



THE GRYPHON

The official newspaper of Leeds University

Student Rebellion Occupy Campus Buildings



Image: @conwatkins.photography (Instagram)

Archie Herrod Robinson

The environmental activist group Student Rebellion occupied multiple buildings on campus, demanding the University cuts all ties with fossil fuels.

This began on Monday 7th of November with the occupation of a lecture theatre in the Esther Simpson building. Following this, a second occupation began on Friday the 11th of November in the Marjorie and Arnold Ziff building, which houses management offices.

From 8:30 a.m. on the 7th of November, Student Rebellion occupied LG.08. On Monday, this meant students could not enter the lecture theatre for a 9 A.M. business lecture on consumption habits. There was a tense atmosphere in the foyer of the building, as students were refused entry to their lecture. This led to the lecture being moved online as a solution. One student whose lecture was moved online following

the action told The Gryphon: "They should have gone somewhere else where there are people that make decisions, not here. This is just an inconvenience".

With Student Rebellion refusing to leave, there was an ongoing standoff between the activists and campus security services, with the protesters insisting the occupation will continue until their demands are met. The group has received a letter from the University threatening possible eviction of students under a possession order. The letter also outlines the prospect of disciplinary action for those involved as well as compensation for legal costs.

Student Rebellion demands three things from the University. Firstly, that it bans investments in oil, gas, coal, and mining companies. Secondly, the creation and implementation of an ethical careers policy. Finally, the refusal of all funding from all oil, gas, coal, and mining companies. These demands

were articulated in an open letter to the Vice-Chancellor, Simone Buitendijk, inviting the University management to meet with them inside the occupied lecture theatre. There was no meeting between Student Rebellion and the University management to discuss the occupation.

The group used the lecture theatre for 'alternative education', holding a series of lectures, workshops, and film screenings on a range of issues including climate justice, direct action and decolonisation of the curriculum. An outdoor rally in support of the students took place on campus on Thursday evening.

Speaking to The Gryphon on the day the occupation began, one of the protesters said: "Business as usual can't continue. The University of Leeds needs to cut ties to fossil fuels. They don't have an ethical careers policy which allows companies like Shell to come onto our campus and to careers fairs. We think that is absolutely unacceptable in an educational institution, so we are here until the University agrees to come and speak to us and cut all ties with fossil fuels".

Another member of Student Rebellion commented:

I am occupying this lecture theatre because I am terrified about the climate emergency. The University claims to be a world leading institution in climate research and innovation, yet when we try to speak out about their links to fossil fuels, we are ignored and threatened. It's just so hypocritical.

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Issue 2

5/12/22

Roman Britain on Display in the Michael Sadler Building

Amy Richardson interviews two University of Leeds professors on diversity in Roman Britain and the pieces on display. (Page 6)



Why You Should Support the UCU Strikes

Owen Frost explains the University strikes and why he supports them. (Page 20)



Brazil, Football and Politics

As the World Cup in Qatar continues, Writer Joe Cook shines light on another issue, that of the connections between Brazilian footballers and the country's right-wing politicians. (Page 28)



FLAME MAGAZINE

Music, Fashion, Arts and Culture, Lifestyle (Midway)

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Editor's Letter



Dear students,

It doesn't feel that long ago since I wrote my last letter. Except then, the sun didn't set at 4 PM every day, and we still had tan lines that were remnants of long, sizzling summer days spent in exotic destinations or with a few mates and tinnies in Hyde Park (same thing, right?). I know it sounds like I'm grieving the warmer seasons of the year, but I promise the past few months haven't been all gloom and doom around here. In fact, I dare say we've had quite an exciting term!

Our most recent issue at the end of October focused on Black History Month, a theme we explored by discussing the whitewashing of Black history in Britain, Kanye West and white supremacy, and even suggesting some ways you can diversify your reading list. Alongside such content, we brought to the forefront a pressing and recurring issue for many students living outside of halls: 'nightmare' landlords.

The Gryphon's 125 years of print journalism, which we celebrated in 2022, come to show we're here to amplify your voice and pave the way for change that seeks to improve student life at our university. I'd like to think we've done exactly that in this issue. Archie Herrod Robinson, Views editor, went down to the Esther Simpson building to report on the Student Rebellion occupation of campus, which called for the University to end its relations with fossil fuel companies. Owen Frost, writer and Arts and Culture editor, followed the UCU strikes and explains why he's supporting them.

Our Society section introduces you to some unique clubs you can get involved with during your time at Leeds. Features highlight the history behind two inscriptions depicting diversity in Roman Britain, and they're currently displayed in the Michael Sadler building; we recommend you check them out. For Features, Views editor Ruby Wait-Weguelin talks about her experience with the 'Writing Back' scheme, a pen-pal initiative which pairs university students with elderly residents in Yorkshire.

The last time I wrote this letter, Liz Truss was still Prime Minister (and she

was also a fighter, not a quitter). How times change, eh? The Views section brings some opinions on her premiership, alongside a fiery debate on the World Cup in Qatar. And if you're wondering where to get special, handmade gifts for your loved ones this holiday season, our Business writer Franks Feng has the answer to your question.

Our Science editor Olivia Kolasinski discusses the reaction of Brazil's scientific community to Lula's presidential election win. Speaking of Brazil, writer Joe Cook sheds some light on the relationship between politics and sport in a country where 'football' and 'culture' are synonymous.

Amid all this, you'll find our FLAME magazine supplement. Ten pages to satisfy your creative cravings. Our Lifestyle editor, Lottie Passmore, brings back the good ol' advice column for all your worries away from home. Music reviews Fontaines D.C.'s gig at the O2 Academy in Leeds, alongside Kendrick Lamar's 'The Big Steppers Tour'.

Fashion gives skincare recommendations on how to soothe dry, irritated winter skin. And if you missed the annual Alice Bacon lecture, which honours the achievements of inspirational women, Arts and Culture is here to keep you updated.

Now I'll leave you with some warm holiday wishes and some time to read the incredible work of our writing and editorial teams.

Enjoy your break!

Yours,

Alba Goskova x

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Enigma

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In response, a spokesperson for the University said: "The University of Leeds Climate Plan sets out the University's targets, actions and investments to achieving net zero by 2030. The scope of the plan covers our teaching and research and operational activities, and our staff and student community have been involved in its development and have key roles in its implementation".

"In line with our Climate Plan, we are reorienting our

research and teaching away from the fossil fuel sector. We continue to work with energy companies when the work aims to reduce carbon emissions or accelerate the transition to a low carbon future. Since 2019, our Climate Active investment strategy means we have had no investments in any company whose primary business is the extraction of fossil fuel, or which derives significant revenue from such extraction."

Hopes for a Second Scottish Independence Referendum Dashed After Supreme's Court Ruling



Image: Scottish Government on Flickr

Jamie Griffiths

The Scottish Government has lost a court case to hold an independence referendum without the UK government's consent. The supreme court has unanimously ruled that First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, does not have the power to hold a referendum on Scottish independence; it is rather an issue reserved to the confines of Westminster. According to Court President, Lord Reed, the laws that created the devolved Scottish Parliament in 1999 mean Scotland does not have power over areas of the constitution when it comes to the union between Scotland and England.

This court ruling is a clear result but is understandably not what Nicola Sturgeon wanted. She accepts the Court's decision but continues to voice the need for a lawful way for the Scottish people to express their will, accusing the Government of denying democracy. After losing the first independence referendum back in 2014, the ruling marks a humiliating defeat for the SNP. A legal referendum on independence would now only be possible if the First Minister manages to persuade the Prime Minister to abandon his opposition

to it which, certainly in the short term, does not appear likely.

Many would argue that Scottish independence is long overdue, especially given the close nature of the independence referendum vote in 2014; a clear indicator of discontent with the UK and an increasing urge for independence. Additionally, the SNP would argue that Brexit has further compelled the argument for Scottish independence as Scotland overwhelmingly voted to remain in the EU. As part of the UK, the SNP argue that they are being taken out of the European Union against their will.

The Supreme Court ruling has certainly increased and polarised views on the referendum issues. Sturgeon's feeling that the independence campaign has been given more impetus has been borne out by a significant show of pro-independence strength and support via a sterling march through Glasgow. The close result in 2019 meant Scotland was basically split in half on the Issue of independence. This divide is now being further exacerbated by inflammatory language

sparked by the concept of democracy.

The SNP's pursuance of nationalistic aims as a main priority is at odds with opinions favouring a firm focus on serious issues facing the entire United Kingdom equally; namely the cost of living and energy crises. The issue of independence has wide ramifications. Going forward it will bring into play questions as to how capable Scotland is at sustaining and growing its own economy without current subsidies. In this respect, renewable energy is set to generate a bright future. Much of Scotland's potential lies in the hope of trade links with and the amenability of the E.U.

Sturgeon's options are limited. It seems as though the only viable plan is to put the independence argument in her next general election manifesto. Her reasoning would be to treat a successful election outcome of over 50% of the vote as justification for a referendum as she would then feel she had a strong political mandate to pursue Scottish independence. Sturgeon's own political future may rest on the outcome. Her opponents will argue independence is not the only issue but if she loses, they will probably agree it is.

Meet Your Societies



South Asian Feminist Society

Sadhana Sreeram

South Asian Feminist Society is the first of its kind at a UK university. As one of the divisions within feminism, it's ultimate aim is to empower South Asian women by addressing and acknowledging the nuances in feminist issues encountered by women across South Asia. This spans over Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Over the last couple of decades, South Asia has increasingly been an area subject to feminist criticisms. There are many topics within the community that are considered taboo, such as sex, periods, female pleasure, mental health, and many more that are not spoken about in the community. Our society provides South Asian women with a platform to vocalise their shared lived experiences and a unanimous aim to come together as a South Asian community to address these topics and create a real, tangible difference for future generations.

The shared values of Leeds South Asian Feminist Society are inclusivity, diversity, compassion, and most importantly, unity. Our committee meets fortnightly to plan and organise events, such as art therapy, movie nights (with a feminist focus), guest speaker events and practical workshops. There are also more relaxed events, where members can come together to speak and discuss their experiences while also getting to know one another. We use our Instagram account (@leeds_southasianfemsoc) to promote South Asian artists and creators while spreading awareness through infographics. As a committee, it is our goal to create a space where South Asian women feel comfortable and confident in their own skin and where they also feel represented at university.



Image: Leeds Black Feminist

Leeds Black Feminist Society

Leeds Black Feminist Society

Leeds Black Feminist Society is a fun and chilled society that welcomes Black women and non-binary people. We are here to provide and nurture safe spaces through events such as "The Angry Black Women", paint and sips, mindfulness meditation, journaling, and movie nights. University is hard enough without feeling like you have a community, and so it is important for us to help all students feel a part of our community; regardless of whether you are a postgraduate student, Muslim, or on a year abroad, please feel free to join us at our events. We are also working on helping people get opportunities, with 10,000 Black interns and advertising placements and career events. Add us on Instagram (@luublackfemsoc) and TikTok (@leedsblackfemsoc) to stay up to date with all the events we have and to see what events we have hosted so far! Also, we are always open to feedback and new ideas!

Tennis Society

Jerome Coombe

UOL Tennis is one of the longest serving societies and continues to be one of the most accommodating. We are one of the few sporting societies which welcomes both men and women into the same one, and we are proud of that. Not only do we cater for both genders, but we cater for players of all abilities. With five different levels (beginner, improver, advanced, development, and performance), there is always an opportunity for someone to join our society and get involved. Each group has access to weekly sessions with our coaches, this not only being a great opportunity to get out and play, but



Image: LUU Tennis Society

to also meet new people at the University of Leeds. Our performance squad has five teams competing in the northern tiers of the British University and College Sports (BUCS) leagues. We are proud to say that in 2012/13 we were the 2nd best performing sports club at the University, a year which saw us grow into one of the strongest clubs.

The society is not just for playing tennis, and throughout the year, there is no shortage of social events for all members. Our weekly Wednesday socials with different themes provide everyone with an opportunity to get dressed up and meet new people. We also host two signature events each year: our secret social to another city and our annual Christmas ball.

Baking Society

Pippa Gatley

Whether making or tasting is your thing, Baking Society can help you begin or continue your passion for baking. Seasoned experts and complete beginners come together to share sneaky tips and tricks on getting the most out of a tight student budget to ensure that you always have a sweet treat to help you (and your housemates) throughout assignments! We meet every other Tuesday at 6pm. Feel free to come along as either a baker, bringing baked goods to meetings, or as a taster, sampling all the yummy treats – dinner will be sorted!



Image: LUU Baking Society

Diversity in Roman Britain, As Told Through Interviews

Diversity in Roman Britain has been a polarising topic of debate for years. However, recent archaeology is revolutionising our view of ancient Britain, painting a clear picture of multiculturalism, and the University of Leeds has a key role. Amy Richardson takes us through the interviews she held with professors at the University about the pieces on display.

Amy Richardson

Interviewing Dr Samuel Gartland

Last month in the Michael Sadler building, two Roman inscriptions were unveiled to the public for the first time since their discovery at Bainbridge, Yorkshire in the 1960's. Dr Samuel Gartland, a lecturer at Leeds' School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, pioneered the rediscovery of these inscriptions and kindly spoke to me about their journey and significance.



The inscriptions displayed in the Michael Sadler building, first floor. Image: Amy Richardson

How did you first rediscover the inscriptions?

I had been aware of the inscriptions since my time as a postgraduate at Leeds. I knew they were hidden somewhere in the basement alongside other artefacts, but I was not exactly sure whereabouts. When I returned to Leeds in 2019, I thought it was the perfect time to dig them out and investigate their significance, but before any of that, the pandemic hit and brought events to a halt. After the pandemic, I initiated the process by emailing the relevant authorities. After various email conversations, a group of us ventured into the basement, where I attempted to convince them of the value of these stones. Bear in mind that the basement was the worst environment to analyse and realise the full value of these stones; it was dark, cramped and the stones themselves had been upside down for 1600 years (so they were very worn and difficult to read).

Do you know why they have been hidden in the basement since the '60s?

No, in short. All I really understood was that the University of Leeds had excavated them at some point in the 60's. I went through the University archives hoping to find more information, but actually found a bundle of correspondence between the archaeologist, Brian Hartley, the University bursar, and the Army. This correspondence discussed the difficulty about relocating the inscriptions from the dig site to the university, simply due to the sheer size and weight of the artefacts. The army provided the solution. The last

letter I found was from Spring 1964, stating that they are ready to be moved, but that the University had not yet organised a place for them to be displayed. I would suspect nothing happened to the inscriptions between 1964 and 2021, other than that they were just held in storage.

What piqued your interest enough to undertake the huge task of getting them on display?

The larger stone is one of the longest surviving inscriptions from ancient Britain, and they are both such striking physical stones. From my work on Greek inscriptions, I have learnt to look at stones in their entirety without simply focusing just on the text. So, when I first saw these two stones, I was taken aback by the clarity of presentation and the wonderful depictions of celestial symbols and animals. The inscriptions are deliberately aesthetically pleasing but are also made to communicate important construction work. They provide various narratives: significantly, they depict the first African ruling emperor and his family, thus emphasising his power and authority over Yorkshire. The inscription also makes reference to Belgian soldiers and paints a picture of ethnic and cultural diversity within Roman Britain, which is not well known beyond specialists.

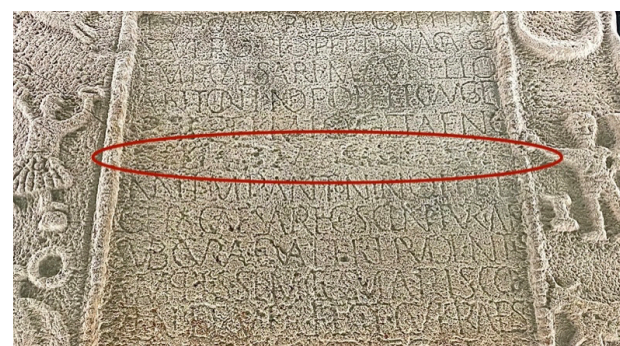
What was the journey from rediscovery to them actually being displayed?

They didn't move at all until the actual moving day, because they are just too heavy! Initially, a team began measuring them to work out the structural framework which would be required to move them and to display them. We then experimented with lighting techniques in order to enhance all of the information depicted on them. Eventually, on the moving day, the team, using supporting framework, managed to relocate them onto a truck, where they were then transported to the Michael Sadler building. When we arrived, we realised the inscriptions and supporting framework would not physically fit in the lift. I won't say too much, to avoid getting in trouble with the museum people, but we improvised, and got them safely upstairs. A small crane was then used to load them onto the display podium. I have not told anyone else this, but as it turns out, the measurements were incorrect. We had to re-measure and change the dimensions of the podium, so it was not until a few days later that the glass viewing panel could be placed into position.

What happens next?

The stones were taken straight from the ground and located in storage, meaning they have never been cleaned, scrubbed, or damaged in any way. We purposely kept them as undisturbed/untouched as possible before they were displayed to the public. This

will allow a team from Glasgow to come and test out new research methods: they are going to analyse the stones for polychromatic information in an attempt to find traces of colours. If they are successful, we will be able to create a full colour reconstruction of the inscriptions. The rediscovery has also opened doors with various institutions and departments to allow future collaborative work, which is very exciting.



The deliberately erased line on the inscription. Image: Amy Richardson

Interviewing Dr Penelope Goodman

The archaeological and cultural significance of these stones is incredibly important, and their journey from the ground to the basement, to now being on display, is fascinating. I met with Dr Penelope Goodman, a lecturer at Leeds' School of Languages, Cultures and Societies, to further discuss the rediscovery from her perspective, as well as to gain insight on the content of the inscriptions with its linguistic and historical context.

Do you have any theories as to why Geta's name is not erased?

I think there are two major possibilities, the first being that it was simply human error. The individual who was tasked with removing Geta's name, may not have been literate, or they may have been too fatigued after a long day? This is another aspect of the inscription which brings us closer to Roman Britain, and it also provides us with a human connection to the ancient world. The other reason could be that it was a deliberate attempt to humiliate Geta by stripping him of his honorific titles, but leaving his name.

Concluding Thoughts

The unique journey and rediscovery of these inscriptions is an interesting tale: they reveal important historical context, challenge outdated views of Roman Britain, and expose the idea of an ethnically and culturally diverse world. The inscriptions are wonderful works of art in their own right, they are on display in the Michael Sadler Building on the first floor, and are well worth a visit.

Parasocial Relationships and the ‘Wife Guy’ Archetype

Recent cheating scandals by famous figures Adam Levine and Ned Fulmer have caught mainstream media attention. Isobel Moore takes a deep dive into the ‘wife guy’ archetype and the controversy behind parasocial celebrity relationships.

Isobel Moore

A question on many minds when Ned Fulmer was exposed for cheating on his wife was: who? As someone who watched the Try Guys from their first video for BuzzFeed in 2014 and was vaguely aware of them since, I remembered one thing about Ned Fulmer: he is a ‘wife guy’. As explained by The New York Times, ‘The wife guy defines himself through a kind of overreaction to being married’ in which he is praised on social media for enthusiastically loving his wife and framing it as exceeding the bare minimum. The ‘wife guy’ phenomenon is perhaps most synonymous with comedian John Mulaney, who was known amongst other things for bringing up his wife in his popular stand-up shows and in public appearances. Another outspoken example is Adam Levine, who in speaking to Ellen DeGeneres in 2014 following his marriage to Behati Prinsloo stated: ‘I use that word [wife] right now a lot. I say it for no reason. I say it a lot. “Wife, wife, wife,” I love it. I even changed her number in my phone to “Wife”’.

The wife guy should not be confused with a man who simply loves his wife. This man will make his marriage a defining aspect of his public persona, creating a brand around his superior husband status in the relationship and, in the case of Fulmer, Levine and Mulaney, seeming to be massively overcompensating for his adultery. Where the wife guy was once a shining example of blissful matrimony, the scandals created by the adultery of these men has shone a light on the false nature of celebrity and the ways in which their characters can be created and destroyed. When Fulmer was exposed in a series of posts on social media for cheating on his wife Ariel with a Try Guys employee, the internet was taken aback. How could a man who made his entire personality the fact that he is married and madly in love with his wife and children have betrayed not only his family, but his audience who had viewed him a certain way for close to a decade?



Notorious ‘wife guy’, Jon Mulaney.
Image: Wikimedia Commons

The irony of a self-professed wife guy betraying the woman he relies on to maintain his brand is not lost on internet culture, with the response to these scandals increasingly focused on mocking the men who engage in adultery rather than in hating the women involved. While Mulaney’s devoted fans seem to agree that immediately moving on from Anna Marie Tandler to have a baby (that he always claimed not to want with his now ex-wife) with the woman he allegedly cheated on her with was a harsh move, Fulmer’s notes app apology on Instagram was immediately mocked and memed as the internet ran with the phrase ‘I lost focus and had a consensual workplace relationship’. Similarly, Levine’s leaked sexual messages with various models were ridiculed with his comments on a woman’s ‘absurd’ body immediately being transformed into a meme format and his sexting style being compared to that of a young teenager.



Maroon 5 singer, Adam Levine
Image: Wikimedia Commons

In a TikTok video following Levine’s Instagram DM scandal, model Emily Ratajkowski spoke out against the disproportionate amount of anger being directed towards the woman Levine was cheating on his wife with, stating ‘I don’t understand why we continue to blame women for men’s mistakes, especially when you’re talking about 20-something-year-old women dealing with men in positions of power who are twice their age [...] The power dynamic is so skewed, it’s ridiculous. It’s predatory. It’s manipulative’. While Fulmer and the woman he had an affair with are close in age, her employee status creates an uneasy boss/worker dynamic that is hard to ignore. In the Try Guys’ YouTube apology following the scandal, Eugene Lee Yang acknowledges that ‘the internet has a tendency to be a lot harsher towards women than men’, an uncomfortable truth that in the case of the men in question seems to mostly be downplayed by the internet’s enjoyment in mocking the weak apologies and embarrassing DM reveals rather than the women themselves.

Parasocial relationships have been encouraged almost from the dawn of celebrity, with the often young, female fans being encouraged and motivated to view their

idols as people they can relate to and feel a sense of closeness with. This is mobilised by social media, where celebrities may post seemingly intimate details of their lives and relationships whilst having a completely different side to them that is not intended for the public to see. Whilst musicians such as Levine have been fostering parasocial relationships for years in the form of songs and interviews, there is something especially intimate about Fulmer’s YouTube fame. On YouTube, audience engagement is everything, and creators are encouraged to form strong bonds with their viewers so that they keep coming back. In the case of the Try Guys, this led to every member having his own distinct character, with Fulmer filling out the wife guy role. The distinction between entertainment and reality is blurred with Fulmer’s constant posting of his wife on Instagram and the publication of ‘The Date Night Cookbook’, a recipe book featuring an Ikea-perfect Ned and Ariel grinning in front of a charcuterie board, accompanied by a review from the other Try Guys that the book is ‘Like going on one big double-date together’. Here, the monetary benefits of fostering a parasocial investment in the family-man persona are made clear.

In a Stephen Colbert interview aired the year before John Mulaney’s separation from his wife, Mulaney revealed a haunting, prophetic conversation he had with her: “‘So there’s a fake you with your parents”, and I said yes, “and there’s a fake you on stage”, and I said yes, and then Anna said, “So how do I know when I’m with you that it’s the real you?” and I said, “You don’t”’. The anecdote is followed by a short burst of audience laughter with the expectation of a happy resolution to the story, but after a sobering semi-joke from Mulaney about how he never wants to know what people, starting with his wife, truly think of him, all Colbert responds with is ‘That’s beautiful and sad at the same time’. These glimpses behind the curtain of the celebrity marriage are a cautionary reminder against accepting public persona and neat branding as true reflections of real, complex relationships. When audiences praise the wife guy for simply enjoying the company of his spouse, the bare minimum becomes a pleasant bonus rather than a necessity for any relationship to work, at the same time creating idyllic narratives that are prone to being dramatically shattered. Fulmer’s prompt erasure from the Try Guys brand is a legitimate response to workplace misconduct, but the apology video with each member embodying his own clear-cut character (anger, grief, matter-of-factness) only highlights the corporate need for marketable individuals who, unlike Fulmer, can remain in character both on and off camera.



Image: Flickr

The Forgotten Mercury 13

Zoe Parker sheds light on the historic development of the Artemis Project and the women who paved the way for its creation.

Zoe Parker

Whilst the tests were being conducted, the Soviet Union sent the first woman to space; Valentina Tereshkova. Unlike members of the Mercury 13, Tereshkova was not a trained pilot, but rather a trained factory worker with strong political views

Whilst the Project Mercury all-male team were free to soar as high as technology of the time would let them, the thirteen women who completed the same training were left to stare at the stars, never quite allowed to reach them.

Frustrated by the way they were being held back, the Mercury 13 resorted to writing an address to then-President, John Kennedy. Eventually a public hearing before sub-committee of the House Committee on Science and Astronautics was called in July 1962 to see if there had been illegal gender discrimination as stated in the Civil Rights Act of 1964. However, Jacqueline Cochran (who funded the project), stood against them, throughout the process. Despite knowing that most of women who took part in the Mercury 13 project had given up their jobs and moved away from their families for the opportunity to become astronauts, in court she stated that she thought most of the women selected would drop out due to “marriage, childbirth, and other causes”.

Testimonials given at the hearing enlightened the public and the committee of how unfair NASA’s selection criteria was at the time. To be considered, NASA stated that candidates had to be graduates of military jet test piloting programs and were also required to have completed engineering degrees. For context, at the time this occurred, by law women were banned from enrolling in military jet piloting programs. In addition,

NASA had previously allowed John Glen to be a member of the Mercury 7, despite his failing to complete his degree, having left to fight in the U.S. army during World War 2.

All the Mercury 13 women were civilian test pilots and had significantly higher air times (in the thousands of hours) than their male counterparts in the Mercury 7. Test scores of the Mercury 13 also provided evidence that women could, contrary to belief, withstand the stress of space travel (loneliness, heat, noise, pain etc) better than men. They were also lighter, so the cost of sending women into space would be significantly lower than sending men. The court eventually ruled that, logically, it did not make sense to prevent women from astronaut training.

Despite this ruling, it took the US government until 1972 to amend the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, allowing women to travel to space, and a further 6 years to lift the candidate requirement of a jet fighter pilot qualification. As a result, in 1978 NASA had its first official class of female astronauts, called ‘mission specialists’. Disappointingly, however, they did not cross the Kármán line into space. Instead, they were ground based, hired to work on experiments.

It took another 20 years for the U.S. to send a woman to space. In 1983, Sally Ride was the third woman in history to go to space.

As of March 2022, only a mere 11% of people who have been to space are female majority of which were US citizens. Their roles have ranged from payload specialists, space station participants, astronauts, cosmonauts (Russian astronauts) and, more recently, space tourists. On the ground, figures of female

employment in the space industry are at the same level they were 30 years ago; only 20–22% (as released by the UN).

Sadly, there was never a point in time where all members of the Mercury 13 met since they were required to complete phase training alone or in pairs. Most of them were never even sent into space. It was only recently (20th July 2021) that Wally Funk took part in a suborbital flight on Blue Origin’s New Shepard 4 mission Flight 16; at 82 years old this made her the oldest woman to have ever gone to space. In the end, Cobb was the only one of the 13 to officially complete all phases; which she did with flying colours, ranking the top 2% of both male and female astronauts at the time.

The story of the Mercury 13 is one of bias and unfair treatment, but it is also, ultimately, a story of determination. These women paved the way for women in the space industry. At a time when they were actively opposed by both NASA and the Law, they fought for the right to be seen as equal to their male counterparts. They may have never made it to space, but they made sure that their voices were heard, and the impact they made on the space industry is undeniable. These women are a source of inspiration to women and girls everywhere, regardless of whether they wish to go into the space industry or not. At least they have the choice and the opportunity – thanks to the Mercury 13; Myrtle Cagle, Jerrie Cobb, Janet Dietrich, Marion Dietrich, Wally Funk, Sarah Gorelick, Jane Hart, Jean Hixson, Rhea Woltman, Gene Stumbough, Irene Leverton, Jerri Sloan and Bernice Steadman.



Image: Ruby Wait-Weguelin

A Unique Friendship: My Experience with ‘Writing Back’

Ruby discusses her experience with the Writing Back Scheme, an award-winning pen pal project which pairs students with older residents across Yorkshire.

Ruby Wait-Weguelin

For the last 9 months, I have been exchanging letters with my pen-pal Lesley, during which we have formed a rather unique friendship. A 50-year age difference, and an even greater difference in opinion, has not stopped us from discussing a broad spectrum of issues of topics. All the way from COVID vaccines and LGBTQ rights to UFOs and the World Cup, me and Lesley have developed a cross-generational friendship through our discussions.

It is unlikely that me, a student in their early twenties, and Lesley, a 70-year-old retiree, would ever have met if it wasn't for the Writing Back Project. Established in 2014 by Dr Georgina Binnie, the Writing Back Scheme is an award-winning pen pal project which pairs students with older residents across Yorkshire. Dr Binnie was inspired by the letters she had exchanged with her grandmother during her time at university and the impact it had on both of their emotional wellbeing. Ever since, the Writing Back scheme has been helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation for both older people as well as students.

According to a recent NIHR study, on average, one in four adults over 60 report feeling lonely, and for those aged over 75, that figure increases to one in three. Letter writing is a powerful method of tackling those emotions, by giving people the space to connect with others and discuss their feelings. However, it is not only older people that experience loneliness and social isolation. Based on the Higher Education Policy Institute's research, almost one in four students are

lonely most or all of the time. This was made worse by the COVID pandemic, which forced us all to adapt to spending less time with family and friends.

However, it was not loneliness that encouraged me to apply for the Writing Back Scheme, but rather an interest in letters. During the first national lockdown in 2020, boredom and isolation led me and my friends to write to each other. Despite the fact I had never written a hand-written letter before, this turned out to be an extremely fulfilling experience that gave rise to my interest in letter writing. After hearing about the Writing Back project, I signed up right away, excited for the chance to write to someone I would not usually get the opportunity to speak to.

Through our letters, Lesley has joined me on my year abroad in the Netherlands and my transition back to Leeds. As well as sharing lots of cat pictures, we have found many shared interests such as climate change, animal welfare and strike action. We have also engaged in some really interesting, and at some points controversial, debates on topics such as over-population, vaccinations, and LGBTQ rights.

Lesley has been involved in the Writing Back Project for eight years now and is still in contact with her first pen-pal. She is “still a rebellious student at heart” and was drawn to the project in order to engage in interesting discussions with people in further education. According to Lesley, she's not interested in the unstimulating conversations she has with people her own age. Instead, she'd much rather learn about

new ideas and discuss her passions such as architecture, historical sites, and trains. Over the years, Lesley has written to many different students, from many different countries and backgrounds. One of her pen-pals was studying Environmental Management and introduced Lesley to the issues surrounding climate change. This has been added to Lesley's long list of interests and has led her to research subjects such as over-population and environmental politics.

After 9 months of letters, me and Lesley finally met in person and discussed our experiences of the Writing Back project over coffee and cake in Chapel Allerton. When discussing the positive impacts of the scheme, we were both in agreement of the different perspectives we have gained, and Lesley said:

“It is so wonderful that I can have someone to discuss such topics with, who understands what I am talking about – albeit that we have opposing views.”

Similarly to Lesley, I have learnt a lot from the Writing Back scheme and it has been an extremely fulfilling experience to get to know someone in such a unique way. Although unconventional, this project has allowed me and Lesley to develop a true friendship and we will continue writing to one another past the project's end date.

Applications for the Writing Back Scheme are now closed, but check out its dedicated page on the University of Leeds website to find out more, or send an email to: writingback@leeds.ac.uk



live music in leeds

FONTAINES D.C.

O2 Academy Leeds, Wednesday 9th November

Fontaines D.C. hit the jackpot on their UK *Skinty Fia* tour, and with a bigger catalogue of songs to play, since getting three albums under their belt, it seems third time's the charm after all.

With frontman Grian Chatten airing his grievances, their new music may sound more muted than previous albums, but Fontaines D.C. make it clear that they are a band who genuinely enjoy playing their own songs. Despite being on their third album, they have the live presence of a new band in subtle disbelief at their luck of playing in front of a big crowd for the first time and making the most of it.

Newer tracks, such as *Skinty Fia* single '*Roman Holiday*', are given the chance to shine and they sound fuller and less muted when played live. The playfulness of the riffs and the bombast of the drums give each track a life outside of its digital mastering, even if the album has been deliberately formulated to convey a sense bubbling resentment.

Chatten's energy as frontman riles up the crowd, despite not always having perfect vocals, and Fontaines D.C. are by no means a one man band, with guitarist Carlos O'Connell doing his best to entertain the audience between songs as Chatten takes much needed swigs of his beer. Whilst there may have been limited crowd interaction, a band like Fontaines D.C., who are so direct with their lyrics, show that this isn't always needed; everything that could be said to connect with a crowd is already being sung. Despite the menacing nonchalance portrayed through Chatten's lyrics, part of Fontaines' magic lies in the way they can conjure up chants, sing-alongs and mosh pits to songs that aren't always the most danceable. The crowd chant along to "I HATE THE WAY THEY USE HER" in '*Roy's Tune*' and the collective moshing to every song, even the slower ones, illustrates the skilful way in which Fontaines have built a community through their songs, translating perfectly to the live gig. I was particularly amused and thrilled by the way Chatten used the microphone stand like his puppet, a tool to physically convey what his lyrics portray emotionally.

During the encore, an angelic white light shines on to the stage as '*Boys In the Better Land*' starts playing. For a band from a country famously divided by religion, Fontaines D.C. make the O2 their church, uniting everyone with Grian as their pastor, even if he refuses to be anyone's God.

It was a joy to see the varied age groups within the crowd, including newborn Radio Six dads and their kids (mini post punk protogeos), the expected crowds of teenagers, and also, as a pleasant surprise, their parents. With a great balance of newer tracks and old favourites like '*Sha Sha Sha*', the gig united the crowd whilst doing the perfect job of preaching the odes of *Skinty Fia*. Fontaines illustrate the way in which music can bring people of all ages together, in this case through embracing the exasperated frustration that pulses through their abrasive music.

For a band who want you to think they don't care, the gig's technical elements show a real amount of thought; from the backdrop of thorned roses to the changing colours of the Fontaines D.C. logo that towers above the stage, the band make sure you don't forget who they are. Whilst lacking the cheekiness of Sports Team's Alex Rice, the fun and melodic joy of Wet Leg's Rhian Teasdale and Hester Chambers, and the "gotcha!" wit of local band Yard Act, Fontaines D.C. show that instead of those three things, sometimes for a great gig, all you need is good old fashioned rock and roll.



By Adam Arthur Harvey

Photo credits : Fontaines D.C., Instagram, Instagram

The Big Steppers Tour:

Kendrick Lamar's masterclass in performance art.

By Charlie Lake

The First Direct Arena was brimming with people. The two-hour wait between entrance and entertainment hardly felt like it at all; the busy chatter of eager fans swallowed up any impatience that might be felt, and this excitement continued into the performances. First up on stage was Tanna Leone. A relative newcomer to the music scene, Tanna performed roughly half of his debut album *Sleepy Soldier* to the eager onlookers in the crowd. After a short, 15-minute break, it was Kendrick's cousin Baby Keem's turn to woo the crowd. Entering the crowd's peripheral with his unmistakable 'trademark usa' was never going to fail to get everyone moving; the mosh pit was already alive to the fusion of trap, rock and alternative rap. Keem continued with a ten-minute snippets format, performing minute-long segments of a lot of his best-known hits; 'HONEST', 'MOSH PIT', 'Scapegoat', even performing his stint of Kanye West's 'Praise God'. He finishes, promising the crowd, "I'll see y'all later".

Just minutes later, the white curtain across the stage ascends, revealing Kendrick Lamar and his entourage of dancers - all in unconventional black tie. Clad from head to toe in black, he kicks off with 'United In Grief' and 'N95' from his new album in what is, at this point, a fairly spartan production of man and mic. His band is hidden behind a curtain at the side of the stage, meaning Lamar's only company as he begins his show is the bright white spotlight above him, and a ventriloquist's puppet in his image, that he operates as he raps the emotional opener.

The audience's support was unfaltering throughout his set and in his low-key way, Lamar played into it; he let the crowd take verses and choruses and led them as if he were conducting a grand orchestra. The control that Kendrick demanded over the crowd was something to behold: any command that he gave, whether that be "Hands up" or "Jump", would see thousands follow suit in an instant. Beyond that, though, there wasn't much in the way of audience interaction. Aside from thanking the Leeds crowd for coming when they could have been "anywhere in the world", for the most part Lamar preferred to let his formidable flow do the talking.

Witnessing The Big Steppers Tour live reveals just how intricately planned and subtle a performance it is; he doesn't engage in fancy footwork like one might expect. Instead, he steps across the stage with purpose, and much of his animation beyond that is from the waist up: subtle hand motions, quickly turning his head, bobbing, and those trademark windmilling arm movements, particularly during the manic 'M.A.A.D. City' and the closer, 'Saviour'. When Kendrick's silhouette was beamed onto the back of the stage, I was amazed to realise that it wasn't live. He's moving along, nearly flawlessly, with a previously filmed silhouette of himself with images of arrows in his back (during 'Count Me Out') or flocks of birds around him (during 'Worldwide Steppers').

Throughout the set, there was a sense of claustrophobia and pressure – but considered. The dancers' moves were often violent and threatening - they circled particularly obvious during 'M.A.A.D. City'; the lights went out and the dancers illuminated him as if he were being pursued by police. Later on, he performs swathed in PPE suits. During the melancholic 'Crown', six big, square lights "You can't please everybody," as if he's being hounded by people's conforming songs. Like the album, it's a haunting commentary

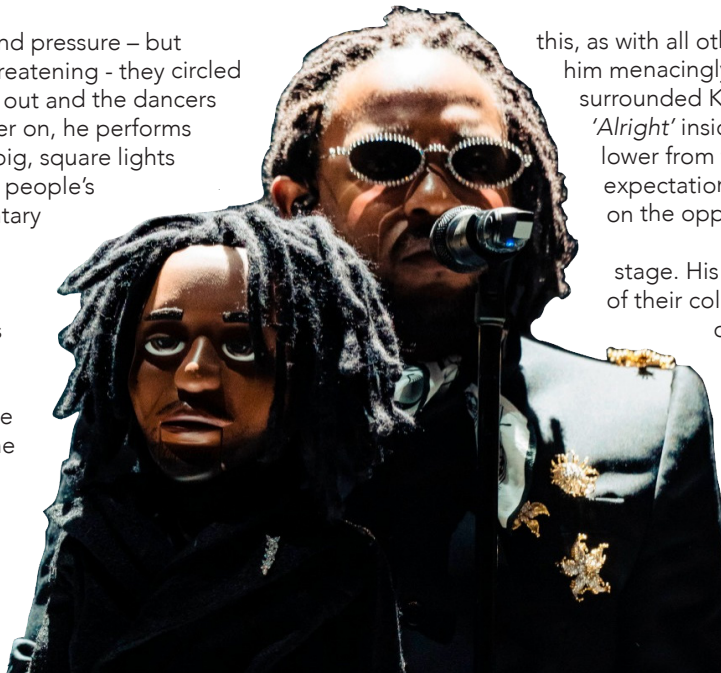
In the final quarter of the set, Baby Keem re-enters the bathed in red light as the pair go bar for bar on a couple well as Keem's new song 'a life of pain'. At three songs, his slightly, particularly given the absence of Kendrick's best closing song 'Savior' is a lyrically dense way to end the contradictions as he wrestles with cancel culture, Covid, the movement. The show ends abruptly after Lamar finishes the he quickly thanks the audience as the platform on which house lights come up, and it's over.

This is Lamar's best tour yet; it is thoughtfully produced Lamar's talents as a performer and director without with *Mr Morale & the Big Steppers*, it paints a picture of megastars. He is not a saviour, as he stresses on the now, an excellent live performer.

this, as with all other elements of the show, was carefully him menacingly even as he's moving with them. This was surrounded Kendrick, each holding flashlights which 'Alright' inside a clear plastic box surrounded by guards lower from the ceiling and loom over him while he sings expectations to make big statements or commercially on the oppressiveness of stardom.

stage. His entrance is certainly arresting; the stage is of their collaborations: 'Vent' and the 'Family Ties', as cameo perhaps outstays its welcome ever so songs from 2015's *To Pimp A Butterfly*. The show: the verses deal with the artist's own war in Ukraine, and the Black Lives Matter final verse - the dancers bolt offstage, and he's standing sinks beneath the stage, the

and expressive. It truly showcases making any compromises in quality. As Lamar as one of our most unconventional record, but an unadulterated artist and,



**THE BIG
STEPPERS
TOUR 2022**
KENDRICK LAMAR

Photo credits: Financial Times, T-Mobile

In conversation with...

Paul McLoone of The Undertones

By Benjamin Forrest

The Undertones first formed in 1974 in Derry, Northern Ireland, but rose to prominence following the blossoming punk rock and new wave scene that erupted in 1976. With an line-up consisting of Billy Doherty, Michael Bradley, Feargal Sharkey alongside brothers Damien and John O'Neill (the prior brother being the principal songwriter of the group), the pop punk five-piece enjoyed both critical and commercial success during the 4 albums and 13 singles the band released before splitting in 1983. One of the most successful bands to ever emerge from Northern Ireland, it was almost inevitable that they would make a return and, in 1999, they did just that! The reformed line-up saw radio broadcaster, comedy writer, and friend of the group Paul McLoone take the place of Feargal Sharkey as the frontman of the band. We caught up with McLoone ahead of the Undertones' 2022 UK tour, which saw them visit seven venues across the country.

Paul had a close relationship with the band even before coming aboard as their lead singer and frontman, "Billy, our drummer, and I were in a band called The Carrellines back in the 80s. I knew John O'Neill from the Derry music scene, which he was very involved in at that time, with That Petrol Emotion and everything, and I knew Michael because we both worked at the BBC for a spell.". So, when it came to the reformation of the band in 1999, Paul seemed the obvious choice: "There was no audition, it was just 'Will Paul do it?', which was very flattering...and very daunting. I was quite trepidatious about it. I said yes without thinking about it, and then I got nervous about it". The pitch for him to become the frontman, though, took McLoone by surprise somewhat, "I got asked to do it, very much out of the blue, by Billy. I didn't even know there was anything happening with The Undertones at all", he chuckled, "When bands used to split up back then, they stayed split up – all of that has changed, of course".

Despite the reformation of The Undertones, though, it was not clear that this new era for The Undertones would last very long, "It was, initially, just meant to be about the launch of the Nerve Centre in Derry, which is a venue and multi-media training kind of place – a really cool place – we were launching that", McLoone explained. The elephant in the room, when discussing The Undertones, in its current form, is the lack of the original singer and frontman, Feargal Sharkey, who (according to reports at the time of the original reformation in 1999) refused to reform the group. Paul, as the new lead singer, talks very openly about how feels with regard to stepping into Sharkey's shoes, "If Feargal had been the songwriter, or a songwriter, with the band I wouldn't have done it", he insists, "I actually knew the guy [Noel Burke] who took over from Ian McCulloch in the Bunnymen and he did a great job, but it just didn't really sit right because McCulloch was so creatively essential to that band. Feargal doesn't really occupy that space in The Undertones – he's a great singer and a great frontman, I have a lot of respect for him – but part of the rationale for me was that he just sang the songs and sang them brilliantly. So, all I had to do was sing them as well as I could and put them over my own way. Naturally, being from Derry and singing in our own accents, we sound a bit similar anyway", he says with a laugh. Despite the readiness of the first audiences in Derry to accept McLoone as the frontman of The Undertones, he explains that there were some difficulties early on, "I personally felt a bit of an uphill battle at times to gain the credibility that you would like, but you have to work at that anyway – you've got to earn your stripes! I enjoyed the challenge, I enjoyed the gigs where there was a lot of folded arms and an attitude of 'Go on then, show us.' because by the end, they were into it. That was always very gratifying, to win them over. People were, 100% understandably, sceptical about an Undertones with no Feargal – some people still are. I've come to accept it; it doesn't really bother me anymore". After such a long time performing with the band, longer a period than Feargal ever lasted with The Undertones, Paul assures me that the sceptical audiences are now, thankfully, a minority.

As previously mentioned, the newer incarnation of The Undertones is now entering its second decade performing together – something which came as somewhat of a surprise to McLoone: "Part of me still feels like it's a new thing, but of course it isn't. It's a generation ago, almost", explaining the fact that, "Even initially when we were planning on doing some more shows and then, eventually, recording some stuff it was only meant to be a few years". Asked what he thought was behind the reasons that audiences are still so receptive to The Undertones music, the frontman replied, "They're still fresh and they're not really tied to any time period, they haven't dated". He also describes how the emerging indie rock scene of the early 00s helped them with their initial reformation, "One thing that really

helped us was that music kind of swung back in a more punk rock direction – bands like The Strokes and Interpol, Franz Ferdinand, all that wave – I think we rode a bit of respect from bands that were coming up that were punk, or guitar influenced bands". Namedropped as being influential to whole host of younger groups, McLoone testifies to the fact that the audiences at Undertones gigs are becoming increasingly more diverse with regards to age groups too, "There's a brilliant photograph of one of the first nights in the Nerve Centre where a flash bulb has gone off at the back and it's lit up the crowd and all you can see are these crescent moon shapes of all these baldy heads illuminated", he laughs, "We've got a much more diverse audience now, not just in terms of age but in terms of gender too – there's a lot more women and girls than there was at the beginning and the age profile has come down in general".

One of the greatest taboos when it comes to groups who have reformed years on from their initial success is the issue of new material. We saw it with The Stone Roses and their dismal attempts at a comeback with 'All for One' and 'Beautiful Thing' back in 2016 from their anxiously awaited third studio album (which was ultimately abandoned). Unlike most, though, The Undertones have produced some brilliant songs since their reformation – releasing two studio albums in the form of *Get What You Need* (2003) and *Dig Yourself Deep* (2007). It seems as though the audiences are very accepting of hearing these newer tracks, "They're very accepting of them. We try not to over egg it with the newer stuff but there's a few proper rocking tunes that we have that stand alongside the older stuff without much of a problem", McLoone explains, "We usually have about four of five of them in the set, out of well over twenty songs. We totally get it; we understand that people are really there to hear the older stuff, but they'll tolerate a few newer tunes. It's like any band, 'Here's a new song' – that's your cue to go to the bar!". Who knows, perhaps there will be some more new Undertones material to add to those setlists before too long?

Needless to say, The Undertones are still going strong nearly fifty years on from their original formation. The group recently released a new compilation album of all the best tunes from the McLoone era, the album is called *Dig What You Need* and was released on the Dimple Discs label earlier this year.



Images: Sonic PR (top), Paddy Simms (bottom)

‘There are monsters out there. And some may even be lurking inside yourself’

Graham Coxon’s *Verse, Chorus, Monster!* & the era of the Britpop reunion

By Erin Clark

Graham Leslie Coxon is best known as the expressive lead guitarist for 90s Britpop-pioneers Blur - the monolith band used as a yardstick by striped shirt wearers worldwide. Formed in the late 80s, the four-piece of Albarn, Coxon, James and Rowntree would go on to produce some of the defining and most influential records of the 1990s. By providing a sound that is more sensitive and reflective than some of their Britpop ‘rivals’; the band was unwillingly pitted against their counterparts in a disarray of chart-topping battles and award show digs - combined with the club culture of the 1990s glamourising substance & alcohol misuse, numerous internal tensions, industrial financial issues and diverging creative differences - what has been the lasting toll on this sensitive guitarist who wears his heart on his mod-jacket clad sleeve? Coxon’s memoir *Verse, Chorus, Monster!* (2022) provides us with an authentic and intimate insight.

Published on the 6th October, Coxon’s memoir is equal parts striking, beautiful and sincere. A press release for the book reads: “His anxiety was tempered by painting and a growing love of music.” Before concluding with: “But there are things they don’t tell you before you get famous. There are monsters out there. And some may even be lurking inside yourself.” Art has served as the medium to help Coxon come to terms with some very traumatic instances in his life, his demons manifest literally as sketches of monsters scattered across countless sketchbooks since his childhood. *Verse, Chorus, Monster!* documents Coxon’s displacement as the son in a military family, Blur’s skyrocket to fame, mental health struggles and subsequent addiction to alcohol - beautifully juxtaposing genuine moments of trauma and loss with those of new life and self-discovery.

The set up at Brudenell Social Club is intimate, fitting for the topics Radio 6’s Matt Everitt and Coxon are about to discuss. The projector screen onstage displays cosy home videos of a 20-year-old Graham and friends cavorting on beaches and chatting in college dormitories soundtracked to the ambient noise – it seems as though, included in the ticket price seems to be an invitation to Coxon’s intimate life. A singular plastic cup sits on a table - a concoction of Red Bull and apple juice awaiting his arrival. He enters to rapturous applause, the same glasses and haircut he donned in the home videos displayed prior to his arrival. Not much has changed, after all, for both the audiences and the artist. Coxon puts the audience on the spot, asking who has read the book. A few hands raise, one being my partner’s sister. When meeting after, Coxon remembered she had been one of the few to have read the book since its release date before they shared a sincere moment of a shared love of artwork

Image: Joshua Atkins



and music. She not only left with a book dedicated to her and a hand drawn lily plant to represent her name – but a huge smile on her face at meeting one of her idols (and the need to get this tattooed at the nearest given opportunity).

With Graham’s book, Damon’s incessant touring and experimental side projects, Dave’s strategic single release and Alex’s cheese-making (?), it takes one a minute to stop and realise, ‘there’s an awful lot of buzz around Blur recently’ - it’s almost as if something is in the works...

13th November 2022, the 27th anniversary of release of *‘The Universal’* (1995) – and boy, should we have believed Damon when he told us ‘tomorrow’s your lucky day’. The following ‘lucky’ day, Blur release a strategic one-day slot at Wembley next summer, as a kind of litmus for interest in seeing the band - who are now all comfortably into their 50s - take to the stage again for their first headline performance in eight years. To largely no-one’s surprise, due to ‘phenomenal demand’, an additional date is added. For Coxon, along with many others, music and the belonging that comes with it has been his saving grace. Telling Trendell of NME “I’m really looking forward to playing with my Blur brothers again. Blur live shows are always amazing for me: a nice guitar and an amp turned right up and loads of smiling faces.” So in many ways, this is his homecoming. Just with a few life lessons learned on the way. Figures such as Graham remind people that there is pride in wearing your heart on your sleeve, however painful this may be. Graham Coxon’s return to music is welcomed by adoring “smiling faces” worldwide, because of both the music and the unashamedly human figure he is.

Coincidentally, Sheffield’s own Britpop-batters Pulp also announced a reunion tour for the same year. If I had a penny for each time this has happened this year I’d have two pennies, which isn’t a lot but it’s weird that it’s happened twice, right? The era of the Britpop reunion is here. Bands like Blur and Pulp work because they are timely and also timeless, above all, Britpop is so well-liked because it is such a ‘human’ genre, it is unmistakably linked to the context in which it was made, but also transcends this to reach audiences of all ages and backgrounds. They serve to remind people of a time in which they were young, or as is the case for many younger fans - a time they wish they existed. The formula is tried and true, the lyrics are relevant regardless of time, and Britpop bands mean just as much to people now than they ever have before. Welcome home, Britpop, the door’s always open.

MARY BEARD MARY BEARD

DELIVERS ALICE BACON LECTURE

The annual Alice Bacon lecture, celebrating the achievements of inspiring women, resumed post-covid at the University of Leeds this autumn. Bacon, post-war Labour politician and Leeds' first female MP, brought the experiences of working-class women into her politics and spent her life breaking barriers, reminding the public that 'It would be a mistake to regard us as women MP's, we are here to do all the work that a man does, and a little bit more'.

This year's speaker was classicist, writer and TV historian Dame Professor Mary Beard.

By illustrating the culturally ingrained misogyny in historical and current society, using a plethora of classical references, Beard highlighted that the struggle for female empowerment and equality has always been difficult. But difficult does not mean impossible.

Beard, whose 2017 book *Women and Power: A Manifesto* sets out the long-term goal of changing the established power-structure, focussed in this talk on three encouraging pieces of advice.

*We are here to do all
the work that a man
does, and a little bit
more*

She began by emphasising the importance of being optimistic and self-congratulatory about the changes we have already made. In the last century we have witnessed the success of women's suffrage and seen three female Prime Ministers, even if one might not agree with their politics. This does not mean that all is solved, but it is important to recognise that there is an improvement to celebrate.

In my post-lecture exchange with Beard, she commended the current *Vogue* for rewriting classical stories from the perspective of female characters, believing that they have already encouraged more young women to engage with the ancient world and adding that she hopes "men will read them too and think again about the classical tradition."

Beard then stressed the importance of recognising the "misogyny spectrum that is all around us". By being mindful of it, we can better understand how important it is to fight against it. She reminded the audience that even the most attuned and liberal minded sometimes fall into sexist traps. Beard gave the example of assuming that the female voice in a pilot's announcement was that of a member of the cabin crew and not the pilot herself. That she herself had done this enabled the audience to further appreciate her overall sentiment.

A more striking example is that of Manchester Art Gallery and Waterhouse's 1896 painting of *Hylas and the Nymphs*. The painting depicts a scene from classical mythology in an overtly sexualised manner, with the villainous nymphs enticing Hylas to his death. In 2018, artist Sonia Boyce, working with the gallery, temporarily removed the painting, provoking a storm of comments and criticisms. But, as Beard pointed out, the intention was never to remove the painting permanently, only to spark a conversation. And that it certainly did. The painting is now returned, but in front of it stands a display of comments from the public on what they think of both the painting and the decision to temporarily remove it.

This engagement shows that hiding these works is not the way to make progress. Instead, we need these works and we need to confront them. As Beard herself put it, 'We won't beat misogyny by hiding it or pretending it doesn't exist'. We need these reminders of our past and what we are fighting against in order to maintain our efforts for the future. As Beard neatly summarised, 'We won't change the world from a safe space'.

The final piece of encouragement that Beard gave was that of the importance of resilience, which she described as an 'unfashionable virtue'. Here she referred back to Bacon, who would 'not be battered down', and then to her own mother, describing a pub in the 1970's in which hung the sign 'men only'. Her mother drank defiantly under this sign until it was one day taken down. With this example, Beard reminded the audience that combating misogyny is not an easy task, but that we must be resilient enough to continue the fight with 'all the weapons in our armoury'.

Although her rapturously received lecture did not shy away from the structural misogynistic challenges embedded in our world, there is no doubt that she left the audience feeling encouraged, inspired and, most of all, emboldened.

Grace Patterson

WINTER WARMER LITERATURE

Winter can be cold and miserable, but many of the great books ripe for it are not. Here is a list of books that tentatively evoke its festivities and cosy you in the colder season. They might make you a little bit happier when you walk across Hyde Park in dark, three-degree weather at midday.

Great Expectations Charles Dickens

A *Christmas Carol* would be the obvious Dickens choice, right? However, the picture-postcard Victorian setting of this novel and its typically Dickensian redemption arc make this another great winter choice. The book is punctuated by characters who navigate shadowy stately homes and learn to embrace good cheer. It's also quite funny, if you try hard enough. I reckon it perfectly morally encapsulates the whole 'it's cold outside but warm in here'

The Pursuit of Love Nancy Mitford

This charming romp by the most famous Mitford sister pokes fun at the sensibilities of the upper class and evokes a distinctly charming sense of the historical Winter past. It's worth reading particularly for the caricature-esque Uncle Matthew's children hunts on Christmas day. The BBC also did a gorgeous-looking take on the novel with Andrew Scott as Lord Merlin, the archetypal Bright Young Thing (in case you needed more encouragement).

The Secret Life of Snow Giles Whittell

To start the list with a rogue, non-fiction shout is Giles Whittell's 'The Secret Life of Snow'. The book is a scientific study into the makeup and outputs of snow, with each chapter unpacking a different part of its mythology and reality from the yeti to avalanches. Whittell considers snow with a love and charm that makes it a fitting, uplifting winter read despite the book's scientific focus.

His Dark Materials Phillip Pullman

A less problematic, death-of-the-author-controversy laden alternative to Harry Potter. Again, talking animals (including a f**k-off polar bear), lots of snow, dreaming spires and an action-packed, magical plot make this a riveting and feel-good story for winter.

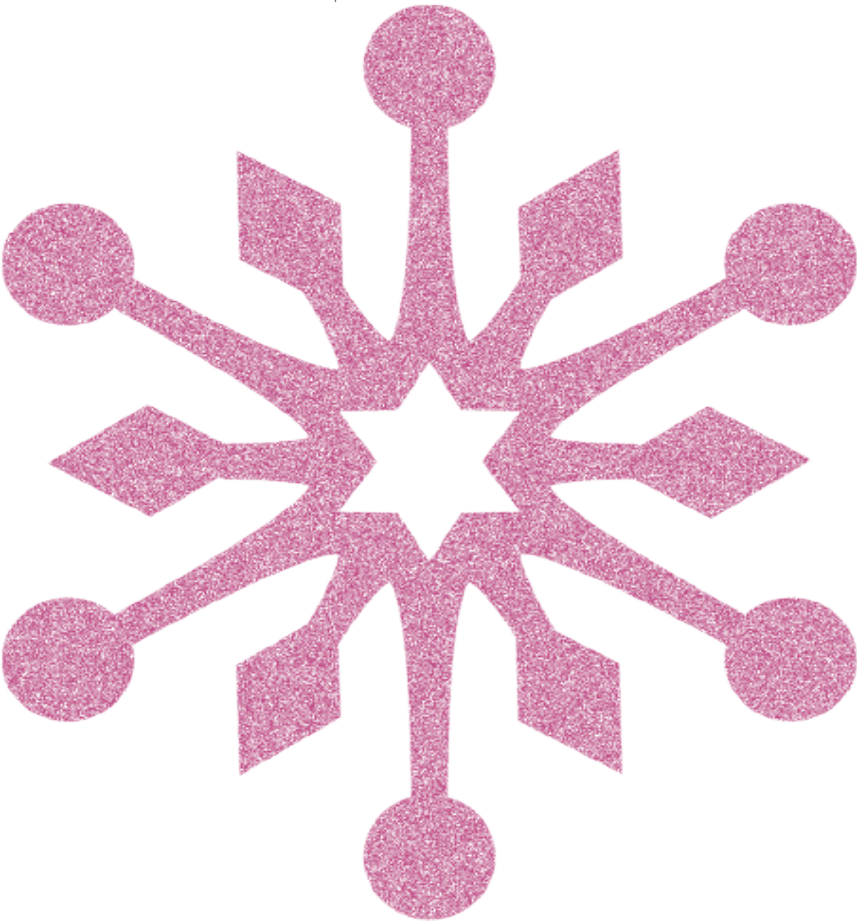
The Secret Garden Frances Hodgson Burnett

This book has a class-A obstinate child learns love-and-good-vibes trajectory, is set on the Yorkshire moors as they freeze over for winter and wake up again, and has some pretty tasty descriptions of food. If we rightfully accept that anthropomorphized animals constitute the ultimate winter book, *The Secret Garden* has a robin that

Amazing Peace Maya Angelou

Maya Angelou's poem about Christmas inspires us all to think about peace in our daily lives and in broader global contexts. Written in Angelou's signature, brilliant style, the poem proffers that happiness and peace are less difficult to attain than we imagine, if only we appreciate the small things.

Mia Fulford



Dear Lottie,

“I’ve been at Uni for two months, but I still feel homesick”

For the majority of people, moving to Uni is the first time they will have lived away from home and, let's face it, Halls aren't exactly the cosiest, albeit pleasant, places to live. Homesickness usually goes away in its own time, but if you still haven't managed to shake off the sadness, here are some pointers that will help you face it head on.

Try not to give into it. You certainly aren't on your own if you've woken up feeling blue and immediately jumped on Trainline to book the first train home for the weekend. However, if this is your immediate response, it will soon become your remedy for any minor inconvenience and, before you know it, home will become your safe space and subsequently, you will associate Uni with being miserable and lonely.

Equally, **don't cling to alternative coping mechanisms**, such as heavy drinking. Of course, drinking is a lot of fun, but if you're using it to escape feeling sad then it can be a slippery slope. Planning a weekend of more 'wholesome' activities is more beneficial in the long term. Take yourself for a coffee, go for a walk, all the cliché 'self-care' tips really do hold some substance!

Talk to someone! Keeping anything to yourself isn't easy and can really feel like a burden. Tell your friends and family you're feeling a bit down, it's good to have someone listen and they might even be able to offer more personal advice. If you're missing friends from home, why not drop them at visit at their Uni and explore a new city? Or organise a group video call and cook together?

As I mentioned, Uni accommodation is often fairly unforgiving and can be a bit bleak. **Make your bedroom your sanctuary.** Coming home every day to a dark and sparse room doesn't feel like much of a reward for a long day at the Library. Invest in nice lighting, a cosy blanket and photos of your favourite people are all great starting points.

If you feel you've tried everything and you're still struggling, the University and the Leeds University Union both offer counselling services.

Lottie Passmore



Book club: Festive favourites

When the weather turns cold, there's nothing better than curling up on the sofa with a good book. These are my favourite untraditional winter/Christmas book recommendations to get you in the festive spirit!

1. *Just for December* by Laura Jane Williams

This book is the perfect winter themed romantic comedy for the festive season! It's the perfect fake-dating scenario where two actors working on a Christmas movie together are forced to pretend to date outside of the set. If you love Christmas movies such as *The Holiday* and enjoy the fake-dating trope, then this book will be perfect for you!



2. *The Christmas Wedding Guest List* by Susan Mallery

This book is a great read this Christmas, including not one, but two, romance stories! It follows two sisters as they navigate finding the one while participating in their parents' vow renewal. If you love reading about returning to your first love and unexpected relationships, then this is the book for you!

3. *Murder at the Theatre Royale* by Ada Moncrieff

I always enjoy reading a crime book, and a Christmas themed thriller is even better! It's the opening night of A Christmas Carol at the Theatre Royal when 'Scrooge' dies

onstage, and journalist Daphne King is determined to uncover the truth. This book is set in the 1930s, so it's the perfect mix of historical fiction, crime thriller, festive themed book to read this winter!

4. *The Christmas Murder Game* by Alexandra Benedict

When Lily returns to Endgame House where her mother died 21 years ago, her aunt presents her with a Game. If Lily solves 12 clues to find 12 keys, she wins the deed to the Manor House and her mother's killer. The games turn deadly, and Lily soon realises that she is not only fighting for an inheritance...but for her life. This book is a page-turner 'who-dun-it' that will keep you gripped until the end.

5. *The Christmas Bookshop* by Jenny Colgan

This book follows two sisters as they try to save an old bookshop that is on the brink of closing for good. This book gives all the festive feels while also focusing on the tricky relationship between sisters. The narrative is reminiscent of Edinburgh at Christmas and this book will give you an instant festive feeling, making it the perfect read for this time of year!

There's nothing more cosy than settling down with a good book and these festive finds are sure to get you in the Christmas mood. How about treating yourself to a mince pie while you're at it?

Jessica George

Photo: Jessica George

Winter Warmers

As I am sure we've all noticed, the days are getting shorter and the temperatures are really dropping, but let's romanticise these cosy evenings in with five staple winter warmer meals to get us through the colder months! These meals are all centred around utilising seasonal fruits and vegetables, to limit costs and to try to limit our carbon impact. With this in mind, these meals can all easily be adapted into vegetarian or vegan options.

First up, we have a warming **butternut squash soup**! This is something that really takes me away from cold, damp Hyde Park, for all its charm, and transports me back to my cosy family home! I like the roasted flavour with a touch of chilli to add some heat and all it takes is a simple stick blender. In my opinion, some crusty bread is a must with any soup. Why not support a local business and take a wintry walk to @leeds-breadcoop (on Instagram) to pick up some freshly baked sourdough to elevate any soup, even one that has come straight out of a can!

Nothing quite says comfort like pasta. Why not try a **creamy mushroom pasta** or push the boat out a bit with a **pumpkin and kale pasta bake** with, of course, lots of cheese! Fill your kitchen with the smell of a baking garlic baguette for optimal cosy vibes!

On a similar note, although it might be lengthy, a **lasagna** is always worth the time! I make mine using quorn mince and add marmite to enhance the "meaty" flavour. In true Yorkshire, and not very Italian, style I also add a splash of Henderson's relish. If you're a Southerner who has never heard of this sauce, you can thank me later!

Mash and gravy, need I say anymore! An easy hit, sausage and mash with some peas on the side to add some vibrancy is sure to give you all the wintry feels.

And finally, unsurprisingly, we have the **roast**. Undoubtedly better had in a pub on a Sunday after a long walk and accompanied by a pint, but nothing beats the satisfaction of making your own. A Roast potatoes should only ever come golden and crispy. Make sure to boil them in salted water and shake them up to make them nice and fluffy,

Livia Garrod



WINTER SKINCARE: Survival Guide

As the mornings get colder and the afternoons get darker, it's normal to notice changes to your skin during the winter months. The summer glow has faded. When you look in the mirror you see yourself looking duller than usual, and the tiredness from late night library sessions is showing. Anxiety, which we may all be experiencing around deadline season, causes an influx of the stress hormone cortisol, which aggravates oil production in the skin. That combined with harsher weather and the effects of central heating, skin can become irritated, dry, and prone to breakouts. Our skin is a huge part of our confidence, and it can be tricky knowing what works and what doesn't without blowing the bank. But with a few fool-proof steps, you can achieve a consistent routine that restores your glow and that confidence that may be slipping at this time of the year.

CLEANSING

First things first, cleansing. As the first step in our routine, it's imperative that the skin is hydrated from the offset. You know you're experiencing dryness if the skin feels tight and lacks elasticity, causing that dull appearance. If this is the case, pick a cleanser with more of a milky, gentle consistency, such as CeraVe's Hydrating Cleanser (£10). The formula consists of 3 essential ceramides and hyaluronic acid, which ensures that all-important moisture is locked into the skin. Ideally, you want to avoid something with a foaming consistency, as this can strip the skin of moisture and cause inflammation.

If you have oiler skin, try out Dr Sam's Flawless Cleanser (£16). The cream-based formula is extremely gentle on the skin and is also great at removing makeup in your evening routine. Due to its jelly-like consistency, it does not clog up pores, making it great for acne-prone skin.

HYALURONIC ACID

Whether you have dry or oily skin, maintaining moisture is key in winter. Whilst most may not implement a serum in their routine and skip straight to moisturiser, it's a great way to ensure that you are giving your skin as much hydration as you can. No winter routine is complete without the hero of moisture – hyaluronic acid. You've probably heard about hyaluronic acid before and think it may be a gimmick as it seems to be in all beauty products nowadays. So, what's so great about it? It holds up to 1,000 times its weight in water and works to evenly distribute moisture to the entire face, leaving skin hydrated throughout the day.

There's an extensive range of hyaluronic acids out there, which can leave you wondering which one does what it says on the tin. My personal favourite is the Vichy Mineral 89 Daily Booster (£26). After cleansing, I leave my face slightly damp and spread two pumps of Mineral 89 to my face and neck. Skin is instantly hydrated and with continual use, my skin feels plumper and smoother. If you're looking for a cheaper alternative, The Ordinary's Hyaluronic Acid 2% + B5 (£6.40) also works to lock in that moisture after cleansing.

MOISTURISER

Far too many of us fall victim to that one moisturiser that we've used since we were kids and hold an everlasting loyalty to it. However, it's important to pick a product with those key ingredients that are going to lock in that moisture we want. The overall goal is to boost hydration, protect, and heal the skin barrier. In the winter, the cream you use should include those soothing, hydrating ingredients, such as hyaluronic acid, niacinamide, aloe etc.

If you're looking for something you can use on your face and body, Weleda's Skin Food (£13.50) has become a leading moisturiser in the skincare sphere for a reason. This ultra-thick cream is packed with nourishing plant oils to ensure that your skin barrier is protected against winter conditions.

Combination skin? Opt for Glossier's Priming Moisturiser Balance (£23). Whilst controlling shine and refining pores, this moisturiser is enriched with niacinamide to even out your skin tone and provide hydration.

SPF

Believe it or not, you should be wearing sun protection 365 days of the year. UV rays penetrate the skin and can cause wrinkles, fine lines, and dark spots – all things you do not want when you're in your twenties. Ensure you're protected by implementing an SPF as your final morning skincare step.

To save your face from sun damage year-round, choose La Roche-Posay UVMune 400 (£19). The brand has pioneered in creating the new filter Meroxyl 400, which is specifically designed to protect from UVA rays. These rays penetrate deep into the dermis, causing hyperpigmentation and causing premature aging. Great for everyday use, its water-like formula ensures the product sinks into the skin, leaving no greasiness or white cast behind.

I know, it's hard to motivate yourself to do a full-blown skincare routine in the morning when you're clinging on to every minute in bed you can get before a 9am lecture. Shift the mindset and, instead, see it as 5 minutes of all important self-care to start your day off right. It's easy to slip into bad habits during deadline season – you're lacking sleep, eating crap, and feeling the consequences. As the seasons change and the stress builds up, it's important to pick the best winter skin-care products that work to keep skin healthy while it battles the colder temperatures.



Photos:
CeraVe
Dr. Sam
Vichy
The Ordinary
Weleda
La Roche-Posay
Glossier

Is y2k promoting 90s heroin chic?

With fashion trends typically on a 30-year cycle, it was as from skinny jeans back to baggy jeans along our wardrobes. The rebirth of this fashion and big sunglasses, allowing us all to damaging side that comes with lifestyle. With the glamorization this trend way too far.

In the 90s, a younger Kate Moss became the fashion industry as a model and therefore lifestyle. Young girls began to idolize peers' influence on young women was in her youth, it became a sort-of norm as good as skinny feels', Kate, and blamed for encouraging eating

In recent years there has been brands such as Savage X Fenty, along with long overdue discussions models such as Ashley Graham public embracing of their curves. The perpetuating toxic positivity, has over-weighed people.

The influence of these public figures sometimes used for good, their recent rumoured reversals of their drastically change body shapes from the money, plastic surgeons, home able to them, young people continue this way. It's time to stop making can take on and off. It begs the question?

The clothes themselves add to these unattainable body types. Crop tops, the micro leavers a large amount body parts such as the may feel the pressure ultra-thin image. With around in discussions help but wonder how really is.

The unhealthy ascend there. With of this era, the look of further perpetuates girl who is crazy yet beautiful. As Elle phrased it 90s fashion, 'Grunge perfect'. People ro-and worn-out kind of this carefree feeling the trend.

Although fun when fashion trend, Y2K into a far more embodied as a fashion trends ous when individual in an attempt to tant to remain fact that, like phase out.

Photo:
katemoss.
com

expected that the 90s and early 2000s trends would start to remerge about now. With the shift with the return of cargo pants, these old trends are slowly filtering their way into all of ion era has many fun aspects, like the return of the velour bejewelled juicy tracksuits embrace our inner Paris Hilton. However there is a much more dangerous and this new way of dressing – '90s heroin chic' isn't just a fashion trend, but a of smoking cigarettes and abusing substances, there is the risk of taking

poster girl for 90s heroin chic. Not only was she at the forefront of the influencing what people wore, but she perpetuated this party girl her and associate her slim figure with all the partying. Moss and her unprecedented. With Kate famously being a smoker and drug user malized culture. Famously coining her mantra that 'nothing tastes 90s heroin chic as a movement, has been harshly criticized and disorders. Moss has since apologized for this.

an onus placed on body positivity. With the help of inclusive a conversation about the diversity of body types was opened up sions of race and gender inclusivity. Celebrities, influencers and and the Kardashian's have also aided this movement with the new generation's prioritisation of self-love, although at times all done so much good for the physical and mental health of

today, much like Kate Moss in the 90s, is immense. Although tions can also have deeply detrimental effects. The Kardashian's BBLs expresses an unattainable idea that one can day-to-day. Although this is only possible due to gyms and personal trainers abundantly avails-suming their media don't always think about body types a trend as if they're clothes you question: was body positivity simply a trend

selves which are considered 'Y2K fashion conversations and concerns about the types which the trend encourages. mini-skirt and super low-rise jeans all of the body on show. With certain stomach largely exposed, some to appear 'skinny' and fulfil this these harmful terms thrown sions of these trends, we can't healthy this trend (or lifestyle)

pects of the trend don't grunge being at the centre dark eyes and messy hair this image of the party still unattainably beautiful. In a 2019 article about was comfortably immortalised the undone look, which promotes that is synonymous with

interpreted as purely a fashion can easily turn delicate matter when lifestyle. In other words, risk becoming dangerous become unhealthy achieve them. It is important to be hyper-aware of this and the all trends, it will eventually

SOPHIE AURANGZEB

I'm Joining the University Strike Action, And Here's Why You Should Too

Owen Frost delves into the current University strikes and why he is supporting them.

Owen Frost



Image: @leedsucu on Twitter

During my time at the University of Leeds, stretching back from first year all the way until now, I've been affected by strikes. Lectures cancelled, delayed marking, late emails, dissertation workshops missed. While this certainly has impacted my education negatively, especially as a humanities student, I still support and stand with striking staff.

I stand with the striking staff members because the anger that I feel this week and beyond is a symptom of systemic unfair staff working conditions. I know staff care about our education deeply, as much as these actions might indicate otherwise.

While some of you might think that university professors are those male dons sat smoking pipes and drinking red wine in grandiose offices like in that one episode of *Peep Show* with a Capaldi Professor MacLeish, that is simply not the case. During the widely discussed cost of living crisis, and throughout the vestiges of an arguably ongoing pandemic, both lecturers and crucial support staff have been hard hit by institutional policy.

'Excessive and unsafe workloads which have been perpetuated for years and have got even worse over the pandemic'. While the university has released a further cost of living support package, including up to £650 in December for nearly 4,000 people on lower pay grades, it is increasingly inaccessible to postgraduate researchers who were classified as 'workers' and not 'staff', meaning they were exempt from this 'tranche of support'. It is not those paid exorbitant salaries in the ivory tower of the Ziff building that feel these hardships. It's the staff that really keep the university running, from professors to PhD researchers, to non-academic

staff including technicians and librarians. The wide-ranging members of staff who operate the buildings we frequent every single day.

Action this week might feel overwhelming given the sheer number of unions on strike. UCU, (the one I was certainly most well acquainted with), represents academic staff. But you might remember UNISON – the crucial support staff who went on strike earlier this academic year.

Also Unite have joined and are a national member-led national union 'committed to high-quality training and resources' throughout education. All unions, but especially UNISON and Unite, emphasise the rights of staff members that enrich your everyday experience by reshelving books you need for Brotherton and Laidlaw, technicians who assist you in labs, cleaners who cover countless facilities, including those toilets in Eddy B.

Another reason for giving your support, (and perhaps one less advertised), is that all three unions support the abolition of tuition fees. Why shouldn't we support staff who passionately disavow the inordinate amount we are expected to pay after leaving university?

Speaking to Leeds Student Staff Solidarity's George Aylett at the first picket line on Thursday, he told me that the strike this year was bigger than ever given the sheer scale of union involvement. He also summarised pithily why students should become aware of striking staff concerns:

"Why should students support striking staff? Because staff working conditions are student learning conditions. A failure to support staff results in poorer learning conditions for students."

Precarious employment has been a longstanding reason for strikes. When it comes to the

numbers, staff from UCU have seen real terms pay cuts as much as up to 25% since 2009.

This is all while the marketisation of universities skyrockets, and rampant casualisation of working hours and short-term contracts leave staff limited in time to invest in us, the students.

Another reason for student-staff solidarity is that the representation in our classroom is directly affected. The racial, gender and disability pay gap have widened at 17.1%, 18.9% and 9% respectively. From November 20 onwards, 'women working in higher education will effectively work the rest of the year for free – earning £4k less than men.' The head of UCL has admitted that 'higher education is systemically underpaying staff.'

Following the speeches at Parkinson steps, the impression I got was that Leeds University and Leeds Beckett have avoided engagement with the unions, claiming strikes are a 'national issue'. However, a national response is indeed possible – the Vice Chancellor sits on Universities UK, a leading body that represents the collective voice of 140 universities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, supposedly proponents of our 'world-class education.'

For scale, this is the biggest ever strike in UK Higher Education. While limited victories have been achieved at Open University and Royal College of Art, a lot more needs to happen locally at the University of Leeds. A much-desired end to disruption from those involved is significantly more possible if students support striking staff.

These strikes may feel disproportionately unacceptable and hugely unfair. But that's because at the fundamental, institutional level, they are.

"A failure to support staff results in poorer learning conditions for students."

Image: George Aylett



From Decline to Disappearance: Reflections on Liz Truss' Premiership



Image: Flickr

Isabel Barrow responds to her previous comments on Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng after a particularly tumultuous few weeks in Westminster.

Isabel Barrow

Writing in October, with Liz Truss still as Prime Minister, views writer Isabel Barrow came to the following conclusion on whether Jeremy Hunt would be the one to save Truss from downfall.

Ultimately, Hunt's measures may be sufficient to restore a brief period of stability for the pound, yet it is unlikely that his chancellorship will be a long-term solution to both the market and the public's distrust of Truss. The origins of this instability lie with Truss, not Kwarteng or Hunt, and no matter the potentially new and innovative policy Hunt devises, his installment as chancellor is a signal to many that Truss no longer holds the power. This is something people tend not to forget and since the economic manifesto, which ensured her popularity with members, has been torn apart, all that appears to remain is a Chancellor following in the economic footsteps of former opponent Rishi Sunak, and a Prime Minister crawling along behind.

Following the replacement of Truss by Sunak, The Gryphon asked Isabel to reflect on her earlier thoughts in light of the new political landscape.

The premise of the above article was to decide whether the appointment of Hunt was enough to save Truss. Surprise, surprise, it was not.

Yet the relevance of this article is not lost. While

changes in the Tory party continue to occur at a precipitous speed, lest us forget that in the last few weeks we have not only gained a new Prime Minister, but a new cabinet too. Hunt's chancellorship seems to be one of the only reminders that Truss was actually Prime Minister and not just a fleeting nightmare. Apart from the obviously dire exchange rate, rising mortgages and worsened cost of living crisis, of course. Yet, we must remember that the appointment of Hunt was by no means emblematic of her so misguided 'Trussenomics' but rather a necessary response to the troubles she caused, a reaction to the predictions of none other than Mr Sunak, some may say.

You would think, with this newfound readiness of Tory politicians to make snap decisions as if they weren't in charge of the fate of a nation, if Sunak wanted to rid his cabinet of Hunt he would, but he didn't. Some argue he had little choice in the matter, with Hunt being the only glimmer of stability the Tory party, and in turn the country, had in the albeit short-lived reign of Truss. Yet if we've taken nothing else from the last few months, in the Tory party where there's a will, there is always a way. The continuation of Hunt's chancellorship thus suggests that Sunak is eager for this glimpse of stability to transcend into

permanence.

October 31st was therefore not only supposed to mark Halloween but the long-awaited autumn fiscal statement. Yet despite being pushed back to November 17th, the statement's content remained a jump scare to many. Hunt's budget introduced £30 billion in spending cuts and £25 billion in tax rises, quite the opposite to Truss' belligerent outlook on taxation and rather alluding to previous years of austerity. Yet is this 'fiscal squeeze' really what our diminishing economy needs right now?

Following the car-crash that was Truss' mini-budget, any chancellor would struggle with what to do next. The Bank of England has warned that we are entering the longest recession in 100 years, and it appears Hunt is attempting fill in the hole left in government finances. However, previously deafened by the screeches of all these Tory U-turns, it is unlikely this statement will be music to the public's ears. Hunt has the task of not only cleaning up the mess Truss made, but tackling the very large and very real issues our country faced before Truss even approached the lectern. Once seen as a temporary fix to the seemingly unfixable, it will be interesting to see if what Hunt plans for the economy is a long-term solution.

Finding Common Ground: The World Cup in Qatar

Introducing our new column: Finding Common Ground! This month, Evie and Sam discussed the World Cup in Qatar.

The Gryphon Views Team

On a rainy Leeds evening in World Cup season, we sat down with two of Leeds' own to discuss the nature of this year's games. Sam Stephens White and Evie Yabsley shared their opinions on their decision to watch the World Cup, despite their concerns about its host. We struggled to actually find a Leeds student boycotting the event, suggesting that it has been widely accepted among students to overlook the issues of this year's World Cup, instead, choosing to sit down at the pub with a pint to enjoy the game.

In this edition of 'Finding Common Ground' Sam and Evie discussed the human rights abuses taking place in Qatar, the effectiveness of a boycott, and whether we should be politicising football in the first place.

For Sam, the central issue is that participation in the World Cup can be interpreted as supporting Qatar and its discriminatory and abusive laws. He emphasised that this economic contribution from the football points to the complacency of FIFA and other football federations. We returned to this argument at the end of the discussion, when both students agreed that the blame should be shifted to FIFA itself.

Our other debater, Evie, considered that there may be some positive change resulting from this year's World Cup, as discussion surrounding this year's games, has drawn more awareness to the situation in Qatar. Moreover, she highlighted that some issues that have been raised about the Qatari government are being seen first hand, for

example the banning of the OneLove arm-bands from players and sports presenters. Although still critical of the exploitation and record of human rights abuses, Evie felt that it may be a "negative influence with a positive outcome".

The discussion also transitioned into a question of whether we should be politicising football. It could also be argued that the purpose of sport is about unity and bringing people together, but that the huge influence of football all around the world could be used to do some good. There have been some political statements in the World Cup, such as the Iranian football team choosing not to sing their national anthem as a form of political protest. For Sam it was important to acknowledge that in the past there has been a tendency to take the blame off the Western governments and see more blame in Eastern governments because of how different it is to Western society and politics, which he felt could be a narrow minded Western perspective.

Evie and Sam both found their 'common ground' in the view that FIFA should shoulder the blame for allowing the World Cup to be hosted in a country with a multitude of human rights violations. Both students felt that boycotting watching the World Cup wouldn't make as much difference as holding the Qatari government, but also FIFA, to account for their responsibility in the issues that the football has raised this year.



“I feel like FIFA is really slipping under the rug”
Evie Yabsley



Evie's Post-Debate Reflections

What were you hoping to gain from the debate?
“I was hoping to hear someone else's perspective and was glad to discuss with someone with the same opinion as me.”

Strongest argument?
“I think the most interesting point was about who is to blame. I feel like FIFA is really slipping under the rug and it's frustrating that FIFA gets away with so much corruption and it's really unfair. I think that was a really good point to raise.”

Has your opinion changed?
“I hate FIFA a bit more than I did already.”

Do you think the conversation was productive?
“I think it was productive in that we're all on the same page about raising awareness of the issues in Qatar.”

Was there something that you would have wanted to discuss that was not raised?
“If we'd had more time it would have been good to find someone with more of a different view, as we've got a more western view.”



Sam's Post-Debate Reflections

What were you hoping to gain from the debate?
“It's interesting to, even though we're both not boycotting it, discuss more complex details about it and to consider different opinions about it.”

Strongest argument?
“I think Evie's point about the direct impact the law had in terms of the workers rights. It was an important point to make; that alongside the blame on FIFA there should also be accountability on the World Cup for the loss of life.”

Has your opinion changed?
“I think my opinion has been enforced by the discussion.”

Do you think the conversation was productive?
“I gained a broad hearing of lots of opinions that we considered, but we have similar opinions, so it's hard to gain a lot.”

Was there something that you would have wanted to discuss that was not raised?
“It would be interesting to talk to someone who is from the Middle East, because we've got quite a narrowed minded view, to get the other side of it would be quite interesting.”

How Should We React to Controversial Artists?

Jennifer Machin discusses controversial artists in the wake of Kanye West's recent antisemitic comments and considers how we should hold celebrities accountable.

Jennifer Machin

In the wake of Kanye West's recent antisemitic statements, we must consider how to react to controversial artists. This is an area that has troubled people in recent years, especially with the rise of accountability in the media, and yet, there is still no consensus. Many separate art from its artist in their enjoyment of many forms of entertainment, such as music, literature, artwork, etc. However, we must consider if something this innocent is damaging in modern-day society.

West's recent statements regarding the Jewish community where he says: "You guys have toyed with me and tried to black ball anyone who opposes your agenda", threatening to go "death con 3 ON JEWISH PEOPLE", reek of antisemitism. These mindless comments have been supported by the white supremacist group 'Goyim Defence League', highlighting the dangers of encouraging these ideologies in mass media. These groups are a direct danger to Jewish communities, and could even become violent, with Kanye's statements virtually endorsing this.

Now, you may wonder how continuing to listen to his music affects this, as it is seemingly harmless, but this is not the case. Continuing to listen to this artist monetises and potentially even sup-

ports his ideas. His continued wealth could be used to fund groups that could harm or damage Jewish or other communities, and this can be prevented to an extent by a boycott of his work. Moreover, his continued popularity, particularly on social media, is nurtured by people's enjoyment of his art, but this gives him a platform to disseminate harmful beliefs that could influence others, particularly impressionable young people.

We should be calling out this behaviour and holding it to account, as many have done in this case. Kanye has been dropped by his talent agency, Balenciaga, JP Morgan, and others, largely due to public disgust of his recent statements. However, this is not the first time Kanye has made damaging statements. He has used scaremongering tactics in spreading misinformation about the COVID vaccine; stated that slavery was "a choice"; openly harassed his ex-wife (Kim Kardashian) and exposed her private information to criticism, such as her consideration of an abortion. Yet, this is the first time he has faced real consequences for his actions, all because of public outrage. This reveals, loud and clear, the power of the public.

Although a lot of controversial artists' music seems absent of their true beliefs and actions, this

is not necessarily the case. Previously innocent lyrics become disturbing with a little context. This was made clear in the case of singer R. Kelly who was recently convicted of various sex offences, some involving children. For example, his song "She's Got That Vibe" seems harmless initially until you realise that the "little cute Aaliyah" he mentions was 12 years old at the time of the song's release. The lack of criticism he received essentially facilitated his later marriage to her when she was aged just 14, with him being 27. Alongside this, the general theme of his song "Down Low (Nobody Has to Know)" about a secret relationship, becomes clearly about grooming in a modern context. Even one of his most famous songs "Bump N Grind" becomes disturbing with the knowledge of his sexual habits.

Overall, controversial artists must be held to account for both their actions and statements, even if this means a boycott of their potentially enjoyable art. This ensures a reduction in their funding, less attention to their negatively used platforms, and most importantly, accountability for their actions.

Musk's Twitter

George Bolger explores Elon Musk's Twitter: should it be seen as a new free speech haven or is it doomed to fail?

George Bolger

It's now been nearly 4 weeks since Elon Musk officially took the helm at Twitter HQ and critics are already raising questions regarding his leadership. In the first few days in his new role, Musk quickly fired former chief executive Parag Agrawal and other top executives such as Chief Financial Officer Ned Segal, and the firm's former legal director Vijaya Gadde, decided to leave the company following this, before Musk, now famously, tweeted 'the bird is free'.

Musk, who over recent years has gained notoriety as a free-speech advocate, had been outgoing in his opposition to the former management of Twitter, particularly of its moderation policies and handling of controversial figures and opinions. He argued they had been unfairly subdued and silenced by former management – therefore contradicting his personal ideals of free speech and personal liberty, vowing to completely change this under his leadership. However, Musk did state he did not wish to see Twitter become a 'free for all hellscape' or an 'echo chamber of hate and division' which some critics argue he has already failed in this task.

One example used by critics is regarding his new subscription based verification system. Here, Musk attempted to recreate how verification on the site works and move away from Twitter's supposedly arbitrary metrics of deciding who deserved a blue tick and who did not. Musk's solution to this was a revised 'Twitter Blue' subscription that opened

up the verification check mark for everyone who agreed to pay the company a monthly subscription fee of \$8. Besides the blue tick, a Twitter Blue subscription also assured subscribers fewer ads and gave them the option to upload longer videos than regular users. Musk also claimed that Twitter Blue subscribers' tweets would receive higher priority rankings on the Twitter feed to increase visibility and promotion for these users.

Despite concerns about scammers and impersonator profiles using the now 'open' verification badge, Twitter rolled out the \$8 Blue subscription to users across the U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. Soon after rolling out the program, the company started classifying select Verified Twitter accounts under "official" checkmarks. However, merely hours after the company introduced the "official" badge, Musk confirmed they were rolling it back. This is likely due to what some would argue is an obvious design flaw in this service, in which parody accounts of significant public figures and companies were able to gain verification and seemingly come across to the public as the official profile on the site. This change affected various public figures and companies including an account pretending to be major US pharmaceutical firm 'Eli Lilly', which falsely tweeted 'We are happy to announce insulin is free now'. This had damaging effects on the company's stock which sank from \$368 a share to \$346 a share, which according to economic reports at the

time—reportedly erased billions in market cap.

Further controversy has risen this week after Musk asked employees to commit to 'long hours at high intensity or leave'. Following this there are signs that large numbers of workers have resigned because they have not accepted Musk's new terms. One former Twitter employee, who wished to remain anonymous, told the BBC: "I think when the dust clears today, there's probably going to be less than 2,000 people left."

Twitter has now officially closed its offices until Monday 21st and asked employees not to discuss internal business in public. Employees have since been tweeting using the hashtag #LoveWhereYouWorked and a saluting emoji to show they were leaving the firm and questions have been raised as to the possibility of the platform shutting down in the near future if the site can no longer be effectively maintained.

Despite this, Musk recently tweeted that Twitter now has a record number of users and regardless of any turmoil, he believes Twitter will continue to be a platform of free speech and will continue to grow.

It is unclear whether Musk's leadership will be the eventual downfall of the company and platform or if he will successfully continue to focus his efforts on maintaining his vision of a platform built on free speech and openness, only time will tell.

Yorkshire Creatives Makers Market: Supporting Small Businesses



Franks Feng



Images: Franks Feng



Black Friday has just passed, and even though there are plenty of discounts provided by high street brands, local independent stores attract many customers as well. Recently, there was a Creative Makers Market in Haworth, where local independent businesses boasted their unique items, inspired by their passion that can seldom be found in high street retailers.

The creative market is close to Keighley. On a foggy day, with a steam train station, it looked like a dream town from the last century. People and puppies went in and out of the fog, finding their favourite items to prepare for the Christmas season. Following the lane up on the hill, the market was located in the school room beside a church. It's a warm room made mostly of wood.

The items on sale were not only unique, but most of them were hand-made with sustainable material. In the fast-growing industry, sustainability is becoming the talk of the town, meaning these products attracted a large group of local residents and students from Yorkshire.

The beautiful song that was playing in the background, was composed by one of the store

owners, who sold three string guitars he created himself with wood. He also shaved the wood to the shape of an old football fan, with a little scarf representing different local teams.

At one of the stalls, there were two sisters selling handmade items that were perfect for winter decorations. One of them said "[they] want to share [their] creative ideas with other creative makers there."

Keighley is the home of the Brontë Sisters, well-known authors around the world. This meant there were many visitors coming to the market to buy bags, postcards, and pens with patterns of the Brontë Sisters and their famous quotes.

Brontë Wildlings store showcased various hand-made hats, scarves, and different items of clothing for young children. There was an eye-catching animal shape bonnet to warm up during the winter, along with many colourful scarves. Plant lovers would also be satisfied with the creative plant plots there. There were different shapes and patterns with sustainable materials to hold your favourite plants.

According to Rosalia, the organiser of creative

market and owner of Brontë Bitch, "the aim of this market is to spotlight the local talent and creators, who also launched a small business idea". Rosalia used to organise a similar market in London before the pandemic struck. More recently, creative independent stores have become increasingly popular in North England, especially the Yorkshire region. There is an increasing number of independent stores here after the pandemic, which encourages people to live with sustainable items.

Reports from the Financial Times show that over 2000 new independent stores opened during 2021, compared to a large number of chain restaurants and bars that closed down because of the pandemic. One of the potential reasons for this is that smaller enterprises are entitled to a 50% business rate discount until April 2023. Another reason is that there are many independent stores in town, so consumers can visit these small businesses with great convenience.

If you have the chance to visit one of Rosalia's Creative Makers Markets, you would not regret it; so buy local produce and support small businesses.

Mitochondrial DNA is Making Its Way Into the Human Genome

Gabriella Greenwood

Billions of years ago, an important endosymbiotic event occurred in which an energy-producing bacterium was engulfed by a larger cell. Instead of being digested, the smaller bacterium and the cell formed a functional relationship in which the bacterium provides energy for the cell, with the two acting as one organism. This remarkable hijacking event marked the birth of the eukaryotic cell, the building block of all animals, plants, and fungi that exist today. 1.45 billion years later, that once independent, energy-producing bacterium, mitochondria, is now famously known as the ‘powerhouse’ of the cell. These biological machines help to convert the food we eat into ATP, a chemical energy source we can use for our daily activities. Owing to their origin as an independent molecular entity, mitochondria have their own double membrane and mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA). This mtDNA is directly inherited from the mother and, by analysing mtDNA through generations, so scientists have been able to gather significant ancestral data.

Until recently, it was generally accepted that after the initial re-localisation to the nucleus, mtDNA became

genetically stationary, resembling ‘molecular fossils’ of the ancestral mitochondrial genome. However, new research published in Nature suggests that the mitochondrial genome is not so stationary after all. Patrick Chinnery, a neuroscientist at the University of Cambridge, and his colleagues analysed fragments of mtDNA within the human genome of 66,083 individuals to investigate any unusual activity. Strikingly, they found that transfer of mitochondrial DNA to the nucleus is an ongoing process that still occurs today. The transfer of mitochondrial DNA into the nucleus was shown to occur once in every 4,000 births.

As these genomic changes are inherited by future generations, the ongoing insertion events play a role in the shaping of the human genome. Due to the dynamic nature of these insertion events, Chinnery et al. proposed that 14.2% of individuals have an ultra-rare DNA segment found in under 1/1000 people.

So, what role do these mitochondrial DNA fragments play in the nucleus? One theory suggests that mtDNA helps to stick back together DNA which has been severed.

This theory is supported by the fact that many mtDNA fragments were found next to binding sites for a protein involved in DNA repair called PRDM9.

Occasionally, insertion of mitochondrial DNA may go wrong and have implications in cancer. Though the majority of mtDNA insertions occur in the non-coding regions of DNA (known as introns), in rare cases they may be inserted into coding regions of the genome which could drive tumour formation. Interestingly, Chinnery et al. found that mtDNA was more likely to be found in tumour DNA, appearing in 1/1,000 cancers from 12,500 samples. This invites further investigation of mtDNA in cancer which may prove useful for future therapeutic application.

This discovery leaves us with a slightly different perspective of mitochondrial DNA which is not as dormant as was once believed. This research shows that even after billions of years, the once independent, energy-producing bacterium may not have completed their role in endosymbiosis after all. Further work is now required to explain exactly how mtDNA navigates into the human genome and what impact this has on human evolution.

Microplastics Found in Human Breastmilk

Alessia Stanistreet-Welsh

The global production of plastics has reached monumental levels, with about 350 million tons produced per year. Widespread usage has led to the accumulation of plastics in landfills and in the natural environment. Once released into the natural environment, plastics undergo degradation that breaks them into smaller fragments ranging from 5mm to 100 nanometres. Through ingestion, inhalation, or dermal contact, these microplastics can enter the human body, sequestering at different body sites by crossing cell membranes.

Previous research has detected microplastics in blood and stool samples, as well as human lung tissue and the placenta.

Now, for the first time ever, microplastics have been found in human breast milk. The discovery came from a study published in the journal Polymers in which researchers examined breast milk samples taken from 34 healthy mothers a week after giving birth. Microplastics were detected in 26, (76%) of the samples. Concerns over the potential health impacts of these findings have been raised, especially for infants, who are especially vulnerable to chemical contaminants.

The researchers also recorded the mothers’ use of personal care products containing plastic compounds, as well as their consumption of food and drink in plastic packaging. They showed that these factors had no correlation to prevalence of microplastics in samples. Instead, the researchers suggested that the ubiquitous presence of microplastics in the environment “makes human exposure inevitable”.

Despite the study finding no risk factors for microplastic exposure, Dr Valentina Notarstefano, one of the study authors, told The Guardian: “We would like to advise pregnant women to pay greater attention to avoiding food and drink packaged in plastics, cosmetics and toothpastes containing microplastics, and clothes made of synthetic fabrics”.

The health impacts caused by the internalisation and accumulation of microplastics in humans is still unknown, although numerous studies have reported toxic effects of microplastics in various animal models, marine organisms, and human cell lines. The researchers noted that “there is no knowledge about the possible impact of microplastics and related contaminants on suckling infants” indicating that “there is an urgent need for more studies”.

However, the researchers do not want to deter mothers from breast feeding their children, with Dr Notarstefano making the following comment: “it must be stressed that the advantages of breastfeeding are much greater than the disadvantages caused by the presence of polluting microplastics. Studies like ours must not reduce breastfeeding of children, but instead raise public awareness to pressure politicians to promote laws that reduce pollution”. Further research, carried out with larger sample sizes, will be required to truly rule out a correlation between plastic packaging and the prevalence of microplastics in the human body.



Image: Flickr

A Breath Of Relief For The Scientific Community After Lula Wins Brazilian Elections

Image: Flickr

Olivia Kolasinski

Following a tense first round at the beginning of October 2022, in which neither candidate received more than half of the public vote, a second round, held on the October 30th, saw Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva win by what has been called the slightest margin since Brazil’s return to democracy in 1989. In receiving 50.9% of the public vote against Bolsonaro’s 49.10%, Lula has secured his second presidency.

The 77-year-old former factory-worker became Brazil’s first working-class president in his first presidential run, from 2003 to 2010. However, following corruption claims amid the Petrobras scandal resulting in a 19-month stint in prison, he was side-lined from the 2018 election which saw Jair Bolsonaro elected president. Lula’s 2022 win is the first time since 1985 that the sitting Brazilian president has failed to win a re-election.

Lula’s re-election has been welcomed by the scientific community in Brazil, which suffered massively under Bolsonaro’s right-wing presidency. The past four years have seen major cuts to the education budget and a serious lack of research grants, leaving many universities and education schemes with poor funding, failing equipment, and a subsequent decrease in the number of academics remaining in Brazil.

Elisa Orth, a chemist at the Federal University of Parana, Curitiba, said of Lula’s win: “Today is a very hopeful day here in Brazil. We have voted for somebody who believes in science, believes in education”. Luiz Dadovich called Lula’s win “a huge relief”. Dadovich, the former president of the Brazilian Academy of scientists, and current physicist at the Federal University of

Rio de Janeiro also pointed out that Lula was the only presidential candidate to mention science during his campaign.

Hope that this new president will restore important legislations and vigour for education is rooted in the example set from Lula’s first and second term in office. During his first presidency, Lula showed his commitment to the scientific community, and environmental causes. His Workers’ Party (PT) invested heavily in science, innovation, and education, whereas under Bolsonaro, numerous environmental protections for the Amazon were removed, leading to mass deforestation, increased wildfires, and causing a doubling of CO₂ emissions in 2019–2020. Bolsonaro also promoted the spread of misinformation about COVID-19 and the vaccine, specifically that receiving the jab would cause women to grow beards and people to turn into crocodiles.

Lula’s win is also being celebrated by scientists outside of Brazil. Aline Soterroni, an environmental scientist at the University of Oxford said, “Lula’s record on tackling deforestation gives reason for hope”, whilst Steve Trent, co-founder of the Environmental Justice Foundation said Lula’s re-election “means people and nature have a chance to recover after the wanton destruction of the Bolsonaro years”. The Norwegian government, previously one of the most significant donors to funds for the protection of the Amazon, are reported to release around \$480 million in aid payments which had been frozen under Bolsonaro’s government for fear the money would be pocketed or channelled elsewhere. Furthermore, an analysis carried out by Carbon Brief estimates that Lula’s win could lead to deforestation being cut by as much as 89% over the next decade.

It is important to note, however, that there is still little to no detailed information on Lula’s environmental policies, his plans for boosting

the Brazilian economy, or for boosting energy demands. Environmentalists worry that Lula may not be sufficiently equipped to tackle the Brazil he has taken on. Ahead of his inauguration on the 1st of January 2023, Lula faces a faltering economy and a pre-approved 2023 budget which includes further cuts to research and the education sector. Aside from this, despite losing the presidential campaign, Bolsonaro’s party still hold the largest number of seats in the Brazilian congress, so any decisions Lula makes will undoubtedly be heavily opposed.

It seems, therefore, that despite the optimism that this new presidency inspires in both the general public and the scientific community, four years of Lula may not be enough to repair the damage caused by the Bolsonaro administration.



Image: Flickr

A Promising New Malaria Vaccine

Petra Gudelj

Oxford University researchers and their collaborators have created a malaria vaccine that has the potential to "change the world". The promising new R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine advances the worldwide effort to fight the mosquito-borne illness that causes children's death every minute. Thanks to these recent advancements, malaria deaths among children may be eliminated "within our lifetimes".

Due to the Malaria parasite's extraordinary complexity and elusiveness, it has taken more than a century to create viable vaccinations. The parasite is dynamic (meaning it changes form inside the host body), making it very challenging to develop an immunity against it. Despite \$3 billion spent yearly on insecticides, bed nets, and anti-malarial medications, malaria kills over 600,000 people each year.

In the 1980s, The World Health Organization (WHO) authorised Mosquirix, the only malaria vaccine to have been licenced, produced by British pharmaceutical company GSK. This paved the way for the Oxford researchers to develop, in their opinion a more effective vaccine, called R21/Matrix-M (or R21/MM). The Lancet Infectious Disease journal reported data from mid-stage research on more than 400 young children who received a fourth Oxford shot dosage following the

first three-dose protocol. They reported that, 12 months after the fourth dosage, vaccination efficacy was 80% in the group that received a greater dose of the immune-stimulating adjuvant and 70% in the group that received a lower dose. These results will contribute to achieving the WHO's Malaria Vaccine Technology Roadmap target of a vaccine with at least 75% efficacy. There were no reported severe vaccine-related side effects.

Currently, the vaccines are in a highly significant Phase III experimental phase, which aims to licence the vaccine for general usage by next year. Later this year, findings from this Phase III licencing trial, involving 4,800 children with different patterns of malaria exposure at five different sites across Africa, will be released to compare the drug's effectiveness and safety on a wide scale. According to interim data (collected in areas where malaria is a concern all year round, as well as those where infection is more seasonal), the vaccine demonstrated over 70% effectiveness. Importantly, the duration of the vaccine's potential protection is not yet known - the team will continue to gather information to provide more comprehensive findings before the year is over.

As data from a bigger Phase III study is still underway, it is challenging to draw direct comparisons between the two vaccine products. According to late-stage trial data reported the previous year, Mosquirix was ~63% effective

against clinical-stage malarial infection. Given that the two vaccinations have not yet been examined side by side in an experimental setting, any comparisons made between them at this point are preliminary. However, the Phase II results indicate that the Oxford injection is a more sophisticated therapeutic over Mosquirix in terms of effectiveness and immunity maintenance. Moreover, the researchers are hoping that the vaccine will be licenced for widespread use in the first half of 2023. R21 also has manufacturing superiority. The Serum Institute of India (the world's biggest vaccine producer) has pledged to manufacture +180 million vaccines once approval is received, roughly 30 times the amount of Mosquirix produced each year.

Accelerating the development of vaccines and treatments, whilst also making them accessible to the most afflicted regions is one of the best courses of action. Results of studies involving the R21 vaccine provide optimistic evidence that, with the correct assistance, it could result in malaria-related child fatalities being eradicated from the planet within our lifetimes.



Image: Flickr

The Sea Under The Surface

Zoe Parker

New research published in The Scientist last month confirmed the discovery of evidence that there could be oceans hundreds of kilometres beneath us.

This 'sub-ocean' would be up to three times larger in volume than all the water in our seven seas combined. However, this water is found in liquid, solid or gas form. It is dissolved and bound up in pockets of magma in an area called the 'Transition zone' - a boundary layer located 410-660 km down, which separates the Earth's upper and lower mantle. The water was found hidden inside the crystal form of ringwoodite, a bright blue mineral which can hold more than 1% of its weight as water.

These findings have shaken the general belief that water arrived on comets that struck the Earth. Instead, this water may be slowly rising from within, urged on by tectonic plate movements. This theory is supported by the fact that the oceans haven't dissipated over the millions of years.

To make this discovery, researchers used seismometers to study the seismic waves generated by 500 earthquakes around the globe. The waves move

through the Earth's core and are detected at surface levels. By measuring the speed of these waves at different depths, the researchers were able to determine the type of rock the waves passed through. They discovered the 'water layer' as the waves pass slower through wet rocks than through dry rocks.

They then conducted laboratory experiments exposing the ringwoodite crystal to lasers creating a hot, high-pressure environment, which mimicked the conditions within the mantle. The data showed that these conditions were causing the water to be squeezed out, or 'sweat' out of the ringwoodite.

So far, the mineral has only been found in North America, but the hope is to find it spanning the whole of the planet. This ground-breaking discovery indicates that the planet's water cycle includes activity in the transition zone; it is a worldwide mechanism.

This area of science has been active for decades. This new finding will help to confirm and shape our understanding of our planet and maybe even others out there.



Image: Flickr

Politics, Elections and Brazil's Football Superstars

Joe Cook



Images: Flickr



The steamy affair that football and politics have been having over the past half-century is no secret. And while the spotlight has been on the various controversies in Qatar this winter and FIFA, the power dynamics of football and politics extend all over the world.

This autumn saw one of the most significant elections of the 21st century. Brazilian far-right, populist leader Jair Bolsonaro locked horns with leftist candidate, Lula Da Silva. It was an election with democracy, the future of the Amazon rainforest and gun laws at stake.

Bolsonaro is notorious for his commitment to commodifying the Amazon, his support for militias, his social conservatism and his threats to disregard democratic elections.

Lula has been a towering figure in Brazilian politics. He is a trade unionist and preaches strong values of workers' rights, self-determination, and socioeconomic equality. He has committed to preserving the remaining rainforest. While serving as president of Brazil from 2003–2010, Lula lifted millions out of poverty.

Football and politics go hand-in-hand everywhere, but especially in Brazil. Politicians use football as a tool to gain popularity, and footballers tend to be very politically engaged – more so than in Europe. This election has widened the rift between Brazilian fans. Bolsonaro has effectively hijacked the famous yellow football shirt, with supporters wearing it at rallies and demonstrations. It has become a political symbol, meaning fans of Lula avoid wearing it. Bolsonaro has worn 86 different shirts in his campaign, and Lula is a loud and proud Corinthians fan.

Almost all of Brazil's global stars are outspoken

'Bolsominions'. Neymar, Ronaldinho, Rivaldo, and a host of Premier League stars including Lucas Moura, Gabriel Jesus and Alisson Becker, have all pledged their allegiance to Bolsonaro's ideologies.

Ronaldinho and Rivaldo, amongst other football magicians, may be inclined to support Bolsonaro because their evangelical Christian beliefs align. The Bolsonaro administration is anti-LGBT and seeks to restore the values of 'God, Family, Country'.

Neymar is the most outspoken disciple of Bolsonaro. He is currently Brazil's largest superstar, and in a country where football is a key strand of national identity, his influence cannot be understated. He has been accused by critics of supporting Bolsonaro because of the tax breaks offered to him and his father.

More sinister accusations suggest his support has been because of his 2019 sexual assault court case. Being in bed with the leader of the country is a great way to avoid the judge's hammer. Neymar has said that he will devote his first goal of the World Cup to Bolsonaro.

It could well be the case that these gifted footballers feel as though they owe the success of their careers to God Himself. However, it is also likely that they prefer Bolsonaro's relaxed approach to the elite paying taxes. On social media, many players have posted their support for Bolsonaro. Neymar has regularly posted pro-Bolsonaro content to his 187 million Instagram followers. Thiago Silva, amongst others, have also posted Bolsonaro quotes and slogans on Instagram.

Not everyone, however, is a 'Bolsominion'. At the recent Ballon d'Or Ceremony, Brazilian World Cup winning hero, Rai, gestured a silent tribute to Lula. Following his speech on social justice and football,

Rai made an 'L' sign with his fingers to the camera. Spurs' Richarlison has declared his support for Lula, making him one of the very few players to favour the leftist veteran.

Of course, everyone has the right to vote for whoever they want, but critics have a right to be disappointed with these players' support for Bolsonaro. Many of these talents came from the Favelas themselves, where conditions have been significantly worsening under Bolsonaro's tenure. The likes of Neymar and Jesus were very lucky to have made it out of the slums, and one must wonder how many other young footballing gems will be left behind in these unstable communities if conditions do not improve. There is the sense that some of these stars have forgotten about their people at home.

Despite football serving as a national religion, many Brazilians have felt a sense of disassociation from the national team in recent years; the talented players tend to leave Brazil very young and spend a decade in Europe earning more in a week than many Brazilians earn in a lifetime. However, the national team are having a strong World Cup run in Qatar, and there is hope that this will reunite the fans back home in Brazil and de-politicise the shirt.

Given Lula's commitment to preserving the rainforest and democracy in Brazil, the whole world had their hearts in their mouths for the results, which went right down to the wire. On the 30th of November, Lula won the election with a narrow 50.9% majority.

Despite the attempts of many Bolsonaro radicals blockading roads and claiming the election was rigged, it seems democracy and the lungs of the Earth can breathe a big sigh of relief. The final whistle has blown on Bolsonaro.