Many arrived without their own gear but made up for it with enthusiasm and a generous supply of snacks; others came prepared with climbing shoes, carabiners, and rope.

After a short hike to the crag, participants settled in for the day, piling their food onto a nearby rock. Though the wall was a natural rock formation, it had been fitted with anchor points for securing ropes. In lead climbing, a climber ascends while clipping their rope into these points as they go. Mountaineering Society members quickly set up secure routes, after which participants were free to choose their own paths up the crag at their own pace.

The routes spanned the UK grading system, from gentle grade 4 climbs suitable for beginners to advanced 7B routes — something for every level. Society members taught newcomers to tie in and stayed on the ground to belay: controlling the rope's tension, securing the climber, and watching for falls.

With gear in short supply, students without their own equipment shared harnesses and shoes, taking turns and waiting patiently between climbs. On the ground, a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere took hold — climbers of all levels lounged in the grass and among the rocks, snacking, chatting, and planning their next route.

> *"While many participants arrived without possessing their own gear, they more than made up for it with eagerness*

The trip wrapped up around 17:00, with vehicles returning to St Andrews and climbers coming home with tender forearms and a real sense of accomplishment. Especially after the whirlwind of Freshers' Week, the day offered a quiet escape from the bustle of term — and proved as valuable socially as it was physically, bringing students together through a shared, challenging, and ultimately rewarding experience.

I love you Lucy

-Kieran

You Do Not Need Mythos to Hack Big Tech

CALLUM BROWN
SCITECH WRITER

Anthropic's Mythos model made waves upon its release, hacking three unnamed companies and finding over 10,000 zero-day vulnerabilities in libraries that power almost every piece of software on Earth. Because of this, Anthropic restricted its use to a coalition of high-profile tech companies for defensive use only, but a group of researchers recently proved you do not need Mythos to break the digital world wide open.

On 24 July, 2026, Anthropic released Opus 5, an upgrade to the highest-power model included in their Pro plan. In just three hours, researchers at Hacktron AI — who had already been investigating potential bugs in some image-processing software — used Opus to prototype an exploit. The next morning, they hacked OpenAI. They took control of an employee's account with access to the company's GitHub (a platform used to track and collaborate on code) and uploaded a message notifying them of the hack. The entire hack, from the start of the investigation to stealing the account, took less than 72 hours.



The hack relied on the OpenAI forum, which allows image uploads. By formatting an image file in the right way, they were able to confuse the software's image processor, giving them access to other parts of the system. Disguising one file type as another (such as malicious code as an image) is nothing new, and systems usually check for this, but the Hacktron AI group got around this method by using a particular image format called High Efficiency Image File Format (HEIF) that was not compatible with the main image checker. Oddly enough, the bug had been patched in a later update of the image processor, but nobody noticed it could pose a security risk, so the update was not pushed out to everybody.

Thankfully for OpenAI, Hacktron AI is a company of so-called "white hats": hackers who collect bounties by hunting for security issues and helping developers patch them, which is why they have issued a report and only made their methods public now, two months later. Though things turned out okay this time, the worry only grows. Hacking the most advanced tech companies on the planet is no longer only available to those with access to state-of-the-art models. The run-of-the-mill models, the ones anyone can use, are now good enough to break competing companies' software.

What is worse, previous hacks stole tens of thousands of dollars; Hacktron spent less than $3,000 on tokens for their entire campaign. In their statement announcing the vulnerability, they say, "Software has long benefited from a kind of security through complexity […] This was never a real security boundary, but it protected ordinary companies in practice from software vulnerabilities. AI is removing that protection […] Work that once required a well-resourced team and months of effort can now be compressed into days."

The safeguards on Fable and Astra, two competing AI systems, may be effective, but it seems like the floodgates on AI-assisted hacking opened long ago, and the main focus must be on outpacing malicious hackers instead of restricting access. This at least does not change much from the status quo; the problem is that many more people with much less knowledge can try their hand at hacking, and can do so much more efficiently than before. The question is whether this increase in cyberattacks will be matched by improved efficiency in cybersecurity.

ILLUSTRATION BY
BELLA XU YING

Hangxiety: Why Your Hangover Comes With Dread, Not Just a Headache

NIAMH SIMMONDS
SCITECH WRITER

You know that feeling. After a Wednesday night in 601, or the Sunday morning after a ball, you wake up, and the dread hits before the headache does. You replay conversations from the night before and run through worst-case scenarios for events you cannot quite remember.

We tend to think of a hangover as a headache, nausea, and exhaustion. For many of us, however, the worst symptom may be dread: a sense of impending doom and a nagging feeling that you said or did something you wish you had not. This is hangxiety: a wave of anxiety that sets in as your brain recovers from alcohol, and it can linger for a day or two after heavy drinking. The good news is that there's a biological explanation, and knowing it might put you at ease the next time it strikes.

Hangxiety is not a verdict on what you said or did. It is just your brain's way of dealing with all those Pablos.

Two chemical messengers set the pace of your brain's activity. Gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA) is the main inhibitory neurotransmitter, the brake that slows and calms the nervous system. Glutamate is its excitatory counterpart, the accelerator that keeps cells firing and you feeling alert. Alcohol is a depressant,

> *"Hangxiety isn't a verdict on what you said or did. It's just your brain's way of dealing with all those Pablos.*

meaning it presses on the brake and eases off the accelerator, boosting GABA and suppressing glutamate, so activity across the brain drops. This is why the first drink or two leaves you feeling calm and at ease.

But your brain is built to keep itself in balance, and so it treats this as a problem to fix. With the balance now tipped towards GABA, it compensates by turning down its GABA receptors and increasing glutamate levels in the brain. When the alcohol wears off, the brain is still running in that adjusted mode: less brake, more accelerator. The calming effect is gone, but the extra glutamate is not, and so the nervous system tips into an anxious, on-edge state. That is hangxiety.

A hangover is also a physical stress on the body. Alcohol affects the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis, the body's main stress response system, and with it cortisol, the stress hormone that naturally peaks in the morning and falls throughout the day. Heavy drinking disrupts that rhythm, keeping cortisol elevated when it should be dropping, and the stress of alcohol withdrawal adds to this. Cortisol heightens the brain's sensitivity to threat, which feeds anxiety and triggers a fight-or-flight response: a racing heart, shaky hands, and a heavy sense of dread. It is great if you are running from danger, but less helpful at 10am when you're trying to recover from the night before.

Then there is sleep. Anyone who has slept off a big night knows it does not feel restorative, and there is a reason. Alcohol may help you fall asleep faster, but it disrupts REM sleep, the stage that helps your brain process emotions and let go of the day's worries. Without that emotional reset, you may wake up more vulnerable to anxiety than usual.

It is also why so many people jolt awake after drinking, heart racing, with a mind that has already sprinted to the worst possible conclusion. Once the alcohol wears off, you are left with elevated cortisol and heightened glutamate activity, which makes it harder to stay asleep and leaves your brain on high alert before the day has even begun.

That's the mechanism behind hangxiety: not a punishment for anything you said or did, but a brain rebalancing after alcohol, plus disturbed sleep and elevated cortisol. Whilst this is not a piece about changing anyone's habits, I hope this eases some minds about why the dread hits.

Water and rest help, of course, but a long walk down West Sands with friends usually does the trick: fresh air, good company, and the reassurance that everyone else is probably feeling something similar. How long it lasts depends on how much you drank and how anxious you tend to be day to day, but for most people it starts to fade within about 24 hours.

So the next time you wake up after a night out convinced something is wrong, remember it is just your brain finding its balance again.

A Tough Start, but a Strong Foundation for St Andrews Women's Rugby

MARLOW MELLQUIST
SPORT WRITER

On Friday evening, the St Andrews Varsity Women's Rugby Team played their Edinburgh rivals in the season opener game.

Immediately upon arrival at the pitch, the Sports Centre was lively, crowded, and ready for the game. There was anticipation as coach buses began to arrive, and both St Andrews and Edinburgh students alike spilled into the surrounding area of the pitch.

A delightful scent of woodfired pizza came from a local small-business truck selling pizzas to fans. The evening had the classic thrill of watching a university sports game, with students arriving in groups wrapped up against the cool weather, under the floodlights.

The game result was a tough loss, 41-7 to Edinburgh. The Saints put on a great fight and left the pitch smiling and excited to embrace the affection of all the student fans, locals, and families that showed up in support.

At half-time, the score was 17-0 to Edinburgh, but the Saints showed stronger defense during the second half and were able to score a converted try. The score was a rewarding moment for the home crowd, who cheered loudly from the sidelines and continued their support throughout.

The women from Edinburgh however, showed incredible speed and made plenty of line breaks. Their quick transitions and ability to capitalise on open space made them difficult to contain throughout the match.

After the game, *The Saint* spoke to fourth-year St Andrews Rugby Captain Annabel Sleigh, who said: "This game has given us a great goal."

The team had a five-week preseason, the longest in its history, that had an emphasis, according to Sleigh, on "team bonding" and strength and conditioning, including "Fijian beach sprinting."

These preparations had appeared to give the team a strong sense of unity, even in a difficult opening match against a familiar and competitive rival. When asked to reflect on the score and performance, Sleigh noted that she was "excited about what the team showed with our new structure."

For the future, she believes that improvement would come with "building our confidence and running in straight." Her optimism was clear after the game, and it was an exhilarating start to the season.

The game proceeded with electrifying energy and a unifying bagpipe ceremony. Supporters held encouraging signs, drinks, pizza, and good cheer.

It felt like more than just the first fixture of the season; it was a chance for the wider St Andrews community to gather around one team and celebrate Varsity sport.

When speaking to both St Andrews and Edinburgh students, they were equally impressed by the turnout, with Edinburgh students recounting that "there were a bunch of flyers everywhere for this game" and what the University did "nicely" was having "free buses and coaches to bring us to the game."

Although it wasn't an equal turnout for both the men and women varsity games, there were mirrored qualities of both events, including a superb half-time performance from St Andrews student A capella group, The Accidentals.

The crowd's presence — from first-year students to returning alumni — showed that there is clear interest in continuing to grow support for women's varsity sport at St Andrews.

While the final score did not go the Saints' way, the match gave the team a valuable first test of its new structure, fitness, and resilience.

The St Andrews Women's Rugby Team has a long season ahead, and the encouraging response from supporters made clear that they will not be facing it alone. With the determination shown in the second half, the confidence described by Sleigh, and a community willing to show up in large numbers, the Saints have plenty to build on as they move forward.

AU to Phase Out Multi-Sport Membership Discount

REUBEN GRAVES
SPORT WRITER

The St Andrews Students' Association Athletic Union (AU) confirmed on Monday 28 September that it is reining in their decision to scrap the multi-sport discount after 23 student sport clubs protested against the move. The AU will instead "phase in this change." There will be a 75% discount on facility fees this year, then 50% next year, then 25%, and by 2029-30 there will be no discount at all for multi-sport players.

Apologising for "communication that was not shared as widely or clearly as it should have been," the AU admitted in Monday's email that they did not allow "sufficient opportunity for the wider student voice to be heard." They have also confirmed that anyone who has already overpaid for their multi-sport membership can now claim a refund at the desk in the sports centre.

So, how did this backlash come about, and what caused this U-turn to happen?

The eagle-eyed amongst those who play multiple sports would have noticed that joining two or more clubs this year became significantly more expensive.

Previously, if you bought memberships for rugby and football — for example — you'd only pay the AU's facilities fee once. In 2026 that fee is £118/year. Under the previous arrangement, you paid it for each sport you play — two sports meant paying this fee twice whilst still using the same gym, pitches, and changing rooms as before.

As with a lot of change, this was done quietly. Written at the bottom of a long AU email in the middle of July, students were informed, "we are removing multi-sport membership."

With many students not staying up to date with their inboxes throughout summer, at this year's Sports Fayre, *The Saint* found that many club presidents had missed the memo.

They didn't miss it for long. 23 of the 53 clubs listed for 2026-27 opposed the change, and all 23 turned up to a meeting on Thursday 24 September to attempt to overturn it.

Even phased in, the change could be damaging for some clubs. The St Andrews Futsal Club most plainly demonstrates this issue. Over 80% of the club play football in addition to futsal. Once the discount disappears, they may not have enough members to operate, which could force the Club, alongside others, to disaffiliate and find their own cheaper ways to train and play. President of Futsal, Max Bean, has spearheaded the protest which led to Monday's U-turn.

"My total membership fee [under the previous arrangement] was £700, I was in disbelief when I saw the card machine," Bean, a member of Football, Futsal, and Climbing clubs, told *The Saint* before Monday's announcement. The figures raise serious questions over future financial accessibility in sport at St Andrews.

The Saint contacted the AU to understand the reasoning behind the original change. Their response explained that the previous system was "no longer sustainable or fair."

> *"The next generation of St Andreans will pay the full cost."*

The AU suggested their 'Try Sport Tuesdays' would help, as students can try a different sport for an hour a week. If you go along on a Tuesday and try, for example, fencing — which you may love — that doesn't make fencing more accessible. Afterwards there's no cheaper way to keep playing without eventually paying hundreds for the year. It's not access, it's a taster, and it does nothing to ease the financial burden that will be shouldered by hundreds of team members. While the reduction in fees this year will help with this issue, it will not support those wanting to play in their first year in three years' time.

"These changes were developed following consultation with the former Athletic Union President and student members of the Executive Committee," shared the AU in a statement to *The Saint*.

According to the 23 opposing clubs, the AU did not ask any of the 2026-27 sport presidents or those from the previous year, and each of these clubs would have opposed it if they'd known.

While many clubs may be celebrating Monday's announcement, the change has been delayed, not reversed. By 2029-30 the multi-sport discount will be gone entirely, and the next generation of St Andreans will pay the full cost.

That Sydney Sweeney Advert

What does it mean to our female athletes?

FREYA CONSTABLE
SPORT WRITER

A recent advertisement for Novig, a sports prediction market, has sparked debate worldwide.

The advertisement depicts Sydney Sweeney nude in a sports-themed montage, covered by sporting equipment, with the tagline "just sports." But for many female athletes, it is much more than "just sports." The advert raises concerns on the objectification and sexualisation of women in sport.

The Saint spoke with the university's top athletes about the advert.

Hannah Coull, the Women's 1st XI Hockey Captain, said the advert's marketing technique tells young women that their value in sport lies in their appearance, rather than their achievements. "Unfortunately, now the phrase 'women in sport' might be associated with this marketing disaster, and not the amazing female athletes all over the world who will inspire the next generation of girls."

Coull emphasises that "as a team, we show up to train hard, and put our bodies through a lot of stress to succeed in a competitive environment." It is these attributes which "should really be publicised."

Women's appearances have repeatedly overshadowed athletic performance. During the 2021 European Beach Handball Championships, for example, the Norwegian women's team was fined for wearing shorts over mandatory bikini bottoms.

Stella Lucano, a Sports Scholar on the Netball 1s who captained the team last season and coaches the 3s, described her reaction as disappointment, but not surprise.

Growing up in sport, she is used to "seeing women's bodies and sexuality used to attract attention in sporting spaces." Although the advert promotes sports betting rather than sport itself, Lucano argues it remains adjacent to sport.

Lucano believes the advert affects women fighting to detach themselves from sexualisation in sport, and that the sexuality portrayed is not liberating but instead directed at the male gaze.

When it comes to her sport, Lucano discussed how, as netball is female dominated, "a lot of times women have to almost overcompensate in their athletic performance in order to be taken seriously." She says the stigma that athletes are only playing for male attention is deeply rooted in being a female athlete.

Lucano emphasised the need to recognise the team's demanding training schedule, but also how uplifting and encouraging one another is "something so special about women in sport." She believes women's discouragement in sport needs to be combatted by promoting the camaraderie, strength, and dedication that go into sport.

The advert's views have surged into the millions, demonstrating the scale of attention driven by the controversy.

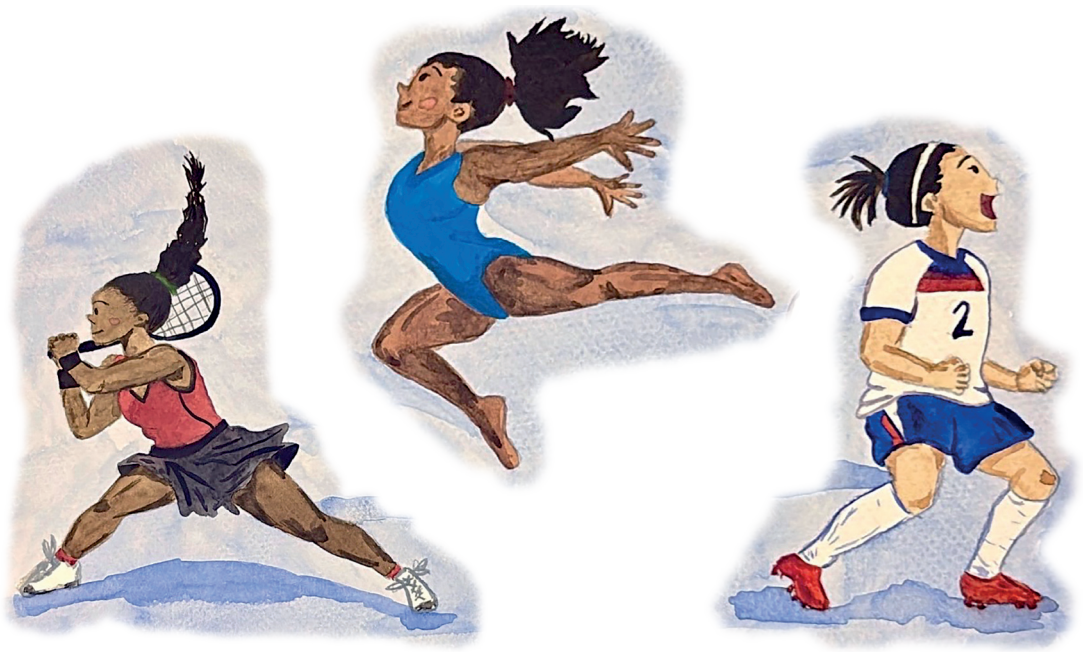
Both Coull and Lucano discussed how the online response to the advert has implications. Whilst on the one hand it has prompted a discussion about women in sport, Coull shared the team's view that "giving this advert attention will create the false narrative that it has any connection to female athletes."

Lucano acknowledged the empowerment in female athletes posting videos on what a woman in sport looks like, but that the "videos give Sydney Sweeney too much attention." She says that "videos where instead it's targeted at just uplifting women in general is a better way of handling it," without giving the advert more attention.

The advert has highlighted women's sport more widely. British sprinter Amy Hunt told *Good Morning Britain* that the advert could act as a "barrier" to girls' participation in sport. She highlighted the need to empower young women around what their bodies can do, not just what they look like.

The controversy surrounding Novig created a much-needed conversation about women in sport. But as Coull and Lucano suggest, redirecting our attention to the accomplishments of female athletes is paramount. Rather than uplifting women only in response to a controversy, we must recognise and empower women in sport always.

Illustration by Tess Barbey





Dash and Splash

St Andrews students compete at European Coastal Rowing Championships

GEORGE ROOK
SPORT WRITER

Sprint down the beach and jump into a boat being rocked by the waves. Teammates holding it in place as you pull hard on the oars for the first time. Raw power: legs, core, back, arms, blasting through relentless waves trying to smash you straight back to shore. Past the breaker zone and you're flat out. Red-lining it to a buoy 250 metres away. About turn, stopping all momentum, then back into the hurt locker, more speed, more reps, more pain. Jump out of the boat and sprint up the beach once more to the finish line. It's all over in three minutes, but it feels like 30.

Every race is one versus one. Lose, and you're going home. Win, and you race again in twenty. Such is the brutal nature of beach sprint rowing.

This September, four selected St Andrews students represented their countries at the European Rowing Coastal and Beach Sprint Championships in La Línea, Spain.

Director of Rowing at St Andrews, Lewis McCue — who was named Scottish Performance Rowing Coach of the Year at the 2024-25 Scottish Rowing Awards — was also selected as a coach for Team GB for the second year in a row.

As the coach is involved in launching the rower into the swell, guiding where to steer, and when to turn, McCue is not only the coach, but part of the team.

Cam Buchan, part of the GB team, qualified for the knockouts in Spain after an exceptional time trial. Buchan followed this up with a clinical display in the first knockout round, defeating Norway's Andreas Soerskaar. Despite being one of the strongest competitors at the event, Buchan lost his quarter-final, bringing an abrupt end to his time at the championships.

Collin Wallace, a gold medal winner at the 2025 World Championships, represented GB in the Inclusion Mixed Double Sculls. This involves a team of two: one para-athlete, Wallace, and one non-disabled athlete, Clare Jamison, with the para-athlete starting in the boat. The British pair secured a silver medal after a well-contested final against home favourites Spain.

Earlier the same day, two more St Andrews athletes — Rosa Thomson, representing Estonia, and Adam Perout, representing Czechia — took part in the mixed double sculls. Both had success in the time trial, placing fourth and first respectively, though the next day they were both defeated in the first knockout round.

This rapidly growing discipline within the sport of rowing is gaining popularity globally. The University of St Andrews is accredited as one of the elite GB Beach Sprint Performance Development Academies. This is not simply because of its outstanding coaching staff, but also because the location itself, East Sands, is an ideal setting to develop world-class rowers.

Rowing coastal beach sprints will make its debut at the Olympics in Los Angeles in 2028. It would come as no surprise to see rowers trained on the shores of Fife making waves in LA. I, for one, will definitely be watching.

Photo by Adam Perout

Victory is Sweet at the Hive: Men's Rugby Win Varsity

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

would prove to be a vital five-point cushion.

Merely six minutes later, the Saints delivered another pleasant surprise for the away end.

With fly-half Howie Offord already forced off injured, replaced by Rory Murray-Smith, and hooker Michael Onohayedo soon to follow him down the tunnel — Callum Fitzhenry summoned in his place — an early deployment of the subs could have been bad news for later in the game.

Instead, thanks to the grit of the forwards that Saints fans are long accustomed to, Ruari Mavin carried the ball over the line, doubling their score from a driving maul. Fitting, perhaps, as the away fans immediately got to work chanting "You're getting mauled by the Saints." As Hull City social media admin would say (probably), Edinburgh had been '#mauled x'. 10-0.



"We lost our hooker, fly-half, and fullback to injury early in the contest, but I thought we dealt with that disruption seamlessly," said St Andrews Head Coach David Morris after the game.

Morris added: "It wasn't a game for the spectacular but just the basics done very well repeatedly to build pressure on the opposition."

Chris Black's confident penalty kick added three to the Saints' tally.

Half time came with St Andrews fringing Edinburgh 13-0, much to the Edinburgh fans' moans.

"We just can't leave our half," remarked Edinburgh University third-year student, Faris, at the break.

The atmosphere was fantastic, with conviviality amongst both fan bases being a joyful — and perhaps rare — moment in sport.

As Morris reflected, "the Scottish Varsity is so much more than the game — it's a time when Saints Rugby can come together and feel that collective sense of belonging."

The half-time a capella performance of 'I Will Survive' performed by St Andrews's very own, The Accidentals, may have inspired Edinburgh's second-half defiance and quick start.

Within seconds of starting, I was afraid, petrified even. Would St Andrews crumble? Break down?... *Die?*

Despite the incoming barrage, St Andrews extended the lead on 49 minutes. Mika Schubert finished off a series of tidy, well-oiled plays from a lineout, powering over from close range. Another team may have cashed in the three points with a simple kick, yet the Saints wanted more, and got it:18-0.

Edinburgh finally found their reward five minutes later with a duly unconverted try on 54 minutes: 18-5. This appeared as the first real dent in an otherwise flawless St Andrews evening.

Only a few moments later, an offside try was prematurely celebrated by most of the home side, sending a clear message: Edinburgh were not going to go quietly, whether offside or not.

That offside call offered only a brief breath of fresh air before the reality turned brutish again. The energy from the St Andrews faithful was further dampened by a dangerous combination that may have dismantled a lesser team — a 60th-minute yellow card for Oliver Finlayson-Russell, followed swiftly by a converted Edinburgh try. The electronic board flickered up an ominous 18-12.

Only one converted try now stood between the Saints and defeat.

"It was a bloody battle, a real battle, between two formidable sides," reflected outside-centre, Thomas Russell. It was from this exact position, he explained, that the game truly turned: "Edinburgh could have won with one try and a conversion — we were under the cosh."

These vital ten minutes could have turned sour, yet the mastery of Ollie Bloore, who rightly deserved Player of the Match, helped control the game and capitalise on Edinburgh's mistakes. "We could have easily buckled at that point, but there is [a]some high rugby IQ [among]within the group coupled with players who have played in big games before. That leadership and clarity of thinking and action under pressure got us over the finish line," reflected Morris.

Skipper David Brown, still marshalling from the front, despite playing the full 80 minutes, was central to that composure.

After a nail-biting few minutes, the surge of Edinburgh's forwards was eventually thwarted by the return of Saints number eight, Finlayson-Russell, and a monumental tackle from Murray-Smith, providing exactly what was needed to mitigate the pressure.

The clock showed '75. The storm had almost settled, five minutes to play.

A darting line break from winger Matthew Cingel pushed Edinburgh back, forcing them to concede an indispensable penalty kick. Then came Chris Black, eyes fixed on the posts.

The Hive fell silent.

He took a few steps backwards and slotted the ball through the posts, unleashing the cheers from around the stands. The kick took the game out of reach from Edinburgh, and signalled a monumental victory.

University of St Andrews 21 - 12 University of Edinburgh.

Saints' outside centre, Rufus Hornyold-Strickland put it plainly: "We just played together, with team spirit — what an incredible ending." A fitting summary for the entire Varsity Series — a result now standing at 8-7 to St Andrews.

PHOTO BY HUGO WU

SUNDAY I'M IN LOVE

FREDDIE COUGHLIN
SPORT EDITOR

After a summer of exhilarating international duties for many, St Andrews players returned to their day jobs: the St Andrews Sunday League. If you're new, strap in. The season is off to a flyer, and you're in the right place to keep up with every tantalising moment.

Firstly, what's changed? Well, the league's directors have spotted its commercial value and it's acquired a corporate sponsor, welcome to the Macron League. We're entering our Barclays era, but perhaps more iconic. There's now a third tier too, with teams in each division due to play each other twice per semester,

Game week one in Macron A provided tight clashes between Beavers and last season's victors, Botswana Meat Commission. The latter showed glimpses of their flair from last season, despite blooding fresh talent, and began the season with a 3-2 win against the reds.

The newly formed, Stroke FC, took on Strokers FC (confused? me too) and announced themselves as the better of the two, with a 5-3 win. For anyone considering assembling a team and calling it Strokest: please don't.

The final match up came between Sheffield Tuesday and DLL. The last time these two met was in a crunch match deciding who would proceed to the season's final. If DLL were hungry for revenge, they didn't show it until late in the second half, when a dynamic comeback saw them claw three back in five minutes. Tuesday held them off to win 4-3.

DIVISION I

	TEAM	PLD	GD	PTS
1	Stroke FC	1	+3	3
2	Sheffield Tuesday	1	+1	3
3	BMC FC	1	+1	3
4	DLL	1	-1	0
5	Beavers	1	-1	0
6	Strokers	1	-3	0

WEEKEND RESULTS

Beavers	2 - 3	BMC FC
Stroke FC	5 - 2	Strokers
Sheffield Tue.	4 - 3	DLL

SAINT

A NERVY NUDGE: In the dying moments of the Men's Varsity rugby match versus Edinburgh, Chris Black slotted a 35-yard penalty kick to keep the Saints out of reach of Edinburgh's attempted comeback.

MAGIC MAW DRAWS AN ACE: Henry Maw, playing in the BUCS Golf Tour Autumn Trophy on day two at Alyth, shot a hole-in-one on the 8th hole, a 138-yard par 3. Amongst those most pleased were his teammates and the Central Pub.

SHOCKER

A CAPTAIN'S CALAMITY: Ludo Knatchball, Captain of Sunday League team, Sheffield Tuesday, returned from his year abroad, slotting back in to lead the team. The dreams of captaining a title charge have been temporarily stunted by a trip to Ninewells and a broken wrist during a six aside league clash last Tuesday. *The Saint* wishes him a speedy recovery.

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