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Minister For Sport Leo Varadkar Officially Opens North Campus Pitches



Gerard Flynn
Interim Editor

UL Chancellor Peter Malone and UL President Don Barry presenting Minister Varadkar with a UL jersey at last Monday's launch.

The Minister for Transport, Tourism and Sport, Leo Varadkar launched the official opening of UL's north campus pitches last Monday, 22nd October.

The new north campus developments, which consist of two soccer pitches, two GAA pitches and one rugby pitch, were deemed to be "truly wonderful facilities" by UL President Don Barry.

Introducing the opening, President Barry complimented "the tremendous work done" by all those involved in the development and stated that the new pitches represent UL as "Ireland's sporting campus" and one who's "dominant activity is

innovation."

In his own speech, Minister Varadkar spoke of "the remarkable extent to which the campus has expanded" since he last visited while attending Trinity College. He complimented the University on the way it "represents the best of Limerick in so many ways, particularly in Education, Art and Sport."

The Minister stated that the five all weather pitches were "facilities that every other third level institution would envy" and in their own way are a sign of the "real regeneration" that Limerick itself is undergoing at the moment.

Mr. Varadkar also spoke about the work the current government

are undertaking in Limerick, particularly the development of King John's castle "as an excellent visitor's attraction" and their interest in developing "employment and an aviation hub in Shannon."

The Minister noted that there's "a rocky and twisty road ahead" when referring to the financial state of the country but noted that it is "days like this that remind us of what can be done in this country" when investment meets innovation.

Former Kilkenny hurler Eddie Keher who occupies a position on the development board for the north campus pitches thanked the "innovators and entrepreneurs" who worked to development the north campus and commended

UL on its ability to encourage an atmosphere on campus that aids "vision and visionaries, innovation and innovators."

Mr. Keher stated that the north campus pitches are also a sign of the "positivity that exudes from all aspects of the University" and reaffirmed his pride in being able to attend the launch, after years of hard work by all involved.

The north campus development cost in the region of €9 million to construct and is "the largest all weather sports complex in Europe" according to UL Chancellor Peter Malone and are designed to IRB, GAA and FIFA specifications.

The north campus developments on the Co. Clare area of UL's campus

also include a new Pavilion building which holds a restaurant and bar, conference facilities and changing rooms to accommodate sports players as well as students and civilians.

Five matches were held after the opening ceremony, which saw each pitch occupied by soccer, rugby and GAA players. On the soccer pitches, Collingwood played host to Limerick FC's under 19's while the UL Ladies played the Lifford Ladies.

The GAA pitch saw Limerick take on Clare while both rugby matches saw UL ladies take on LIT ladies and North Munster U-17's face East Munster U-17's.

Baumgartner Breaks 18 World Records After Space Jump

Fintan Walsh
News Editor

Since Austrian skydiver, Felix Baumgartner jumped from his space shuttle in the stratosphere, Guinness World Records confirmed a total of 18 records were broken.

Mr Baumgartner broke a total of five world records. Most famously, he was the first man to break the sound barrier, falling at a speed of approximately 1,300 kilometres per hour. The Red Bull-sponsored daredevil broke the record of highest freefall distance, highest freefall parachute jump and highest vertical speed.

Around eight million people worldwide viewed the world record process, which made it the most concurrently viewed live stream.

Guinness World Records recently revealed the oldest living man – Jiroemon Kimura of Japan – aged 115. He is “the last known man to live across three centuries”, according to the publication. On December 27, 2012, Mr Kimura will break another world record; the oldest man to be ever featured on a documentary.

Olympic Wrestler Saori Yoshida was presented a Guinness World Record certificate for 13 “unprecedented” World Championship victories, including three Olympic gold medals.

Australian Priest, Father Schneider, was declared the oldest living teacher, who is just about to achieve his one-hundredth birthday.

As Spider Man reaches his fiftieth birthday this month, comic icons Marvel decided to break the record of



most signed greeting card. After the New York City Mayor's Office declared a “Spider Man Day” for October 14, a total of 2,702 signatures contributed to the record-breaking greeting card.

At the Punjab Youth and Sports Festival, in Lahore, in Pakistan, the largest human flag appeared at the National Hockey Stadium. A total

of 24,200 youths grouped together, holding green and white boxes to represent their national flag. On the same week, the largest picture mosaic record – made by people – was broken by over 1,900 Pakistani students.

The festival utilised the opportunity to achieve more records, such as most martial-arts kicks in three minutes

with one leg (616); heaviest vehicle pulled by beard (1,700kg); fastest time to wire a plug (35.93 seconds); fastest time to arrange a chess set (45.48 seconds); most consecutive football headers (335); fastest time to dress in cricket whites (one minute, 18.21 seconds); most leapfrog jumps in 30 seconds (34).

Former Wales and Blackburn Footballer, Robbie Savage, gathered 464 players to beat a five-a-side world record. The record of most players to play in a continuous 5-a-side football exhibition match was successfully achieved by the footballer, beating the previous record by a slim total of 23 players.

Credits

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Sports Editor – Robert McNamara
Arts & Ents Editor – Rachel Dargan
Travel Editor – Amy Grimes
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Visit www.anfocal.ie to view An Focal online.

1. Contributors please note:
All submissions to An Focal are greatly valued. If you have submitted an article which has not been published in this issue, it is very likely that your piece has been retained for publication in future issues. If you are concerned that your article has not been published, please say so.

2. Editing:
If you are unhappy with how your article appeared in An Focal, please discuss this with the Editor. A number of strict guidelines are followed in the production of An Focal, which means some articles may be altered to allow them to fit on the page and to improve readability.

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L.I.T Voted IT Of The Year



Fintan Walsh
News Editor

The Sunday Times voted Limerick Institute of Technology as IT of the year around two weeks ago.

The Sunday Times' University Guide oversees the overall quality of ITs and universities in UK and Ireland. The publication also named UCD as university of the year.

A total of 14 Institutes of Technology were in the pool of high-contesting candidates but the multi-departmental institute managed to shift up eight places from last year and grab first place.

LIT President Maria Hinfelaar was pleased with the result and said that the merger with Tipperary IT and the institute's multi-geographic presence

were major factors for the college's recent successes.

“[The Sunday Times] commented on our successful merger with the Tipperary Institute, which has transformed LIT into a multi-campus institution with a presence in Limerick City, Thurles and Clonmel in Tipperary and Ennis in Clare,” she said. “I am sure that this integration has contributed positively to winning the accolade of IT of the Year.”

The institute are seeking to change its status to become the Munster Technological University, a concept urged by the Department of Education.

University of Limerick lies in sixth place in the Irish university rankings with an employment rate of 90 percent.

Harvard Launch New President's Challenge

Fintan Walsh
News Editor

President of Harvard University, Drew Faust, announced the details of the University's sophomore year in the President's Challenge competition.

The President's Challenge 2013 contest will focus on “social and cultural entrepreneurship”, writes the twenty-eighth president of Harvard, in a letter to the student body.

The University created the programme to allow all undergraduates and postgraduates to come up with innovative solutions to combat social problems.

The programme's first year, last year, was won by a project where students experimented with “a protein found in silk to preserve routine vaccines without refrigeration”, according to Harvard Magazine. The winning team won US\$70,000 and was given a reserved venue to proceed with the project.

Ten teams – with the most innovative ideas – are shortlisted. These teams will receive a \$5,000 seed fund to go about the initiation of their project. “A grand prize winner” and three runners-up will share a total of



Harvard President Drew Faust

\$100,000. The winners are allowed to use the University's innovations laboratory to “make their plans a reality”, says Faust.

The winners of the competition's second year will be announced at the end of the academic year.

AN FOCAL

Gerard Flynn

Without beginning this editorial in too dramatic a fashion, I just want to say that there hasn't been a period in An Focal's 22 years of existence that has been as tumultuous as right now. That's just being honest. Everyone thinks that and to some extent it's somewhat true. There's no Communications Officer anymore and much of the work on the paper, particularly due to Darragh Roche resigning as Editor, has been left in the hands of Lorna Bogue and myself, two co-op students.

Firstly, I just want to say that this tricky time isn't an indictment of the Students' Union or even the student body themselves for their hand in the disposal of the Communications Officer position. I don't want to sound like Rafa Benitez but my opening paragraph is just the facts. We can all sit around and lament the days of Finn and Kelly when the paper was both award winning and informative and pick up the latest issue simply to complain about the size of a cartoon or ask why there's a particular black and inky picture on the front page of the latest issue. I think that frankly, this is quite a lazy critique and often one that falls on deaf ears.

For however long that myself and Lorna are in charge, all I can ask for is co-operation and honesty. By all means, if you have a problem with the paper, whether you're a student, an

editor or a passer-by, call into the Communications Office in the SU and tell us. The college paper was and always will be a collaborative process between students and in my opinion, that element of An Focal's production is as weak as it ever was. So, if anything, this editorial is a call to arms for all those who wield pens instead of swords. If you don't think An Focal is up to a certain standard, you can do one of two things.

1. Come into the office and tell us your grievances and perhaps we can work through things together and solve your problem.

2. Write an article for the particular section of the paper that you feel is weak or uninteresting.

I personally think it's too easy to sit back and say nothing when you notice problems occurring. During An Focal's golden years I've noticed that there was a strong personality in the paper and this permeated all the way through having started with the editor position. Without delving too much into my psyche and all my quirks and foibles, all I can say is that if you approach myself or Lorna anywhere on campus or pop into the Comms office, you won't be turned away and we'll let you air your particular grievance(s). If there's one thing that I pride myself on, it's my honesty and approachability.

The last thing I want to embellish or perpetuate is a divide between the students and essentially, what is their paper. My interim position of editor is simply a custodial

position, as it always has been. I may have a say in what goes in and what's cut and how the layout and design look but this is a student paper that's run by all of you.

If you ceased to contribute articles, the paper would die and it would be the editor's head on the chopping block. All I ask is that you contribute if you have something to contribute. Whether that's critique or copy, I don't mind. No one, especially not students, should feel like the Students' Union is a place that they can't enter or change for the better. Informality is something that I'd like to bring to the Comms Office while I'm here on co-op so if you're in the SU building and want to talk about the paper, don't even knock on the Comms Office door, just walk in.

Sure, you might catch me singing along to Biggie Smalls but for the sake of the paper, its content and how we want it to move forward, I can only say that it is a chance you must be willing to take...

Lorna Bogue

Well, it appears that I possibly should have read Ger's editorial before writing mine! Writing the Editorial for this edition of An Focal is something that I never thought that I'd be doing, however, life happens and we all end up in situations where we have to do things that are unexpected. I can't pretend that this editorial will be particularly

insightful, but I would like to take this opportunity to respond to some of the prevailing ideas and attitudes that I have encountered in the last few weeks during my time working on the paper.

First of all, I believe that the first priority of An Focal should be to act as a student voice. We are the paper of the students' union, and when I say students' union I mean that we are answerable to every member of the students' union. Not just sabbatical officers, but every student in the University of Limerick. We are doing our best to provide information on what is happening in the University that we are all paying to attend, and we give any student who comes to us with a story an opportunity to be heard on a platform which is read by both students and staff. This brings me on to the second prevailing idea that I would like to address; An Focal is a free platform for everyone, and anyone can write for us. We have made huge efforts to encourage more people to write for us. An Focal isn't run by shadowy faceless people behind closed doors, we are run by students for students. Our office is in the students' union building and our door is always open. Ger and I have noticed that whenever someone comes into the office they tend to knock timidly on the door and feel as if they're intruding on something or as if they shouldn't be there. True, Ger is usually freaking out to Biggie Smalls, and the less said about the office poster of Lianna Decker the better, but a few

minute with us generally cures them of that idea, but the idea that we are unapproachable or that we only provide a platform for certain people is perhaps the most harmful idea that I have encountered during my work experience. We are always looking for new voices to add to An Focal. It's always a good thing to have a plurality of opinions on campus, and the growth of other media outlets on campus is a great thing. Thomond Student Times is an excellent example of how students can represent and inform each other.

So in conclusion, submit an article, it's very easy and we would be delighted to receive it. We always offer feedback, when asked, on the articles that are submitted to us. Writing for An Focal has been a very valuable experience for me personally and for all of our student contributors. Ger and I would like to take this opportunity to thank every student who is already part of our team, and our editors who have been thoroughly professional throughout our work experience and have made our jobs much easier for what has been a strange year for An Focal.

To submit articles send them to lorna.bogue@ul.ie or gerard.flynn@ul.ie or create an account on www.anfocal.ie to submit an online article.

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AN FOCAL

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Blah Blah Blah Blog

Gerard Flynn
Interim Editor

I hate blogs because to me they signal everything that is wrong with the internet and the impressionable, stupid people that it brings together. From my extensive reading of blogs, I've come to the conclusion that they are a tool that people use to inform the world of their existence, like a job, a car or a family.

Blogs seem to be the last stop (or in some cases, the first) for people who are so arrogant and deluded that they think they should be a celebrity or a preacher without having any discernible talent or body of work to prove so. We seem to have entered an age where intelligent language (most often misused in the context) covers up a lack of original or thought provoking ideas. In fact, some blogs I've seen are venues for boring people to practice their failed stand up career and at the very least, to work on their paltry Frankie Boyle impressions. These blogs use crudity and harsh language to veil the fact that the topic of discussion is boring, juvenile and most likely, ill-informed.

Unfortunately blogs are also created by the "Go-Getter" amateur journalist types. These are the people who think that they will work at the New York Times some day and will be the first ones to tell you about their new blog entry while issuing the same level of misguided enthusiasm as if they had announced that they were making a twenty million dollar feature film.



An accurate depiction of what I actually look like...

A trip to their blog is one where you need to traverse their opinionated views on everything from Silvio Berlusconi to 18th century romanticism. Their interests appear to cover every topic just so they can put themselves in the shop window for future employers. For these people, blogs are their personal C.V's and they enjoy doing it because it

involves their favourite pastime - answering the questions that nobody asked them.

Most people miss the point when it comes to blogs however. They are supposed to be something so personal and insightful that they represent who you are but this can be lost in inane posts about how an old man touched your hand on the bus today

and how it was "pure embarrassing." Surely to blog, you must get down to the very essence of what you are, display it for public viewing and let the world be the judge. If you're going to give something, at the very least give it all and make it interesting.

By blogging, you are putting yourself out there for public ridicule and if I have offended you, I'm sorry. We all

need a place to vent our frustrations and interests and in a way, I'm doing that in this piece, right? Well, there is a slight difference. My pointless ramblings are being published so they can be seen in real life by real people and not in the vastly apathetic cyberspace by child molesters and chronic masturbators.



Unite the Union, University of Limerick Branch

10 reasons to join unite the UNION

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Drug Use: Are We Lingering On The Edge Of Tolerance?

Eoin Lyons

Am I missing something or have drugs like weed and ecstasy become legal? Of late there has been a noticeable increase in the normality of drugs. It has become almost a substitute of equal acceptability for alcohol, particularly for the young party generation. While I do not intend to present a biased argument for or against this new craze, I do wish to highlight what may be the causes of this.

The abuse of drugs in Ireland has been apparent and growing steadily since it first came to the fore in the 1970s. Much like the rest of the world, Ireland during this time was experiencing the age of love and it's obsession with psychedelic drugs such as cannabis and LSD. These kinds of drugs permeated through the music industry and became the hobby of choice for the chill out generation. The epidemic continued throughout the 80s when heroin and other opiates exploded on to the scene and their popularity subsequently sky-rocketing. The problem of needle exchange and the connection between drug use and HIV/AIDS shone a dim light on the topic and gave a very shocking picture of the harmful side effects of heroin in particular. Luckily the problem in this country was nothing like our American counterparts and the use of drugs remained with the minority, with many anti-drugs schemes rolled out across the country via the government and health boards.

It was only this decade when a massive resurgence occurred and became blatantly apparent all over the country. Unless you were tucked up underneath a rock in 2010, you will have heard about the Head Shop fiascos. Personally, this was the first time I noticed even on a

local basis the ease to which anyone could purchase what were effectively (and later confirmed in law as being) illegal drugs. The ease of purchase for the "legal highs" had adverse effects not only on those members of society who chose to use them but also the drug dealers themselves. On more than one occasion on 2010, certain head shops were pipe bombed and burnt to the ground by suspected "disgruntled dealers." Calls were made to introduce legislation making these head shop drugs unlawful and this was soon completed. However, despite the positive action taken by the government to reduce drug use, it has become clear in the past couple of years that drugs are no less popular than ever before.

Similar to the initial explosion of popularity seen in the United States in the 1960s and 70s, and further around the world in the years following, there has undoubtedly been a major resurgence in drug popularity in Ireland. It's not as if drugs themselves are new though, or that new musicians or icons have made drugs cool again. So why the return to popularity all of a sudden? It is tough to outline any sole reason to be honest. There are so many things that may influence the popularity of drug culture but no clear blameworthy factor.

There are certain similarities between the first craze and the one we are currently experiencing. For instance, the underground rave culture and the birth of both house music and techno grew a connection almost immediately with ecstasy in particular when it first occurred back in the day. A similar culture has grown recently with the return to popularity of these types of parties and events. Yet this could not solely be enough to place the onus



on for such a massive return of drug popularity. Even the recession has been mentioned by many to have been a contributing factor. With funds being tighter for a massive percentage of the population, everyone has looked to value for money at every opportunity. For example, party-goers have noticed the appeal of buying ecstasy for less than the price drinks, with the effects of the ecstasy being much more than its equivalent in alcohol.

While the logic may be questionable it is apparent there somewhere. However, there has also been a shockingly

apparent increase in the amount of drug related deaths highlighted by the media in recent times. Only recently we heard of a string of deaths of young men as a result of ecstasy use. The discovery of PMMA, a substance which has been sold as ecstasy and wrongly believed to be less potent, has led to a spate of deaths across the United States and Canada due to and underestimation by users of its strength. This amongst other things has been increasingly highlighted by the media in relation to the negative effects of drugs, yet there has been no subsequent deterioration

in their popularity. To be perfectly honest, I'm confused as to how drugs have slotted into normality for our generation. While I do not wish to discourage you from it if you do enjoy it (after all it makes no difference to me), I am finding it hard to understand its appeal and acceptance into society by so many people. It has not suddenly become legal, so I find it confusing that the apparent attitude of the majority makes it seem as if it were. But after all, ignorance is bliss I suppose!

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ULSU President's Address

Adam Moursy

Welcome to Week 8 – For those of you still here, you've made it past the half-way point of the semester! In no time the exam period will be upon us but before that there are still plenty of events such as the Halloween Ball taking place on Wednesday 31st October (Tickets onsale from the SU reception for €5) and the legendary Christmas Daze organised by The Stables at the end of November.

November will see a busy month on campus and especially for the SU. Week 9 will see YOU, the Students, go to referendum to vote on whether to extend and increase the Annual Student Levy that you pay on top of your Student Contribution Charge. If approved, we can proceed with plans to build a new student centre, extend the arena and redevelop Maguire's field. This is one of the most important votes that Students will face in any of their four years in UL and as such, it is vital that everyone gets out and gets informed but most importantly it is vital that everybody votes. The SU will be launching a referendum information campaign in Week 8 to inform Students on the importance of each project and what Students will get should the referendum be passed.

We are currently inviting submissions from both staff and students to nominate a charity of their choice to be considered as one of the four chosen charities for Charity Week. If anyone feels they have any suggestions, please



send a short bio (outline of the charity) and where the money will go and email it to Cathal at suwelfare@ul.ie.

12 charities will be shortlisted and then voted on at the ULSU executive meeting.

Finally, I must pay tribute to Darragh Roche, former editor of An Focal.

Darragh resigned in the last issue for personal reasons but I must commend Darragh for the hard work and dedication that he put in to the newspaper over a number of years, which included a co-op placement here in the SU. I have a huge amount of respect and admiration for Darragh

but I can understand his decision. One thing that is for certain is that we will replace Darragh with the best candidate available to ensure the continuation of the paper, although replacing him is not an easy task. In the meantime co-op students, Gerard Flynn and Lorna Bogue, have taken over the paper

and I must again commend them for stepping up and doing a terrific job on this edition. They were thrown in at the deep end but have maintained the high standards expected of An Focal.

Just Keep On Arguing

The Elephant's View by
Michael Shea

Monday night/Tuesday morning saw the last of the Presidential debates. This one was focussed on foreign policy and is generally accepted as the "least interesting" of the three debates. However, that is not to say it was entirely uneventful. The demeanour of both the candidates, rather than anything they said, was very surprising. Ever since the first debate, the wind has been blowing in Governor Romney's direction; he led President Obama by six points in the daily tracking poll and Rasmussen has Romney ahead by four points as of Tuesday the 23rd. The President's performance in the second debate has done little to stop the haemorrhaging of his support and his handling of the Benghazi attack has many people shouting "cover up".

As such, we saw a role reversal in the debate. As Chris Wallace, a Fox political commentator, observed "if I had been on a desert island for the last four years and I had just been parachuted into this debate, I would have thought the guy that turned out to be Mitt Romney was the President protecting a lead and that Barack Obama was the challenger trying somewhat desperately to catch up". Indeed whereas the President resorted to petty attacks on Romney's character and tiny points in his policy, Romney appeared to rise above it all and act Presidential, effectively disarming the President's attacks with "attacking me is not an agenda."

This is not a rose-tinted view of a conservative commentator. To the

contrary; the President's attempts to portray Governor Romney as either a flip-flopper or war monger rather than explain why he is a better alternative was obvious. That's not to say the President did not perform well. To that end he was quite well prepared. However, the grand strategy was to deliver a knockout blow that would change the narrative of the election into the President's favour for the last two weeks. The President was looking for a "where's the beef?" moment. Unfortunately for him, Governor Romney was two steps ahead of the President and did not take the bait.

Case in point; the opening question on Libya; "(regarding the September 11th attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi) What happened? What caused it? Was it spontaneous? Was it an intelligence failure? Was it a policy failure? Was there an attempt to mislead people about what really happened?" The moderator, Bob Scheiffer, practically served the President on a silver platter. But rather than going after the President and reading an indictment of charges (which could have taken half the night), Governor Romney spoke in much broader terms. Romney mentioned how we in the West had much hope for the Middle East during the Arab Spring, but now there is cause for concern considering the rise of extremism.

Romney complemented the President on taking out Bin Laden but challenged the notion that Al Qaeda was no longer a threat stating "it's (Al Qaeda) certainly not on the run...It's certainly not hiding. This is a group that is now involved in



10 or 12 countries and it presents an enormous threat to our friends, to the world, to America."

This came as bit of a shock to many who felt that the Governor has to make up for his 'poor performance' in his previous debate against Candy Crowley and the President. Charles Krauthammer effectively summed up what many Republicans felt at the end of the debate; "I would have gone after Obama on Libya with a baseball bat but that's why Romney has won elections and I have never even contested them."

The President's strategy also backfired, to a certain extent. In his attempt to lure Romney into a heated interaction, the President just looked petty. Consider how the President (again) criticised Romney for investing in companies that out sourced jobs to China. Governor

Romney just responded with "attacking me in not an agenda" and carried on arguing his points.

Another example; when the topic of military spending came up, Governor Romney pointed out that the US Navy hasn't been as small as it is today in decades and that the Air Force is both the smallest and oldest it's been in the service's entire history. The President flippantly says "we also have fewer horses and bayonets" since 1917 before lecturing the Governor on advance Naval Warfare; "We have these things called aircraft carriers, where planes land on them. We have these ships that go under water, nuclear submarines."

There would have been many ways to attack the President on this quip; US Special Forces rode horses into combat in Afghanistan in 2001, the US Army

and Marine Corps still issues each member with a bayonet. Has so much changed in 90 years that the Navy doesn't need ships? Is their job now to make "the Muslim world feel good" like NASA? There's the hilarity of the fact that a man who called a US Navy Corpsman (core-man) a "corpse-man" not once, not twice but four times in the same speech could lecture anyone on the US military. But again the Governor just went on arguing the facts making the President look like a child.

Among lawyers there is a saying that goes 'when you have the facts, argue the facts. When you have the law, argue the law. When you have neither, just keep arguing.' I'll let you, dear reader, conclude which of those boxes President Obama fits in.

Former Frog Reveals Extent Of Campus Witchcraft

The Crow's Nest

The student body was literally frothing at the mouth this week from the effects of an unfolding witchcraft scandal. It is believed the frothing is a result of a witches' curse which was descended on campus thanks to one man, who until recently resided under the Living Bridge. This anonymous and therefore cowardly whistleblower, known only as Mr F, reported to An Focal that he had spent the last six months living as a frog on the north side of campus. While this life was not especially unpleasant, it did cause him to miss all of last semester's exams. Mr F points the finger squarely at witches, whom he claims are ubiquitous on campus. Mr F's sudden transformation back into a human has been attributed to the recent burning at the stake of known bride of Satan, Maggie Broomhandle. Ms Broomhandle was sentenced to burn by the LIT students' union last week during one of the IT's regular witch trials.

"This is absolute rubbish," said Mildred Newt, president of UL's Society of Hags and Crones, "Witches are most certainly not responsible for the transformation of Mr F. It's simply the typical reaction of people who don't understand how we hags and crones operate. If he'd crossed us, he'd be dead. We wouldn't bother turning him into an amphibian." Ms Newt then cackled, swirled around in her cloak, hopped on a broomstick and flew off. She was later observed poisoning local wells.

The response of the Students' Union has been muted. "Look, we have no reason to suspect there's any Satanic conspiracy here," said Welfare Officer Cathal Ronan, while sharpening a rune-covered knife against a whetstone.



"Witches are people too and they have rights. Particularly, they have the right to devour children."

Mr F has since returned to classes and is expected to think of some other bizarre excuse to avoid exams in short order.

In other news, the awards keep on coming for UL in its 40th year. Not content with the media attention so far, UL's press moghuls arranged to publicise our institution's birthday by piggybacking on the popularity of

another organisation, the UN. The plan, it seems, was for some cunning co-op student, currently on placement at the General Assembly, to replace a diplomat's speech with one extolling the virtues of our little university. Unfortunately, the diplomat in question was the ambassador from Iran, who had intended to deliver a speech condemning some Zionist conspiracy or other. Somewhat miffed, the Iranian authorities threatened escalation. Luckily, the situation was resolved

by the skilled negotiations of Prof Don Barry, who even convinced the Iranians to fund the library extension. The Ayatollah Khomeini Wing of the library is expected to open by 2014.

And finally, with the anniversary celebrations well under way, a large number of geriatrics are coming to campus this week to mourn the youth they wasted. These elderly individuals, many of whom have jobs and children, will take time out of their tedious schedules to remember what it was

like before the shackles of life weighed them down and broke their spirits. We are glad that we young people can give up some of our vigour and vivacity to remind older generations of the best times of their lives. And also remind them of the last recession. Just in case they forgot.

Dear Angie...

Dear Angie,

I am to undergo heart surgery and I have a sneaking suspicion that my boyfriend is the donor. He always says that I have his heart, no matter what. But would accepting his generosity on this occasion be going too far? Where's the line?

gurl

Dear Furious,

Dear Girl,

First of all, when it comes to making this decision you're going to have leave your heart out of it, so to speak. Yes, yes, I know, the delicious irony is not lost on me! In all seriousness though, this is a decision which should be taken in a completely rational manner and not ruled by the emotions. The initial step in making any important decision is to be as informed about the decision as possible. What are the options? What are the consequences of taking each option? All of these factors need to be weighed up and balanced with each other. In your case the first step you need to take is to confront your boyfriend and see if he is indeed the heart donor. Think about it, I

have heard many similar tales on the internet of boys donating their hearts to their girlfriends, and then making the discovery that they themselves can't live without their hearts (which is a bit late to be making this discovery but there you go). These stories that you find on the internet, likalicious is my personal favourite source for romantic stories, are all very short and one-dimensional. Often when I like them and put them up on my page I am left with more questions than answers and more likes from Christine LaGarde than I know what to do with. Why doesn't anybody get a pacemaker? Is the first question that springs to my mind. Why has nobody had a conversation about this serious life changing operation, and what kind of doctor is taking hearts from live donors? I'm pretty sure this flouts the Hippocratic oath. But these stories aren't real. They are romantic and exaggerated, but they are not real. Maybe this is an opportunity for you to re-evaluate your relationship with your boyfriend. If he is making drastic decisions that affect the both of you and he is not consulting you then perhaps your relationship isn't as strong as it seems. Perhaps both of you are not in fact equal partners

at the table. I myself have had many relationships like that. Often it ends up with me having to make unilateral decisions for others. They complain about the fact that I have had to make decisions for them, but at the same time how can they expect to make decisions when they haven't been involved in the decision making process? I'll let you in on a little secret, I personally hate making decisions for other people. Its easily the most difficult part of my job. Unfortunately, having to make tough decisions is one of the responsibilities of a leader. People may say that I take great joy in making a decision, appointing a representative to the ECB, bailing out a bank or indeed writing off 50% of the debt of a nation. It may appear that I enjoy to stride on the world stage, However, to be frank, I hate having the responsibility for these decisions. Sometimes, before a big conference, I will lie awake at night and hoping that this will be the conference when I'm not the strongest player in the room. I anticipate the day when I can sit down at a decision making meeting with an equal sitting across the table from me, because it's so much easier to make a choice when all the parties are involved in the correct and proper



process. That's why I have such a good friend in Christine LaGarde. She is my equal when we sit down together, and we can talk things over as equals, state our own points of view, generate ideas (some of my best ideas have come after a few alderhumpen of pilsner. In fact, as I recall, it was during one of these 'idea sessions' that I decided that it would be a good idea to get someone to offer Mr.Kenny 'European of the year'. Me and Chrissy rang up a publishing company and asked them to do it, then sat back and watched the news to see the results of our little joke. Laugh? We certainly did!)

In conclusion dear reader, if you need

your boyfriend's heart, then by all means take it. Just ensure that everyone involved is aware of the consequences of the action that you eventually decide on, and remember, everyone involved is entitled to have a part in the decision making process

Grosses küssen

Grosses Küssen,
Angie x

AN FOCAL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Editor, UL Students' Union, Castletroy, Limerick. T: 0860435304 E: darragh.roche@ul.ie W: www.anfocal.ie
An Focal endeavours to accommodate all letters as far as legally possible. All parties have the right of reply to letters printed herein.

Dear Editor,

Remember back in the day when Halloween used to be all spooky and scary and we used to dress up as witches or ghosts or what not? Is it just me or is it more stressful trying to find a costume nowadays than when we were younger? The auld bin bag with a crap plastic mask was always a favourite in our house-(the mammy was a bit of a cheap skate.) Nowadays Halloween is basically, to quote the wise words of Mean Girls, "the one day a year when a girl can dress up like a total slut and no other girls can say anything else about it".

Don't get me wrong, I'm no stranger to these costumes, last year I was Minnie Mouse complete with black shorts underneath as half the dress didn't cover me arse and to be honest lads no one needed to see that - not a pretty sight!!! Some of the outfits are cute and lots of people like the chance to dress up in their cutsie little costumes and have a bitta craic but then again some of the "sexy" outfits are absolutely ridiculous. The other day while taking a break from some em college work (ahem...) meself and one of the girls started looking up costumes on the internet which resulted in such costumes as a "sexy" hamburger.... Don't get me wrong I faaair like a superdine chicken burger after a night in the lodge but sexy is not a word I would

associate with a burger, then again maybe that's just me. There was also a clown costume which guaranteed "to get compliments not laughs".... Now call me old-fashioned or stupid but is that not the whole point of a clown? No??

So after a few hours of searching we got to thinking about making our own costumes. It seemed like an ingenious idea, creative, cheap and no one would have our costume, what could go wrong? Lots apparently... first of all we put our idea to the boys we live with. It went a little like this; get a pair of jeans or shorts and completely cover them with packets of smarties then get a white t-shirt and write "smarty pants". We thought we were hilarious, creative masterminds and all that craic... The lads however, thought we were off our heads; apparently our idea was plain embarrassing. So after a bit of thought and realising we were way too lazy to follow through with our idea as well as the fact that sitting down in those costumes might be a pain in the arse (literally-we'd be sitting on loads of little cardboard boxes like) we decided to go down the old-fashioned road of a trip to the costume shop.

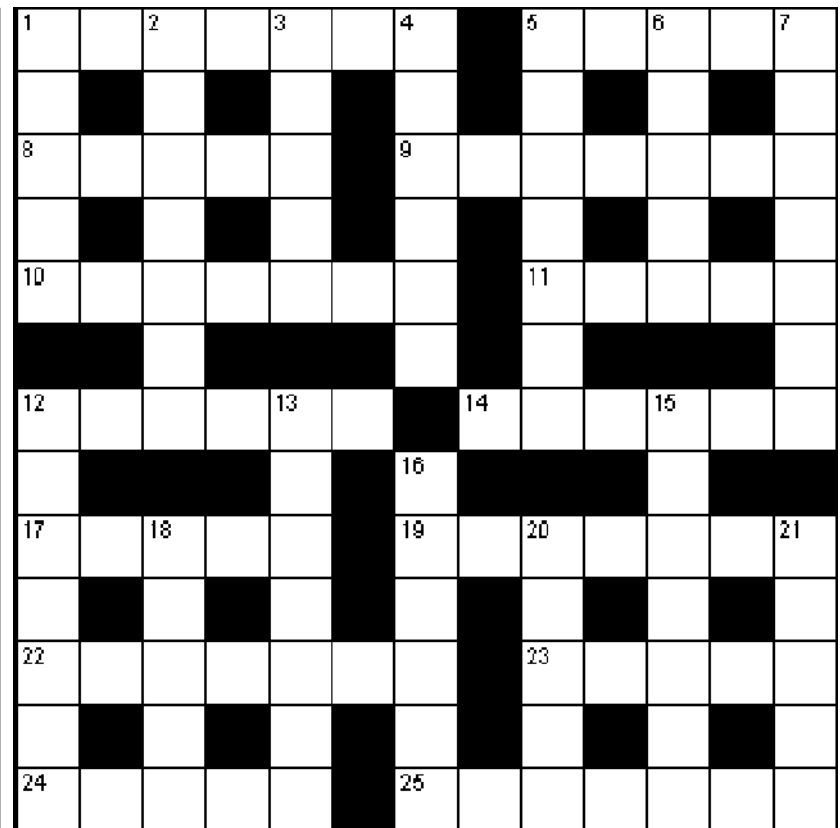
Then came the best idea yet. As we stood there in Glitzy Bits possibly the best costume I have ever seen IN MY LIFE appeared from behind the counter. It was a fork

with other cutlery pieces beside it. Our heads started racing with the possibilities. Of course we knew it was guaranteed we would NOT be getting the shift, but we made a plan which made the sacrifice of the shift worth it. I'd ask people could I spoon them while she would come up and say spooning leads to forking; obviously we thought we were hilarious. (Although in hindsight we probably sounded like simpletons in the packed costume shop) And then came the major disappointment, the sales assistant (when she had finished laughing at us) kindly told us there was no spoon, it was just a knife and fork. We were devastated, knifing was not half as funny as spooning (and sounded a lot more psychotic).

So dear editor, looks like I'll be doing Where's Wally this year. Not the most original, I'm guessing there'll be between 10 to 20 other Wally's in the Lodge but it's cheap as chips and my arse isn't out.... Sure what more could ya want from a costume??

Yours sincerely,

Mary O' Laughlin



CLUES

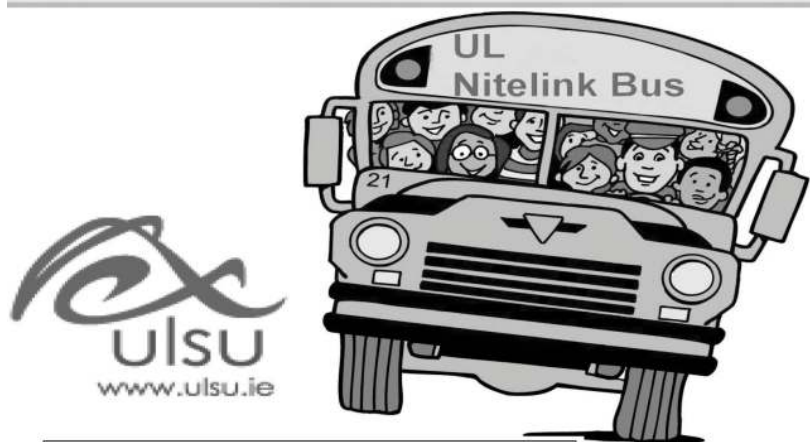
Across

- 1. Quantify (7)
- 5. Mindful (5)
- 8. Changed location (5)
- 9. Pyrogenic (7)
- 10. Fundamental (7)
- 11. Languish (5)
- 12. Remit in advance (6)
- 14. Recommendation (6)
- 17. Utter (5)
- 19. Traversed (7)
- 22. Trap (7)
- 23. Precise (5)
- 24. Velocity (5)
- 25. Farm vehicle (7)

Down

- 1. Imitate (5)
- 2. Go forward (7)
- 3. Below (5)
- 4. Comestible (6)
- 5. Irritated (7)
- 6. Fragrance (5)
- 7. Most vital part of an idea (7)
- 12. Own (7)
- 13. Clumsy (7)
- 15. Occurring with no delay (7)
- 16. Dialect (6)
- 18. Follow or result (5)
- 20. Greek letter (5)
- 21. Dissuade (5)

Student Nitelink Bus



○	Cappavilla Village	19.00	20.00	21.00	22.00	23.00
○	Thomond Village	19.05	20.05	21.05	22.05	23.05
○	Dromroe Village	19.10	20.10	21.10	22.10	23.10
○	Stables Arch	19.15	20.15	21.15	22.15	23.15
○	Kilmurry Lodge	19.25	20.25	21.25	22.25	23.25
○	Brookfield / Groody	19.30	20.30	21.30	22.30	23.30
○	City Centre -Arthurs Quay	19.40	20.40	21.40	22.40	23.40

Introducing a new hourly bus service for students going from UL's north campus and Students centre to the Kilmurry Lodge Hotel, Groody, Brookfield and Limerick City Centre 7pm to 11pm [EX-Cappavilla] every Mon, Tue, Wed and Thurs nights (Semester weeks).



Mike Hynan Coaches

**Knock Knock, open wide,
See what's on the other side
Knock knock, anymore,
Come with me through the magic door.**

Want to find out whats behind the Magic Door...

Pop down to



The Mill Bar, Annacotty

And find out...!

UL Students and Staff,
Now receive a 10% discount on our Evening Menu 3-8pm Mon - Sun

(production of staff or student card required, not available with other promotions)

Follow us on Facebook /TheMillBarAnnacotty and Twitter @millbarlimerick for upcoming details of competitions and Oktoberfest!

Condom: This Is Your Life

Barbara Ross

For most, condoms are just a matter of course when getting down and dirty but where did they come from? National Condom Week took place from 15-21 of October so let's celebrate the life of the humble condom.

Condom use can be traced back several thousand years ago to around 1000 BC. Ancient Egyptians wore linen sheaths but it is unclear as to whether they wore these condom-like sheaths for protection or for ritual. The earliest evidence of condom use in Europe comes from scenes in cave paintings at Combarelles in France dating from 100-200 A.D.

In Italy during the 1500s, linen sheaths were used for prevention of infection, and later for the prevention of pregnancy. In 1844 Goodyear and Hancock (yes, these are their real names!) began to mass-produce condoms made out of vulcanized rubber, which is a stronger, more elastic material.

The first advertisement for condoms was published in The New York Times in 1861. The advertisements were for "Dr. Power's French Preventatives." In America in 1873, The Comstock Law was passed prohibiting the advertising of any sort of birth control and it also allowed the postal service to confiscate condoms sold through the mail.

The first latex condom was produced in the 1880s, although it wasn't until the 1930s that they were in widespread use. In the early 1900s social hygienists fought to prohibit the use of condoms by Americans, resulting in World War I U.S. troops having the highest rate of STDs at over 70%!

The sexual revolution of the '60s resulted in a decline in condom use as more and more youth practiced free



love without condom usage. The 80s identified HIV, the virus that causes AIDS and the Surgeon General stated that other than abstinence, the most effective way to protect against HIV is to use a latex condom each and every time you have sex.

Contraceptives were only made legal in

Ireland in 1985 due to the protestations of the Catholic Church who thought they would lead to the moral decay of Ireland. Little did they know, no help was needed in this area. The 1990s brought with it the stars of the condom world including coloured condoms, ribbed condoms, studded condoms,

flavoured condoms, glow-in-the-dark condoms and large condoms, as well as the first polyurethane condom.

The naming of the condom is a bit of a mystery. Some believe it was named after "Dr. Condom," who supplied King Charles II of England with animal tissue sheaths. Others believe the name

came from a "Dr. Condon" or "Colonel Cundum." Most likely it came from the Latin word "condom," which means "receptacle."

Condom, this is your life and we thank you for it.

Issues With Celebrity Advertising

Emily Maree
Fashion Editor

Once upon a time, the copy of Vogue or Elle on your coffee table was full of unknown and unbelievably beautiful women that no one had ever heard of. Unless you were a supermodel who created her own brand like Elle MacPherson or Naomi Campbell, you were a nameless entity who was just employed to make the clothes look incredible and was paid handsomely for the privilege.

These days, every model worth their salt is a household name, from Arizona Muse to Freja Beha Erichsen. Even the old familiars like Kate Moss are dabbling not only in fashion but other areas too. But in the last few years, designers have become tired of the same old supermodel faces and have started using people they think the public will relate to: celebrities.

In today's climate, you're not a celebrity unless you endorse something and everyone is getting in on the action. Jennifer Lawrence from the Hunger Games, after having a spectacular few months of Hollywood fame, has landed herself one of the biggest endorsement deals on the planet: becoming the face of Dior, following in the footsteps of big names like Mila Kunis, Natalie Portman and Marion Cotillard.

Kristen Stewart, despite all the bad press she's been receiving, has

landed on her feet on the advertising front. The Twilight Saga star is the face of Florabotanica, a fragrance from Balenciaga and receives a huge paycheck for standing in her usual sullen way in a floral dress. Not my idea of good advertising but apparently it works!

Newlywed Blake Lively has had her fair share of endorsement deals but her adverts for Gucci Première have made her infamous. Wearing a gown that looks like she has been dipped in gold, girls in any way impressionable have tripped over themselves to buy the new perfume. Whether it smells good or not, the idea is every time they spray themselves, they'll smell like Blake Lively. Who wouldn't want that?

Even the men are getting in on the action Andre 3000 from Outkast is now strutting his manicured facial hair around for Gillette and I'm sure you've all seen the new adverts for Chanel No. 5 with Brad Pitt talking absolute muck to the camera about anything but the actual fragrance. The point of these celebrity advertisements is that it doesn't matter what they say or do, as long as you're famous, that's all that matters.

But can this invasion of celebrity advertising be good for our pockets or minds? I, for one, would buy a product if it was Jennifer Lawrence or an unknown name modeling but this isn't a case for many others. In a society as



impressionable as ours is today and in a time when money means a lot more when you finally have some, is it fair for brands to tease us with this advertising, with the promise that once you buy it, you'll be able to smell or look or strut

like that celebrity on the pages of your magazine?

I say not! Bring back the days when the unknown wore the clothes we coveted or had the hair we wanted because at least then, we'll be buying

it for ourselves and not to look like an impossibly airbrushed movie star!

If You Can't Do It, Fake It

Sophie McDermott

Tanning can be the most complex and stressing part of getting ready for the day or night. We like to experiment with different types and methods of tanning to find the one that best suits us personally, however, this can go disastrously wrong and leave you looking like a ginger zebra for the next couple of days. Many people have different types of skin such as sensitive, dry or oily and this makes it harder to take friends' advice on the best tan on the market.

Tanning products that work don't have to leave you without rent money as they don't need to be top of the range. Many tanning products that people of all skin types swear by can be picked up in your local supermarket for great value.

TanOrganic: As well as being a tan that is guaranteed to not turn you a shade of tangerine, TanOrganic is the only tan in Ireland that is eco-friendly and best of all, uses natural ingredients that won't irritate sensitive skin. For people suffering with skin conditions such as eczema, this tan comes highly recommended as it won't leave your skin blotchy and dry. It can be bought in various pharmacies or online for €20.

Fake Bake: This tan has it all; it appears instantly and stays, giving you a deep tan for a few days. It's a wash off tan, that doesn't wash off. Although, its price range may be a bit too steep for college students at €28, this tan is worth the investment and a bottle can last you for ages if used with care. This tan is quick and easy and worth €100.

Rimmel Sun Shimmer: Not everyone wants to be bronzed all the time and



only want a temporary glow to get through an event or a night out. For these people, Rimmel Sun Shimmer is definitely for you! It's wash off so you can go back to your naturally beautiful pale self whenever you like. Retailled

at €7.92 from most pharmacies in Ireland, it's cheap as chips and will last for a long time.

St. Moriz: While Penneys may be the go-to for clothes and jewellery, we may be a bit wary of buying their fake

tan for €5. It just sounds too good to be true. But from personal experience and from the experiences of friends, St. Moriz is the godsend of tans. It's non-streaky due to the fact that you can see exactly where you're applying

it. It comes up instantly and if left on overnight, you could wash any of the excess tan anyway to leave you with a golden glow that even Cheryl Cole would be jealous of.

What To Wear Next Season

Sarah O'Dwyer

Every season we wonder what the four paramount fashion weeks will cast up in terms of trends and for spring/summer 2013 there is as much to work with as every season before. So, here are the key trends you'll be wearing next season.

Floral prints were seen on the London, Milan and Paris catwalks. The prints are big and bold this season, in comparison to last years' minute prints. Similar to the trends seen on the London catwalks last year, floral prints bloomed in Milan this year, with the Bluegirl and Just Cavalli collections presenting a selection of exquisite chiffon flowers painted on to lightweight fabric. Opting for the oriental look, Etro and Marni displayed kimono-style jackets and Prada looked to the sixties for inspiration, displaying Mary Quant style flower prints on outerwear pieces.

A dominating trend across the fashion capitals this season was safari style. A new twist was given to the traditional camouflage as Italy's finest designers like Ferragamo and Emporio Armani fused utility style jackets with classic khaki and beige safari shorts and belted skirts. A new utility style was shown in all of the fashion weeks, with designers sending the models down the catwalk in military-style uniforms. It was Felipe Oliveira Baptista who truly defined the trend with his khaki utility

clad collection.

Stripes also made an appearance at all of the fashion weeks. In London, PPQ went for bold horizontal stripes, as did Christian Dior in Paris. Leading designers like Dolce & Gabbana, Fendi and Moschino sent models down the catwalk in bold stripy summer dresses, bright blocked matching tailored skirt ensembles and long flashy blouses respectively.

Unlike the classic spring/summer nautical stripes, this season's tones are all about bright colours such as orange, blue and yellow. Tommy Hilfiger gave stripes a very modern look by colouring them and placing them onto suits for women. However, designers like Alexander Wang and DKNY took a different approach with the pattern. No matter what form they may take, stripes are guaranteed to be a frontrunner this spring.

Known for their great craftsmanship, Gucci, Roberto Cavalli, Versace and Bottega Veneta showed off their extraordinary skills presenting embroidered lace collections for S/S 2013. Favouring black this season, Bottega Veneta wowed their fashionable crowd with stunning embroidered lace fitted dresses. In contrast, Roberto Cavalli produced delicate embroidered lace trousers and blouses and similarly, Versace opted for neutral colours to show the trend. Nude embroidered lace hot pants and cropped top sets, complete with matching kimonos,



were just some of the highlights.

Finally, sea green shone through as the key colour for S/S 2013, especially at Milan Fashion Week. Giorgio Armani, Gucci and Missoni all included some of the shade in their collections. At Gucci, the catwalk sparkled with gorgeous

bright sea green silk gowns as the show highlights. Giorgio Armani and Missoni had pieces shimmering in sea green as both designers played with glittering fabrics, clearly inspired by exotic fish. Different variations of the colour were present in many shows but

they were all undeniably ocean themed, which is perfect for the holiday season.

These are the trends that emerged to the fore for the Spring/Summer 2013 season from London, New York, Milan and Paris fashion weeks.

Cookery Corner: Carrot Cake Cookies

Barbara Ross

Carrots do not only make you see in the dark but they are also great for a sweet treat! Perfect for cuddling up in front of the fire, these carrot cake cookies will make you forget about the wind and rain. Don't be intimidated by the list of ingredients, it is a super easy recipe. These cookies are great on their own or are more luxurious with the creamy icing.

These cookies should be small in diameter, especially if you want to sandwich them with the icing, as they can be quite heavy due to the deep flavour.

Ingredients:

6 ounces (ozs) of flour*
1 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp baking soda
½ tsp salt
4 ozs butter, softened
3 ozs granulated sugar
2 ½ ozs light brown sugar
1 large egg
½ teaspoon vanilla
5 ozs coarsely grated carrots
3 ozs walnuts chopped
3 ozs raisins
8 ozs cream cheese
3 ozs honey

Method:

Preheat the oven to 190°C and grease two baking sheets. Whisk together the flour, cinnamon, baking soda and salt in a bowl.

In a separate bowl, beat together butter, the two types of sugar, egg and vanilla until pale and fluffy. Mix in carrots, nuts and raisins then add flour mixture until just combined.

Drop 1 ½ tablespoons of the mixture per cookie 2 inches apart on the baking sheet and bake until lightly brown and springy to touch. This should take about 12-16 minutes depending on your oven.

Cool cookies on the baking sheets for 1 minute and transfer to a cooling rack to cool completely. For the icing, blend the cream cheese and honey in a food processor until smooth.

Once cooled, sandwich the flat side of the cookies together with a generous tablespoon of cream cheese filling.

*You may need more if the mixture is runny as you don't want them to spread.

(Original source: West Cork Cooks Cookbook)



Gimp Is The New Black

Emma Norris

Leather is an absolute style must this season, which is good news for the bondage fiends among you. Think dominatrixes, gimps and all things motorcycle chic going hand in hand with the fifty Shades of Grey theme that's so hot right now.

Leather is a good wardrobe staple that everyone needs to have unless you're an animal rights activist, in which case, it's an abomination. You need a decent leather belt, every day shoes, going out shoes, a timeless bag and a classic leather bomber jacket in your wardrobe because they go with absolutely everything. Or maybe that's just me and maybe I have inadvertently developed a fetish for a tanned hide.

Polyurethane is a cheap and cheerful alternative to leather but it won't last long and if you're really into fashion, you'll understand that, yes, trends come and go but some things never go out of fashion. A good wardrobe will have a white shirt, a blazer, a pencil skirt, some quality jeans and some key leather pieces. Kit your wardrobe out with some quality-made essentials and you can mix and match with current trends and buy these cheap if you want.

Most of what's on the high street now is faux leather – good news for your purse-strings and good news for those nuisance vegans floating around. You'll find peplum tops, skater skirts, leggings and some kinky knicker shorts and bralets if you really want to commit to



the leather trend.

After seasons of blinding bright hues and busy prints, fashion has turned a nouveau gothic corner. Tough black leather turned up at Proenza Schouler, Givenchy and Versace, where Guido Palau gave Donatella's model army Lisbeth Salander micro-fringe at this seasons catwalk shows.

Yves St Laurent has gone for a structured leather look with high-waisted trousers, big collar and slicked back hair, while Jean Paul Gautier has opted for an altogether more feminine feel with a cinched-in waist and thick sheep-skin lined jacket.

Androgynous girls and femme fatales alike can work this luxe trend with a few key pieces from Topshop, New Look or Penneys. ASOS is also always a great place to pick up some good quality pieces at very affordable prices.

Best Ways To Avoid A Cold This Winter

Sarah O'Dwyer

Having a cold means that you could have any one of over two hundred different strains of the virus. It is this fact that makes colds so hard to treat. In truth, it's safe to say that there is no definite cure for the cold. There are, however, a couple of simple steps you can take to boost your immune system to help fight off the cold; eat well and exercise regularly.

Both of these suggestions sound simple but in all honesty, most people delude themselves into thinking that they are already in control of both their diet and exercise, when in reality they are not. A diet rich in fruit and vegetables ensures the body is provided with the essential nutrients it needs to keep your immune system's defences up.

Sweets, chips and donuts taste fantastic but they're doing no good for your immune system. Your body needs a wide variety of nutritious food to fight off the common cold. But not all fats are bad for you. It's widely believed that high-fat diets suppress the immune system but this is not the case. Certain fats, like fish and nuts for example, can actually boost immune response, curbing the colds.

Fruits like oranges and chillies (yes, they're technically fruit) contain tons of vitamin C. Blueberries are packed with vitamin B. Both vitamins play a key role in the immune system. In general, look for foods that contain zinc, vitamins A, C, E, and B-6 and folic acid. All of them



have important influences on immune responses.

Chicken soup has been a popular cold treatment for centuries and surprisingly, it's recently been found that there is a scientific basis for faith in this traditional cure. Chicken soup acts as an anti-inflammatory and helps to accelerate the elimination of mucus.

Of course, it goes without saying that drinking plenty of water is essential; among many other things, it reduces the discomfort of a sore throat. Something which may surprise you, however, is the fact that a new study has found that there are immune boosting nutrients in tea and it also helps with skin cell regeneration.

On top of eating well, exercise also helps to keep colds to a minimum. Scientific studies show that moderate exercise helps to boost your immune system over time. However, overly intensive exercise can actually do more harm than good for your immune system, so don't overdo it.

A daily walk or workout routine will not only enhance your overall health but it will also strengthen your immune system. Something as simple as a walk every day or a daily cycle for example will leave you feeling refreshed and healthy. Time in the gym is also time well spent. So look after your body and try not to get a cold this winter!

NFL Mid-Season Report: How Is Your Team Fairing?

Garry Irwin

With most of the teams having played half a season, now is a good time to look at how each is coping so far. If we look at each of the 32 teams we can see if your team needs to sack its defensive coach or if that rookie draft pick is helping your side make a bid for the playoffs?

Bottom Eight

Browns: there is some young talent in Cleveland but they aren't going to win many games this season. **Jacksonville:** beset by injuries but even when fit the Jaguars struggle to compete. **Kansas City:** when Chiefs QB Matt Cassel was injured they were lucky to get on the scoreboard, at least with him they have a slim chance. **Carolina:** every week it seems the Panthers find a way to lose, have been very disappointing so far.

Oakland: the Raiders could surprise everyone in a poor American Conference West but probably not! **Tampa Bay:** they are competing but will lose more than they win at the moment. **Indianapolis:** they have already won more games than last season, maybe they shouldn't be down here? **New York Jets:** Sanchez has been throwing interceptions and fumbling for weeks, is it time for Tebow to drive this team forward?

Middle Tier

New Orleans: Saints seem to be coming together after a terrible start. **Detroit:** the Lions were always gonna find things tough in the NFC North. **Buffalo:** if you see the Bills defensive line wandering around blindly somewhere, please direct them back to the Ralph Wilson Stadium. **San Diego:** if the Chargers can keep it

together, they could make a wildcard spot. **Cincinnati:** after a good start, the Bengals seem to be imploding. **Tennessee:** being the second best team in the AFC South should see the Titans to the playoffs... maybe. **Arizona:** after a blistering start the Cardinals also seem to be imploding. **Dallas:** you never know which Romo will turn up for the Cowboys, but they have the talent.

Philadelphia: can a new defensive coordinator improve the Eagles chances? **Miami:** 'Fins fans would probably like to see some more offensive options before booking playoff tickets. **St. Louis:** is Sam Bradford turning into a decent Quarterback? **Pittsburgh:** the Steelers haven't gone away you know! **Denver:** Payton Manning should see the Broncos to the play-offs. **New England:** the Patriots need Tom Brady back to his best because the defence can be woeful more often than not. **Minnesota:** can the Vikings keep this purple patch going? **Seattle:** if the Seahawks had an offence that could put points on the board, they would be one of the favourites for the Super Bowl.

Eight To Beat

Baltimore: injuries may have put paid to any chance the Ravens had of going all the way this year. **Chicago:** a solid defence is helping the Bears to a winning season. **Washington:** maybe this is a season too early for RGIII and the Redskins. **Green Bay:** if you want to beat the Packers you are going to have to put up 40-50 points because Aaron Rodgers is on fire at the moment.

New York Giants: win follows win for the Giants in a tough NFC North. **San Francisco:** the 49ers can blow hot and cold but it's hot more than not these days. **Houston:** if the Texans second half of the season is as good as the first



Matt Ryan of the Atlanta Falcons.

they will be tough to stop come play-off time. **Atlanta:** the Falcons were the longest undefeated team in the NFL, you can't argue with that.

The beauty of the NFL is that even

teams who are bottom feeders at the moment can still make a run and achieve a playoff spot or a wildcard place. It's too early to say which side will lift the Vince Lombardi trophy but

it will be interesting to see the week-to-week alterations and transformations from now until February.

No Question About That!

Andrew Cunneen

What justifies sacking a manager in modern football? Week in, week out, managers all over the world are being sacked. For them, they wish everything was as simple as a computer game makes out – don't meet your objectives and you're gone. But has modern football overstepped a line regarding the cutting of gaffers for other reasons?

To try and understand the complexity of the decisions, let's put ourselves in the shoes of the people involved in the decision: the board, the fans, and the media.

Let's contextualise. Historically, the pre-season minimum expectations were the threshold in which you needed to find yourself on the right side of, come season's end, to extend your term in charge. Lately, even securing these goals aren't enough. While this may seem rash, it is the sad reality but given the amount of money in the modern game, the board must act quickly to protect their own interests.

The perfect case of this was André

Villas-Boas. Let's be honest, you don't sign a young manager and expect him to be an instant success; that ability comes with age and experience and is an extremely difficult trait to adopt. AVB probably would have established a footballing philosophy, showed how the youth systems should play the game and slowly build up the club based on his own blueprints. A few bad results were the end of the line for AVB and his proposed plan was torn up in front of him. Let's hope he gets a bit more time at Tottenham then.

The fans have a massive say in who runs the club as well, of course. While these views are, for the most part, based on a mixture of results and attitude, certain jobs won't even give you a brief, given the sheer size of the franchise you have decided to take over – destination Madrid. José Mourinho had to tackle the sheer might of FC Barcelona; the world's most talented footballing side. José, as a manager, may not be the most attractive in terms of style, but he is, for me, the best in the world. Bringing instant success

in England, in Italy and managing to overcome the Catalan world beaters in Spain. Despite all this, Mourinho was slammed by the fans of the club, due to the legacy of good football because he liked to shake things up and apply a more direct, aggressive style. Football is a results business, it always has been.

Perhaps the most severe of all factors is the media. You'll have sensationalist British pundits claiming the English press is the most interfering, most intruding and most opinionated in Europe – I assure you, they are not. Despite this, the power they wield is extremely significant. Two fine examples of media-based opinions becoming mainstream public perceptions are found with Roberto Di Matteo and Giovanni Trapattoni. The former, who has taken over in a caretaker role following the departure of the aforementioned AVB, was disliked from the off by the media. The man is often seen as boring and is portrayed by the press as a shy schoolboy surrounded by managers with years of experience. I had never

been more delighted than when Didier Drogba slotted that penalty in Munich. I thought, finally, a manager who proves people wrong will shut the media up.

Within days of him leading Chelsea to a European Cup success, various publications had stories of bigger names in the world of management floating through their headlines. The beginning of this season justifies sticking by a man who gets results.

Having spent years around Irish pubs, despite my young age, I have come to realise that the average bar-stooler has a limited knowledge of anything tactical, and furthermore, anything logical. His opinions are always based on the back-page of an exaggerated tabloid and that very paper is never far from his beer mat. Giovanni Trapattoni has a very limited amount of ability to work with. He oversaw a qualification to a major tournament for the first time in ten years and was only denied progression to another due to a bit of French improvisation that I won't dare to mention in fear of sounding like a

broken record.

The big question is: how can some people honestly say the man should be sacked? Having won his lion's share of trophies worldwide, he would have appeared to have lost the dressing room. If your manager has gotten you to platforms you never thought you could reach and has achieved more than you ever could have as a player, then you sit down and do what you're told.

The most ironic part of all this, is the subtle change in attitude of the Irish public when their nation went to the Faroe Islands; a nation consisting of the population of Roscommon and ran out 4-1 victors. See my point? Management is always a hot topic but for once, please let the proof be in the pudding rather than basing your opinion on the sensationalist back pages.

Cosmopolitan Comeback Kings Of New York City

Darren Mulryan

It's almost 27 years since the beautiful game graced the five boroughs of New York City. The Cosmos soccer team had written history with its star studded footballers gracing the North American soccer league in the 70's and 80's. The signing of multi winning world cup holder Pele put a twinkle in the city's eye along with Franz Beckenbauer and Carlos Alberto. The style of football was attractive and brought considerable interest from the media. There is no question that the golden era of soccer in the United States had hit Everest peaks in the early eighties with sell-out crowds and Hollywood A-listers having post game cocktails in the club lounge.

The cosmos brought a confidence and a feel good factor that was badly needed in a City crippled by crack addiction and mass riots against the police department. All good parties must come to an end however and shortly after the cosmos dominance came the retirement of star man Pele in 84'. The league wasn't the same after that. Crowds drastically faded in obscurity and the hype and frenzy that surrounded soccer diminished completely when the NASL folded in 1984.

Many years have passed since. Major League Soccer was founded in 1996 after the United States hosted the World Cup in 94'. This major event reinvigorated the country's interest and had a knock on effect shortly after. The world cup was a massive factor in introducing the MLS to a country dominated by Football and Baseball.

The 90's passed and the league proved to be financially sustainable with over a dozen teams participating. The New York Metro Stars were one of the founding teams in the league and went under a name change in 2005, now known as the NY Red Bulls. This satisfied the hunger for soccer in the city but word on the subways and taxis were all about the emergence of a former giant.

Enter an English based consortium with a dream to revitalise the face of New York soccer. Finally, a team to challenge the Red Bulls dominance of the Eastern Conference. These dreams became a reality in 2009 as Pele confirmed plans to introduce the Cosmos into the NASL by the 2013 season. Former Manchester United legend Eric Cantona has done great work as the clubs ambassador by creating the clubs impressive youth development system. Money has been pumped into the underage categories and the club are focused on sustainable growth based on local youth players. The team will also play in Hofstra University stadium, which was their home for the 72' and 73' season when they kick off next year.

The future however is very much in the blueprints. Plans are now in place for a \$300 million stadium in the borough of Queens. The development is being ushered by MLS commissioner Don Garber. Garber is credited with increased fan attendance in the MLS and increasing the competitive nature of the game in a financially controlled league. However Garbers plans are not welcomed by all in the city. Many NYRB fans and officials are growing



Twice in a lifetime: The New York Cosmos are back in the Big Apple.

concerned at the development of the stadium which may become permanent home of the Cosmos in the future.

Red Bull Arena is located in Harrison, New Jersey and can be accessed from the city, however with the possible development in Corona Park taking place, casual Red Bull fans might commute on the much shorter subway journey to Queens. This may result in

lower gate receipts in Red Bull Arena in the coming years. There is no doubt NYRB have at least a decade of experience at the top level of soccer in the United States over the Cosmos. But Cantona and Co. will be in no rush to throw the current playoff contenders off their throne. All the tools are in place to succeed. Provided the Cosmos will be given the correct financial

backing and marketing prowess, it will only be a matter of time before they compete in the MLS. It is going to be an exciting period for soccer in the City over the coming years and with the nostalgia of the cosmic era returning to the Big Apple, the 27 year wait for the party to start again has finally come.

Iron Mike Finally Shows His Heart

Gary Whelan

"There's no one that can match me. My style is impetuous, my defence is impregnable and I'm just ferocious. I want your heart. I want to eat his children."

Iron Mike Tyson. The baddest man on the planet. The brawler from Brownsville, Brooklyn and unquestionably the most controversial boxer of all time.

He had it all during his reign as undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.

Explosive and destructive on an unprecedented level in the ring, 26 of his first 28 fights were won by knockout. 16 of these were in the first round. It was said that at the peak of his powers, if Mike Tyson hit an average Joe in the head, the only result would be decapitation.

Equally explosive and self-destructive outside the ring, Mike has been there and worn every controversial t-shirt ever made. He won over \$300 million and blew the lot, been jailed multiple times, attacked managers, there's been robberies, drugs and lots of violence. You have probably heard about all of his past crimes before.

Fast forward to 2012 and Mike Tyson is a very different human being.

Even Mike becomes upset now when continuously questioned about things he may have said or done 20 years ago.

He is now vegan, choosing to abstain from any products which are derived from animals. Ironic considering people used to describe him as being an animal. He is intelligent, articulate and loves studying philosophy. He also dedicates a lot of his time now to philanthropy even though his days of being super-rich are over.

Mike is also very much in demand from television shows such as Dancing With The Stars and The View. His street cred is all but gone with some of his reality TV appearances but you know what, he doesn't care and I guarantee you wouldn't rib him about it to his face!

I had the pleasure to meet him not once but twice on his recent trip to Limerick and he was an absolute gentleman. He shook hands and hugged a couple of thousand people in the space of 12 hours and every time his smile and small talk with each person was 100% genuine.

He kissed children and playfully bit peoples ears when posing for photos and even sang the Phil Collins track 'In The Air Tonight' on stage like he did in The Hangover.

As a kid in the 90's Mike was one of my



In the ring he was ruthless but now Iron Mike is a keen philanthropist.

idols, every fight he won and every bad thing that he did made me look up to him even more. Every time somebody said something bad, I defended him.

As an adult in 2012 he is still one of my idols but for completely different reasons. Now I actually feel proud of

him for the way in which he has turned his life around and proved so many people wrong.

So what does the future hold for Mike Tyson? Parent Teacher meetings? Weekends strolling around Bed Bath and Beyond with his family? Who

knows?! I doubt that even he knows, this new life is probably very new to him also but it's great to see him doing so well.

Wielding The Axe

Michael Ramsay

Football can be a cruel sport, not least when a man's livelihood is dealt another blow as his ruthless club wields the axe, forcing him to search for another job. When one takes on the role of a football manager, he knows that he must never get too comfortable in one setting. Over the last ten Premier League seasons, an incredible 50 managers have been handed their P45s and shown the door. Among them, a charismatic Portuguese lad who guided his side to six trophies during his three year stint, a Cockney 'geeza' who brought Champions League nights to his club for the first time in their history and a silver-haired fox who was a Steven Gerrard screamer away from winning the FA Cup.

Of course, while controversy may have surrounded these questionable axings, a case cannot be made for some of the deadwood including messrs Billy Davies, Terry Connor and Sammy Lee, who summoned a paltry two wins between them. This season, we have managed to make it to late October without a sacking, but I shall run through the shortlist of candidates who might be getting sweaty when they pass their respective chairmen in the corridor.

5) Sam Allardyce

One of the 'marmite' characters in football, Allardyce has brought a brand of football to the game that has proven effective over the last ten years or so. The former Limerick FC gaffer has enjoyed a career of consolidating Premier League statuses at almost every club but that hasn't stopped him receiving the 'heave-ho' on more than one occasion. With both sides in mid-table, Allardyce felt the cold sting of dismissal at both Newcastle

and Blackburn, in favour of a more attractive style of play. Both sides were relegated within 18 months. West Ham fans who are singing for Paolo di Canio, take note...

4) Roberto di Matteo

Yes, you're probably thinking this article has lost all credibility and have probably thrown away the paper now that I've listed the man who currently occupies the summit of the English league. However, take a quick second to remember which owner he is working for. The fact that he has been offered a one year contract after winning the FA Cup and Champions League in the space of three months, shows the reluctance of the trigger-happy Russian billionaire, Roman Abramovich, to appoint the guy who was deemed not good enough for West Brom in 2011. While Di Matteo is incorporating a fluid, sultry and above all, effective, way of playing, it won't take much to go wrong to give Roman his excuse. Once one Pep Guardiola gets tired of spending his Saturdays watching the X Factor, don't be surprised if Roman begins the initiation process.

3) Nigel Adkins

In 2010, Alan Pardew was sacked by a struggling Southampton side in League One, Newcastle were in the Championship and Nigel Adkins was plying his trade at Scunthorpe. Two years later, and an Alan Pardew-led Tyneside club finished 5th in the top-flight, while Adkins steered Southampton to successive promotions. Football doesn't make sense sometimes. However, it would be foolish to underestimate the job Adkins has performed at Southampton. However, football is a results business and there was no room for sentiment when similar promotion heroes such



as Phil Brown, Neil Warnock and Mick McCarthy were handed their compensation packages. Harsh as it may be, if Southampton continue to ship goals, the owners might find themselves with no alternative come Christmas.

2) Chris Hughton

One of the perennial nice guys of the sport, Chris Hughton received a barrage of support from all corners of the top-flight following his controversial sacking by Newcastle in December 2010. Having steered a club who were heading in the direction of the Titanic, he was let go in favour of the more experienced Alan Pardew, which created the annual storm of outrage on Tyneside. This time around, however, supporters probably wouldn't

be so surprised were he to be out of a job soon. Norwich City have been quite atrocious this season, shipping 17, and looking like relegation fodder already. The last game Norwich had played before Paul Lambert, they conceded seven at home to Colchester. With Lambert taking his miracles elsewhere, Hughton may have been left with an unassailable challenge.

1) Mark Hughes

It wasn't so long ago that Mark Hughes had been tipped to succeed Sir Alex Ferguson at Man United. Now, he is staring down the barrel of the gun at QPR. Fans are baying for blood, as their newly assembled squad lies at the foot of the Premier League and haven't shown much signs of improving. Mark Hughes was sacked by the lavishly rich

Arabs at Man City for drawing too often. Now, he may be shown the door for not drawing often enough.

The simple fact is that football is a harsh business. It speaks volumes that only three top-flight managers have managed to experience the last decade at one club. Memories are extremely short in this sport and previous miracles or achievements quickly evaporate in the minds of the men in the corporate boxes. Sooner or later, whether it's tomorrow, a year's time or longer, 95% of managers will be summoned to the chairman's office for that final conversation.

You either die a hero or you live long enough to see yourself become the villain.

The Lions: A Relic Of The Past

Eoghan Wallace

Unsurprisingly, Warren Gatland will coach the Lions on their tour of Australia next year. His duties as coach will take up all of his available time, which means he will not be overseeing Wales' defence of their Six Nations crown next spring. That responsibility will fall upon his assistant coach Rob Howley. The Lions have not won a series since the 1997 tour to South Africa and defeat Down Under would see the Lions lose four consecutive tours for the first time in their history. The question I pose is if the Lions tour is relevant in today's professional game or not. Is it merely a relic of the old days of amateurism?

If any tour of the professional era sums up what has become of the Lions then the disastrous 2005 tour to New Zealand is a painful example. It was up to Clive Woodward, fresh from Rugby World Cup success, to steer the Lions to victory. The team possessed one of the most experienced playing squads ever assembled and the largest backroom staff any Lions side had ever had. It was for these reasons that the team came under heavy criticism after losing the series. Woodward's reputation was sadly tarnished by the humiliating 3-0 drubbing suffered at the hands of

the All Blacks. The fact that the tour's most memorable moment was Brian O'Driscoll being brutally assaulted by Tana Umaga and Keven Mealamu tells you it was an unforgettable tour for all the wrong reasons.

The tours from the 1970s are looked upon as the side's golden period. The 1971 tour saw the Lions claim a historic 2-1 victory over New Zealand, the only time in their history the Lions have ever beaten the All Blacks in a series. The tour that succeeded it, three years later, has become part of rugby folklore. Captain Willie John McBride and his famously marauding 'Invincibles', a team that included such legendary names as Gareth Edwards, Mervyn Davies and Mike Gibson, finished the 1974 tour of South Africa undefeated winning three tests and drawing one. No subsequent tours have captured the public imagination quite as much as the 'Invincibles' did. Since that famous series victory 38 years ago the Lions have only won two tours from a possible nine.

Of course in the 1970s neither the Heineken Cup nor the Rugby World Cup existed yet. Competitions which have grown in prestige and have thrived in the professional era and needless to say have overtaken the Lions tour in importance. Who cares



Are the Lions merely a relic of the old days of amateurism?

how many Irish players make Gatland's squad next summer? I'd take another Irish Heineken Cup winner any other day. When Brian O'Driscoll retires, what will the biggest regret of his career be? Would it be losing three Lions tours? No, it would be having not made it further than the quarter-

finals of the Rugby World Cup with Ireland. The Lions tour may generate a certain amount of media buzz in a tour year but it is nothing more than a relic of the amateur era which generates nowhere near as much passion among the players or the fans as it once did. It also serves as a painful reminder of the

huge gulf in class between the British Isles, Ireland and the 'big three' in the southern hemisphere.

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LFC: Champions

Andrew Cunneen

Despite an exodus from the Premier Division that has exceeded eighteen years, Limerick Football Club are back in the big time and secured their promotion to the top flight last weekend.

Mervue United were the unlikely saviours for the Blues as they shocked Waterford United at the RSC to leave Waterford four points behind with just a single game to play. In what seemed like an anti-climax to most, Limerick won the title off the pitch but to the generation of fans who have been through thick and thin, winning the First Division title is all that matters.

The last time Limerick won the second tier of Irish Football, Sam Allardyce was the man in control. After a few failed attempts, it appeared as though Limerick would really struggle to get out of the division for quite some time. Since the move out of the Markets Field in 1987, Limerick, like Shamrock Rovers at the time, had failed to secure a place to call home. Travelling between Hogan Park in Rathbane, Jackman Park on Carey's Road and the home of Pike Rovers in Crossagalla, the club's instability was crystal clear to all those who supported them. This, in turn, made the club rather difficult to support.

Hope was rekindled for Limerick in the 2003 season when a playoff spot was obtained. Bringing the might of Derry City to Southill was never ideal, but the Shannonsiders drew nil-all in the home

leg, only to be comprehensively beaten at the Brandywell.

In what was a sick twist, Limerick finished the following season with twenty points and were placed bottom of the second tier. The future looked remarkably grim for the club after such a deflating year but given the nature of Irish football, apparent light at the end of the metaphorical tunnel was never going to be too far away.

Under the ownership of Danny Drew, 2006 was an exciting time to be supporting Limerick. Welcoming the visit of freshly-relegated Shamrock Rovers, Hogan Park played host to some fantastic clashes with the Dublin side. Despite being top of the league half way through the season, some controversial changes between board room and dressing room brought the title challenge to its knees as Limerick went on a winless run that exceeded eight games. Penultimately, Limerick finished fifth.

A new dawn at the club arrived in 2007 when Limerick were rebranded under the title of "Limerick 37". Manager Paul McGee brought in the best of the local talent and attendances rocketed. Once more, the Blues saw a title challenge fade to nothing as the might of Finn Harps and fierce Munster rivals Cobh Ramblers was too much for McGee's men.

The biggest emergency the club faced was in 2009, when, following the departure of Chairman Jack McCarthy, Limerick FC (reverted in the 2009 season to FC), were subject to a shortfall

in funds and bar a minor miracle, would be wound up by the high court. In the back row of that Strand Hotel function room sat Pat O'Sullivan.

Organising the club from top to bottom as well as installing proper structural arrangements, Pat O'Sullivan transformed Limerick soccer from a laughable entity to one of the finest run clubs in the league. This new lease of life was mirrored by the club's new instalment at managerial level. Former Shamrock Rovers and Kilkenny City boss Pat Scully took control at the club a few weeks prior to the takeover. His experience and know-how brought Limerick to an encouraging position in 2009, and again in 2010.

2011 was the year that Limerick were finally expected to launch a title challenge. While Limerick's intentions were of good merit, the likes of Shelbourne, Cork City and Monaghan United stood in their way. While Limerick only finished four points off top upon season's end, the Blues were placed fourth thanks to the awarding of three points to Monaghan United based on licensing agreement rules. While that pill was tough to swallow for the Blues, the following season would more than make up for it.

Limerick were finally promoted in 2012; finishing top ahead of challengers Waterford United and Longford Town. Having assembled a squad capable of competing for honours a division above their current level, Limerick set about their task in admirable fashion, despite the odd hiccup against Waterford,



Limerick will be playing top-flight football next season and more friendlies against attractive foreign opposition are expected at Thomond Park.

whom they lost all four games to. Limerick won all but one game they played against the sides outside the top three. This level of consistency was the deciding factor in where the league title went.

Limerick played their last First Division game on Saturday, October

13 at Jackman Park against Wexford Youths. After almost twenty years of pain, the presentation of the First Division trophy to captain Pat Purcell symbolised the end of Limerick's exodus from top-flight football in Ireland.

NBA Season Preview: Can Miami Heat Do It Over A Full Season?

Eoghan Wallace

That's the question that will be asked when this year's basketball season gets underway on October 30th. Last year saw nearly two months of games being scrapped as a lockout was implemented between the players and the owners. When things finally got underway at the end of December some teams were better prepared than others. The Heat eventually went all the way and beat the Thunder 4-1 to take their second NBA title in the finals in June.

There have been some big changes of personnel this year as teams try to compete and make the playoffs. In one of the biggest trades in NBA history, six time All-Star and three time defensive player of the year, Dwight Howard will leave the Orlando Magic and join the LA Lakers. He is joined in LA by Magic team mates Chris Duhon and Earl Clark. Landing in Orlando are Josh McRoberts, Christian Eyenga,

Maurice Harkless, Nikola Vucevic, Arron Afflalo, Al Harrington, plus they get improved draft picks. Harkless and Vucevic were Philadelphia players, so in turn the 76'ers received Jason Richardson and Andrew Bynum from Orlando and LA respectively. Afflalo and Harrington were previously Denver Nuggets teammates, so for that pair Denver received All-Star shooting guard Andre Iguodala from Philadelphia. We will soon find out if these new signings can gel in their new teams.

The other major move was the New Jersey Nets franchise that upped sticks and turned into the Brooklyn Nets. This sees the Nets return to the place where they were when they first entered the NBA in 1976, then known as the New York Nets. They play their first game in their new home, the Barclays Centre, on November 1st against their nearest neighbours the New York Knicks. It will be interesting to see if they can get the Brooklyn crowd behind them

against heavyweights the Knicks and the Celtics in the eastern Conference Atlantic Division. Plus you can't forget the 76's in that division either, who will hope to make a run for the playoffs.

Another team hopeful of making the playoffs should be Chicago, if Derrick Rose can get back from injury early enough. The Indiana Pacers will also hope to improve from last year where they ran the Heat close in the playoffs. The Heat themselves are still the best team in the East though and should make the playoffs with something to spare.

Over in the West you should keep an eye on the Dallas Mavericks who will hope to bounce back after a disappointing 2012. The Clippers normally play second fiddle to the Lakers in LA but that doesn't mean they can't make some noise in the playoffs this year. The Lakers themselves will aim to come out on top of the Big3 Western Conference teams but San Antonio and Oklahoma will have other ideas.



Dwight Howard will leave the Orlando Magic and join the LA Lakers for the new NBA season.

With the baseball over, the American football winding down and the ice hockey season in limbo, the NBA will be the only game in town for American

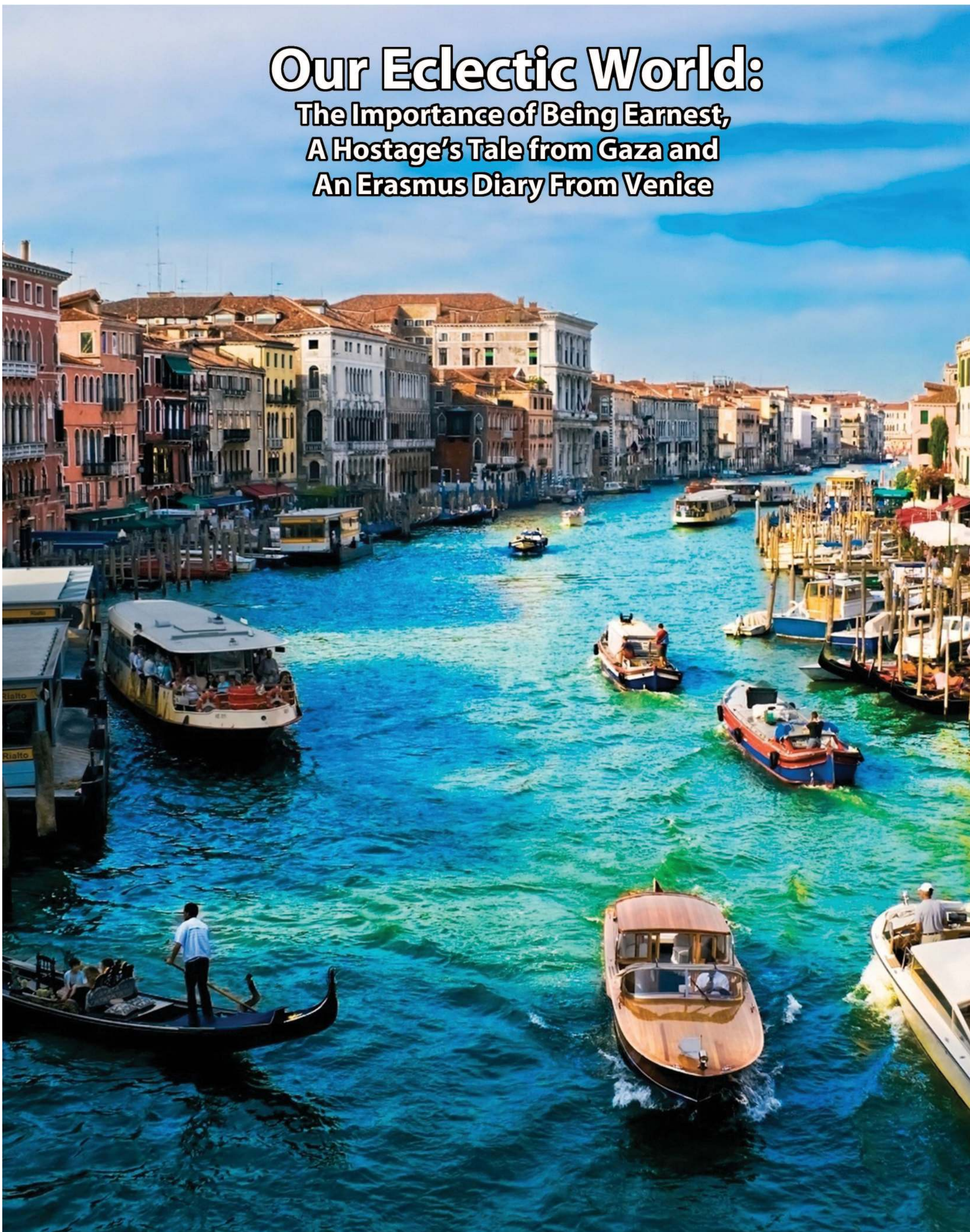
sports fans. Let's hope it can serve up some quality basketball action that makes up for the disappointing shortened season last year.

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Our Eclectic World: The Importance of Being Earnest, A Hostage's Tale from Gaza and An Erasmus Diary From Venice



The Importance Of Being Earnest Review

Darragh Hogan

The Importance Of Being Earnest is a title that is familiar to many people's ears. Despite people being familiar with it however, not many bother to actually read it. In spite of its relatively simple language and brevity, it doesn't seem to be a title many delve into nowadays for light reading. Admittedly, I did not encounter the text spontaneously but I have lately encountered it in class while on Erasmus in Sweden. I think it is a very entertaining play and felt obliged to give Oscar Wilde some credit where credit is due.

So what is the play about? It is set in London during the cusp of the nineteenth century. It is a commentary on the upper classes and how they are living in a terribly selfish and vain reality unfamiliar to the rest of the population. Wilde is an expert on human behaviour and comments on it in an ironic way, hilariously berating the upper classes with his wit. Mistaken identity is the main theme in the play.

The story revolves around the name Ernest. However, Ernest is a number of people: John Worthing, John Worthing's imaginary brother and Algernon Montcrieff. In short, Ernest does not exist but is rather the procreation of John's and Algernon's untruthful and wilde (sorry I couldn't resist) imaginations. As the pair create a subterfuge in order to impress the women in their lives who are in love with the name Ernest (yes it does sound ridiculous), they become more

and more tangled in the sticky web of lies they have spun. When the two meet whilst playing their phantom characters to different people, their lies start to catch up with them.

This deception created by Algernon and Jack is very relevant as of today. People are constantly distorting the truth and fabricate false realities for people to believe in, whether it is a little white lie or an invention of mammoth proportions. There are so many individuals desperate to trick others into believing their lives are far from mediocre. Interestingly enough, my main message is that it is actually important for people to be earnest so it's a very apt name for the characters and readers alike.

As always Mr Wilde is a master of language and plays with words in ways that surprise and entertain constantly. One example which I found very entertaining was during the exchange between Jack Worthing and Lady Bracknell when he explains how he 'lost' both of his parents to her in his early years. Lady Bracknell replies biting "To lose one parent may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness." There are many lines I would class as gems in this play. To mention a few: "I never travel without my diary. One should always have something sensational to read in the train." "If you are not too long, I will wait for you all my life" is also a classic.

Although the wordplay is genius, it is much more immersive to see the



play performed. After all, that is the medium in which it was meant to be seen. The 2002 version which my class watched has its merits and stars Rupert Everett and Colin Firth in the roles of Algernon and Jack respectively. They portrayed the flamboyant young dandies very convincingly in my eye, although maybe a tad too seriously for a comedy. One little thing that I found distracting was the sheer amount of extras employed in the film, as a crowd in which Algernon and Jack could

converse with each other amongst; I think it seems unnecessary.

The scene in the drawing room for example, with the two men alone and with no-one else to distract us from them is a much more immersive and engaging experience. Also, I couldn't help thinking that Dame Judy Dench's realistic portrayal of Lady Bracknell could have been better replaced with the usual exaggerated grandiosity that Dame Maggie Smith expresses herself with. It would have made the funniest

and most energetic character in the play much more humorous.

During our performance of this play in class, many of my classmates practically howled with laughter at some of the lines in the play. I don't think any summary I could give can rival the persuasion of genuine laughter from a group of young people laughing at a play that was first performed in 1895.

Let The Sky Fall...

Gerard Flynn
Interim Editor

After 50 years of doing battle with Chinese men with sharp hats and lunatics with eye scars and metal teeth, you'd think that by now Bond had faced everything. Sadly, it seems that before Skyfall even begins its promotional run, Bond's biggest battle was always going to be for his own credibility and relevance in a world that largely consists of action and interactions involving a computer screen.

It's comforting as a Bond fan to say that Skyfall really is yet another "resurrection" for the 007 character and one that focuses on all the things that made Bond great in the first place. Daniel Craig once again takes on the role of the British secret agent and after 2 previous films under his belt, really has the role locked down at this point. He goes up against the former M16 agent Raoul Silva, played by Javier Bardem, who's out to get Bond's boss, M played by Judy Dench, after she traded him to the Chinese government for the release of 6 other M16 agents.

A lot of Skyfall's action focuses on technological warfare and how in this modern age computers seem to be involved in everything. Ultimately the film centres on Bond's love of physicality and hand to hand combat versus Silva's technological know-how. The film itself comments coyly on the approach favoured by both Bond

and his antagonist by introducing the character of M16's quartermaster Q, played by Ben Whishaw, who makes the point that he could make more of an impact for M16 "in bed in my pajamas" than Bond could in the field.

Credit has to be given first and foremost to cinematographer Roger Deakins who frames every single scene perfectly and at times makes you feel like you're inside an oil painting, such is the beauty and diversity in colour that the film offers. The Shanghai segments of the movie in particular remain vivid in my memory and I don't think it's too far-fetched to consider this Oscar nominated work, especially considering Deakins pedigree. Appointing Deakins really was an inspired choice by director Sam Mendes who was obviously a fan of his work with the Coen brothers on films like No Country For Old Men and more recently, True Grit.

The film is truly a love letter to fans of Bond's feature film past that were helmed by the likes of Sean Connery and Roger Moore with references to ejector seats, aston martins and of course reptile hopping! It really does feel like an out and out Bond film by Bond fans for Bond fans and in a way that's the biggest compliment you can pay it.

Bardem's villain will go down as one of the slightly better villains in Bond's 50 year history. He holds some of the



slightly camp mannerisms of Mr. Wint & Mr. Kidd (Diamonds Are Forever) with a passion for destruction that Heath Ledger's joker would be fond of. I wouldn't go as far as to call Bardem's character a scene-stealer, however he does have one fairly unsettling exchange with Bond halfway through the film that bests even the Casino Royale ball bashing scene involving LeChiffre and his knotted rope.

The director, Sam Mendes, (known for Revolutionary Road and his cult classic directorial debut American Beauty) ultimately does a very good job on this film and it's clear from all the references to past Bond adventures that he himself is a fan. Like anything

however there are a few minor hiccups.

I felt at times like Skyfall was a mash up of a lot of other films that have been extremely popular in the last decade or so. Its action sequences retain the realism and ferocity of the Bourne movies while some of the larger, grittier action scenes remind me of Christopher Nolan's work on both the Dark Knight trilogy as well as Inception. Sometimes the nods to previous Bond films can become tiresome especially if you keep spotting them and this makes the film seem forced and artificial. Fortunately, Mendes grounds Skyfall with genuine heart, something that had been missing from Marc Forster's Quantum of Solace. This shouldn't come as a

shock to any Mendes fans seeing as he's famous for creating characters that we care about and relationships between these characters that seem genuine and gripping. His work on Revolutionary Road in particular is a testament to this.

Without jumping on the band wagon too much, I have to say that "no", this isn't the best Bond film ever. I would still hold Goldfinger and even Casino Royale above it on my best of list but it's still an excellent entry into the Bond canon and one that rather expertly pays tribute to Bond's past while also giving us a glimpse of what to expect from his future.

Goosebumps: 20 Years On

Evana Downes

Remember the tingle of anticipation and horror induced by episodes of Goosebumps on RTE's Den 2 (now 'The Den'), way back in the day? The conviction at the end of each episode that you would NEVER imitate the protagonist/protagonist's enemy, and that terror could await bullying/nosy/obstinate children? Second only to the spooky, retro gold that is Fact or Fiction, Goosebumps was adapted for television from children's horror books of the same name written by R.L. Stine. The first book of the series, *Goosebumps #1: Welcome to Dead House*, was printed in 1992; the first book of the latest spin-off series, *Goosebumps Most Wanted #1: Planet of the Lawn Gnomes*, was released this month. Twenty years later, it is safe to say that the cult of Goosebumps continues to scare and moralise today's generation of kids.

As a child, I developed an obsession with Goosebumps that would manifest itself in a preference for horror movies/programmes as an adult (my preferred horror fix these days is the deeply unsettling *American Horror Story*, now in its second season). I would obsessively swap Goosebumps books with my neighbours, comb the town library weekly for new editions and traverse charity shops for cheap, battered copies. You know you were a true child of the nineties if you consider the day that Stine introduced the 'choose your own ending' Goosebumps books as a significant milestone in your horror story reading career. Recalling all this as Halloween approached, I decided to find and watch one of the



television episodes of my childhood.

Produced from 1995-1998, Goosebumps episodes generally feature stories such as 'The Cuckoo Clock of Doom', which I rediscovered on Youtube. The story revolves around the the hero, Michael, who is introduced when he is shown being doused in ketchup by his prankster sister, Tara. This, we are soon informed, is not an isolated event. There have been similar incidents before, the most devastating of which involved Michael's face crashing into his twelfth birthday

cake. Unsurprisingly, Michael decides that it is time to get revenge on his thuggish little sister. Seeing Tara being warned not to meddle with the antique cuckoo clock that their father has just purchased, he sneaks downstairs one night and turns the cuckoo's head backwards. "That'll learn her," Michael thinks in satisfaction as he creeps back to bed through the atmospheric dark corridor.

However, it being Goosebumps, things aren't quite so simple. Michael's little alteration triggers a time travelling

episode in which he wakes up first on his twelfth birthday - replaying his humiliating tumble on the cake - and then his sixth. At this point, he realises that his sister is no longer around and that his parents have no idea why he keeps asking for someone called Tara. Before we have time to contemplate this turn of events, the episode has moved on to the next morning, and our hero wakes up as a toddler, realising that he's running out of time. Luckily, that day Michael is left in a buggy in an antique shop, where he manages to find the

clock and turn the cuckoo head in the right direction - just in the nick of time. Of course, there is one catch. When he reawakens, he is twelve years old again - but minus his sister. 'The Cuckoo Clock of Doom' has claimed its first victim, and the scene fades as Michael contentedly concludes that the world is a better place minus one bullying five year old. Even now, the moral of this Goosebumps story is crystal clear: bold behaviour will forever curse you, so leave your siblings alone.

Should I Do A Masters?

The decision to undertake a postgraduate course is a significant one. In many ways it's like an investment decision so you have to look at the costs (investment) and the benefits (payoffs). The costs are familiar to students - fees, living expenses, travel expenses, etc. But what about the benefits?

The major payoff from undertaking a postgraduate course is that the skills, competencies and qualities you develop during your degree will enhance your CV and help you stand out in a highly competitive graduate employment job market. The course you choose allows you to either deepen your knowledge of your chosen specialism (e.g., the business studies graduate who goes on to do a masters in taxation) or broaden your knowledge into another discipline (e.g., the engineering graduate who does a masters in business management).

Just like an investment decision, there are timing issues. Reasons for going straight from undergraduate to postgraduate study might be: you are accustomed to being a student and have momentum; your study skills should be well-honed and sharp; you may have few obligations; and some occupations require an advanced degree even for "entry-level" positions. On the other hand you might like to gain some work experience before undertaking a postgraduate course for the following

reasons: you can get a better handle on your career goals by working in the field for a few years; you can bring a broader world view to your studies; you have a more mature outlook on college and work; you can save for the course you want to undertake; and some course require work experience.

The unprecedented economic downturn has made up-skilling more important than ever and consequently has added to the attraction of achieving a specialist post-graduate qualification. Many of the postgraduate courses at the Kemmy Business School allow you to specialise through optional modules and a dissertation or research project which is completed on a subject of your own choosing. This means that you have the opportunity to build a programme which reflects your own unique interests and which will prove rewarding in your future career. Additional features of Kemmy Business School postgraduate courses include credited professional development and career planning modules, international field trips, professional certification opportunities and the chance to work on live business projects as part of your course.

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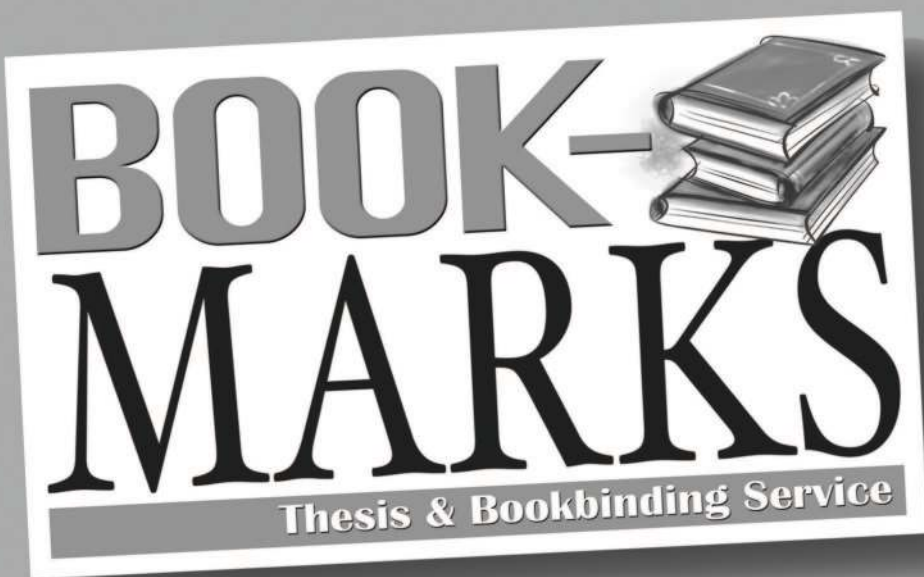
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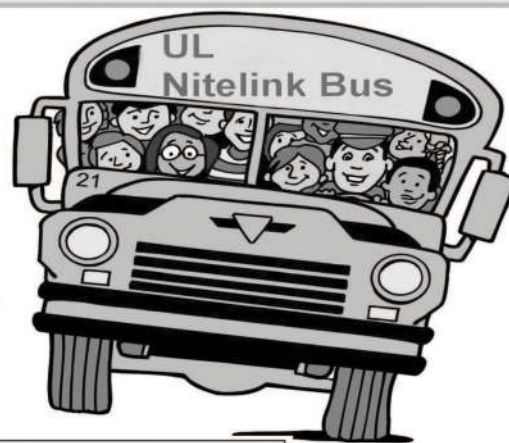
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○	Dromroe Village	19.10	20.10	21.10	22.10	23.10
○	Stables Arch	19.15	20.15	21.15	22.15	23.15
○	Kilmurry Lodge	19.25	20.25	21.25	22.25	23.25
○	Brookfield / Groody	19.30	20.30	21.30	22.30	23.30
○	City Centre –Arthurs Quay	19.40	20.40	21.40	22.40	23.40

Introducing a new hourly bus service for students going from UL's north campus and Students centre to the Kilmurry Lodge Hotel, Groody, Brookfield and Limerick City Centre 7pm to 11pm [EX-Cappavilla] every Mon, Tue, Wed and Thurs nights (Semester weeks).



Mike
Hynan Coaches

D.I.E Review: 25/10/12

Fintan Walsh
News Editor

If the fancy dress didn't contribute to the utter zeal of last Thursday night's monthly D.I.E., the array of music certainly did. The Halloween special offered, more strenuously than other times, a smooth concoction of the underground's varieties.

An explosive performance came from Limerick's newly cherished act, Milk Baby, who were announced as "a last minute gig" on the night. The four-piece collective bossed around the upstairs' petite stage with rough, trad-Berlin riffs and immaculately throbbing beats. Despite their fresh visage on the scene, the unsigned act didn't succumb to shyness, which gainfully engendered a smooth prelude to Waterford's hard-alternative group, Kodakid.

Superfluously frenetic, Kodakid's progression since their well-received Independence 2012 gig has been contrasting. An element of teenage excitement was probably instilled into them after they released their OK Computer-ish track, 'Portis', last week. Wholesome and elementally fervent with each of the four-piece's instrumental routines, Soikans on lead guitar, Duignan on bass, Power on lead vocals and Browne on his inclusively sweet drums – they all summed up to a picturesque At The Drive-In mania for their encore.

"There's nothing better than coming off stage – dripping in sweat – to find the crowd in the exact same state," drummer Anthony Browne said after the gig, who went on to praise the venue and the crowd.



Though he did lose his 'fro, Toby Kaar has not stripped himself of his on-stage style. And despite wearing a t-shirt that said cliché, he had put together one of few atypical DJ displays ever experienced in Limerick City in a long time. If he was in the UK, they would be using their "maximalist" coinage flippantly on this guy. From a West

Coast, Stone's Throw Records feel of experimental hip-hop, to smoothly arpeggiated vocal samples, to crafty The Field tech-house gestures, it's clear Kaar never dumbs down to genres, categories or labels. His perplexing use of out-of-nowhere bass is curse-word worthy – in the good kind – the kind that shifts the listener into an orgy of

musical sensations. His performance patched up what D.I.E. usually advocates; diversity, entertainment and insanity.

Other acts of the night that contributed to an atmospheric blessing were Conga (of Elemental Music), Adam Bentley, Sight (of Hsuan Records) and Simon AK. Thursday night was significantly

overpowering in comparison to previous events. So the question is: how far can D.I.E. raise the bar, and has the standard been set too high for it to lower its list of popular acts? November 29 will assure any of the goers that this week's quality was all but second nature.

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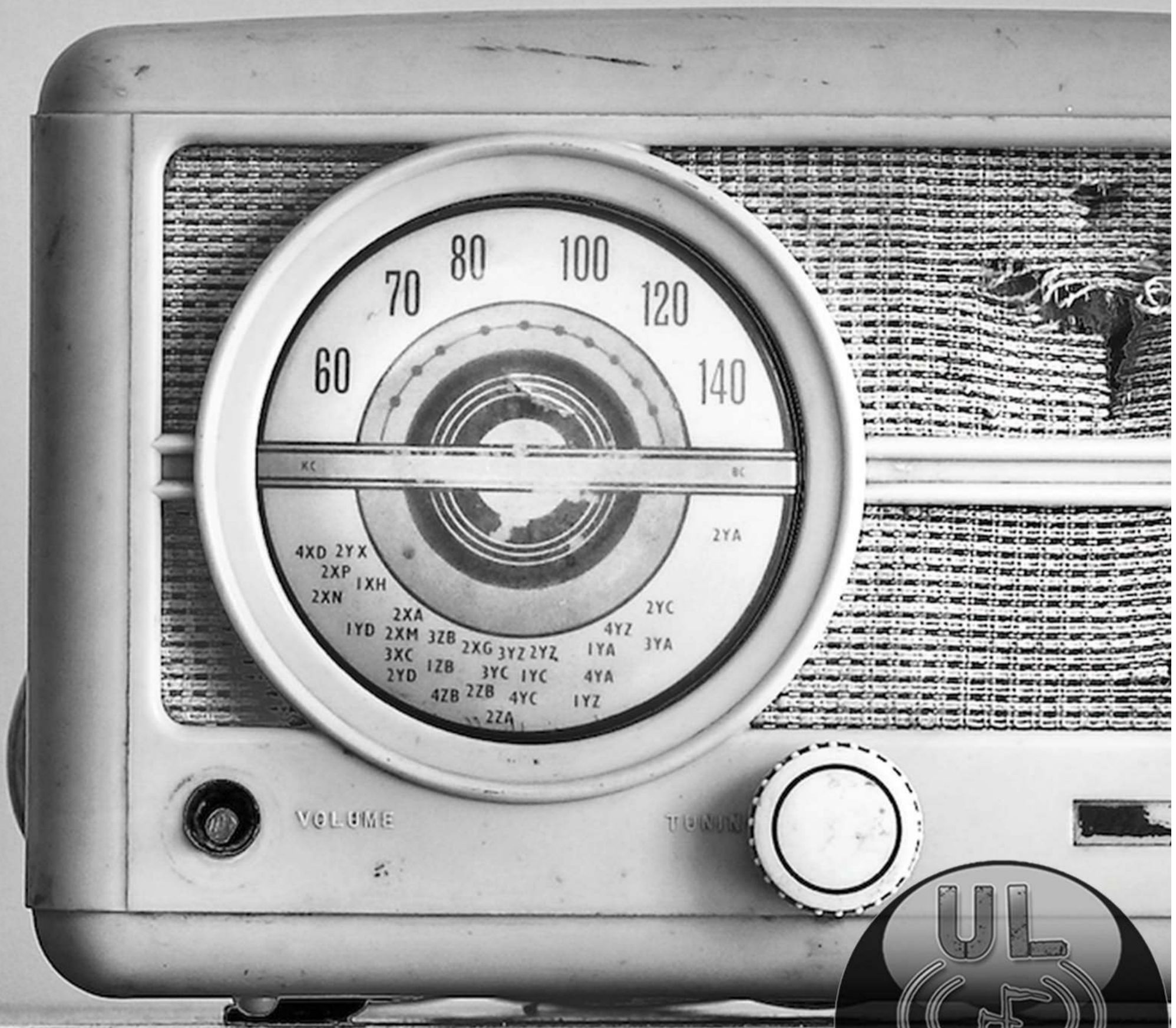
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Séan Quinn: Villian? Victim?

Enda Costello

Séan Quinn, once Ireland's richest man is now arguably it's poorest. As the Quinn saga continues to dominate the front and business pages of our national papers, many people in the border counties of Monaghan, Fermanagh and Cavan question whether this once business tycoon is the victim of a large and complex conspiracy from the Financial Regulator to the IBRC (formerly the Anglo Irish Bank).

The remarkable story of how a once renowned businessman has ended in ruin, his son now in jail and his assets frozen, for many remains a puzzle and an intriguing tale.

The conflicting opinions of Séan Quinn, Victim, Hero, Criminal, have left the public confused by this complex web of a series of court and commercial procedures. Some argue he is the architect of his own downfall, that he is now simply facing the consequences of his ill-fated gamble to invest heavily in the former Anglo Irish Bank. At the two rallies hosted in his native town of Ballyconell, people have been steadfast in their support against what they call an injustice and unfair elite that is conspiring against the Quinn family and penalizing the communities that would otherwise be desolated without the huge investment Séan Quinn Snr. has pumped into these rural areas.

Many argue that because of Sean Quinn's "worst financial gamble", the taxpayer will now have to take up the tab, which could take 25 years to fully repay. His loans of €3bn from Anglo to invest in a worldwide property portfolio, was believed by many to be reckless. According to Ms. Justice Dunne, he acted in a "dishonest

and deceitful manner" and he was "uncooperative and abrasive" during court proceedings. His worldwide business empire stretching from Russia to India now lies in the hands of Banks or is tied up in commercial entitles.

The High Court ruled the transactions of assets from the Quinn Group/Family to foreign businesses was in "Contempt of court" with Sean Quinn Jr. set to be freed from prison after serving a 3 month sentence for his conviction. The IBRC are now pursuing the Quinns in 24 cases across 8 jurisdictions, in what is the largest and most complicated series of commercial cases ever seen in Ireland.

The Quinn Family has had enormous support from their local and surrounding communities and he remains a very popular figure in the boarder counties. Many feel he has not received a "fair crack of the whip" and has been unfairly and ruthlessly pursued by the media and the banks. They argue that the banks are placing 5,000 jobs in jeopardy in a rural area, which relies on the Quinn Group for jobs and economic survival. The Family argues that only a few years ago the Quinn Group had the "highest average return and lowest loss ratio in Ireland or the UK and those figures can be verified by the Financial Regulators own records". What has happened since? The Financial regulator has refused to disclose the relevant information that he relied upon to make an informed decision to take the Group out of the Quinn's hands according to Colette Quinn.

The Family has called for a full investigation and feels it is the right of the countries citizens to know the full story and why they have to pay for this



financial mess. They also argue that the debt does not reach the billions like Anglo among others is suggesting but rather "the legitimate debt is in the region of €450m".

Ultimately this is a sad story, of how a locally respected man made his way to the top to be outdone by the crippling

recession that has continued to plague Europe. However, it could be the taxpayer and in particular, the people of Cavan, Fermanagh and Monaghan who could suffer most.

This story is far from done and the courts don't expect to be finished with the Quinns for at least a year. Expect

to see much more of the Quinns on your television screens and in the print press. Is he a victim or villain? Hopefully the future will decide, as the facts will reveal themselves and the real culprits.

Held Prisoner In Israel

Zoe Lawlor

Last Saturday, en route to Gaza in an attempt to break the siege, the crew of the SV Estelle were attacked by the Israeli navy, kidnapped and brought forcibly to Ashdod port, many of them were tasered. They comprise five European parliamentarians, a former Canadian MP and activists from Sweden, Spain, Italy, Norway and Israel. As I watched their progress anxiously, hoping they would make it, I remembered my journey last year on the MV Saoirse, the Irish Ship to Gaza, when 14 Irish and our Greek captain Zach sailed, among them Trevor Hogan, ex-Munster and Leinster rugby player, Paul Murphy MEP and Felim Egan, artist.

Why did we sail? Gaza, Palestine, has a population of 1.6 million people, over half of them children and most of them refugees, driven out of their homes when Israel was founded in 1948. Surrounded by 40-foot high walls of iron and steel, Gaza has only 3 points of entry or exit: the Erez border crossing with Israel, the Rafah crossing with Egypt and the sea.

Israel has occupied Gaza since 1967, maintaining complete control over its air space and territorial waters, imports and exports, and travel into or out of the territory. In recent years, Israel has subjected Gaza to an increasingly severe blockade, restricting its ability to import and almost completely shutting down its exports. As a result,

the economy has collapsed, leaving 80% of the population aid dependent.

In December 2008, Israel launched a military assault on Gaza, killing over 1,400 people including more than 300 children. The infrastructural destruction wreaked by bombing was massive, and thousands were made homeless. Since then, with few materials allowed in for rebuilding, people's living conditions have drastically deteriorated. Last month the UN issued a report: "Gaza in 2020, a Liveable Place?" focusing on its precarious situation particularly regarding water, education and employment. In the last week, five people have been killed in Israeli airstrikes on Gaza.

It is because of deep concern for, and solidarity with, the Palestinians in the face of this illegal and immoral siege that flotillas have been sailing, that there was an Irish Ship. After months of fundraising, including washing cars every Saturday in Limerick, the ISTG bought a ship and in June were to sail as part of the Freedom Flotilla. In Turkey, the Saoirse was sabotaged in such a way that had we not accidentally discovered it, we would have sunk at sea, most likely with loss of life. Meanwhile, the Greek government blocked all other ships from leaving their ports and the Flotilla was sidelined, or so they thought....

Determined to sail we set off again in November. Unlike the summer, where we had lots of publicity and support, including video messages

from Damien Dempsey, Eoin Reddan, Jerry Flannery, Gordon D'Arcy and Eoin Kelly, this time we went secretly, only telling our families. The secrecy, while necessary for our safety, made it pretty scary. As Israel had murdered nine peace activists on the Flotilla the previous year, the risks were serious and it was daunting. Sailing was a relief, once at sea there was no turning back.

Sailing alongside our sister ship, the Canadian Tahrir, we were hopeful, although some shipmates suffered badly from seasickness and there were interesting times in the kitchen, cooking while being thrown from side to side is challenging! The morning of the attack, as the sun rose, looking at the Irish and Palestinian flags fluttering with Gaza on the horizon, it all seemed possible. But forty nautical miles out, in international waters, we were surrounded by warships, zodiacs and gunboats, all populated by heavily armed, masked commandos. Our ships were corralled and forced to collide, we were water cannoned which caused massive electrical damage, Saoirse was then violently boarded with all windows smashed.

We were taken to Israel at gunpoint, stripped multiple times, had our belongings stolen and were put through a sham of a court process before being charged with entering Israel illegally and put in Givon prison for a week.

There were only five women in our group and we were kept in our cells for over 20 hours for the first few



The crew of the MV Saoirse with family members and supporters after returning home from Israel.

days. The prison experience, while educational, was pretty grim and the guards were extremely aggressive, even telling us that we weren't human. They were obsessed with getting us to sign a statement stating we had entered Israel illegally and to pay for our own tickets home. I would still be there if they were to get me to buy that flight!

After much public pressure and intervention from the Irish embassy, we were released. Our ship and belongings have still not been returned to us. Our

time in prison was just a tiny snapshot of life for Palestinians living under Israeli occupation. Until the siege of Gaza ends, there will be freedom marches, freedom waves, freedom flotillas – we sail until Gaza is free!

For information about Palestine solidarity in Ireland, please email me at zoe.lawlor@ul.ie or go to www.ipsc.ie

Kayak Club Alps Trip 2012

Oisín Bates

In the annals of history people are going to be talking about three things: the discovery of fire, the invention of the submarine and UL Kayak Club's 2012 Alps Trip. Though SU summer trip reports can come to prove a bit tedious and predictable at times; if you'll care to listen, our kayak-related shenanigans will weave for you a tale of magic, adventure and well allocated SU budget-money.

The trip began in mid-May, setting off the morning after our final day of exams. The Alps-Tour began with a preparatory-week, in which twelve experienced members undertook advanced-training to develop leadership skills and safety awareness. The first major task of any European trip is getting there; the journey on its own proved an adventure in itself. Travelling from Limerick to Lyon (via Tipperary town to fix a puncture) the first two days proved a rollercoaster of ups, downs and that unique musk of perspiration that you can only quite get from 11 lads (and a lass) living out of a minibus. Starting from Limerick, the blatantly-branded UL Wolf-Wagon (along with the unbranded minibus) bated on towards the fair port-town of Rosslare and the promise of a ferry to a cheese-paved land of wine, Socialists and pencil moustaches.

The over-night crossing took us as far as Cherbourg from where we spent a day driving to Lyon. Having camped near Lyon, the following day brought a 6 a.m. start and a half-day's driving to Campertogno in Italy. Thanks to the early start, we were lucky to arrive by the afternoon; in time for an evening paddle on the 'Home-Run'; a section of the Sesia River that conveniently flows past our campsite. Everyone was chuffed to have made it in time to fit in a paddle that day. Some claimed that the day couldn't get better but the pasta carbonara dinner that night was ridiculously delicious.

Over the course of the first week, the advanced group put in long -but

enjoyable- days of great paddling, serious training and less-serious banter. Having paddled the Home Run on our first day in Italy, the advanced group managed a number of further runs: the River Sesia's 'Raft Run', a section of the River Sermenza; and two trips to the famous 'Sorba Slides', a series of rock slides on the River Sorba. Though river-running is all great fun, the club was fully aware of the ever-present risks present on whitewater; a serious push was made over the course of the advanced training to improve safety awareness and to facilitate comprehensive safety-training. As the first week's training drew to an end, its value was fully evident in the improved confidence and awareness of the group.

With a week behind us, we set off for Milan to collect the rest of the group who would be flying to Bergamo Airport. All arrived without hassle and having safely collected another twelve eager-paddlers, all appeared to be going to plan. This good fortune proved to be short-lived though as the trailer soon began giving difficulty. As night was approaching, with little prospect of finding a mechanic, the decision was taken to make camp for the night just short of the Slovenian border. It was apparent that the trailer would take time to fix so a decision was made for half the group to continue on to Slovenia the following morning while the remainder stayed with the trailer. This plan proved a great success as, while it was essential to have the trailer fixed, the division of the group made it possible for many of the new arrivals to get straight into paddling without the hassle of a further day's wait.

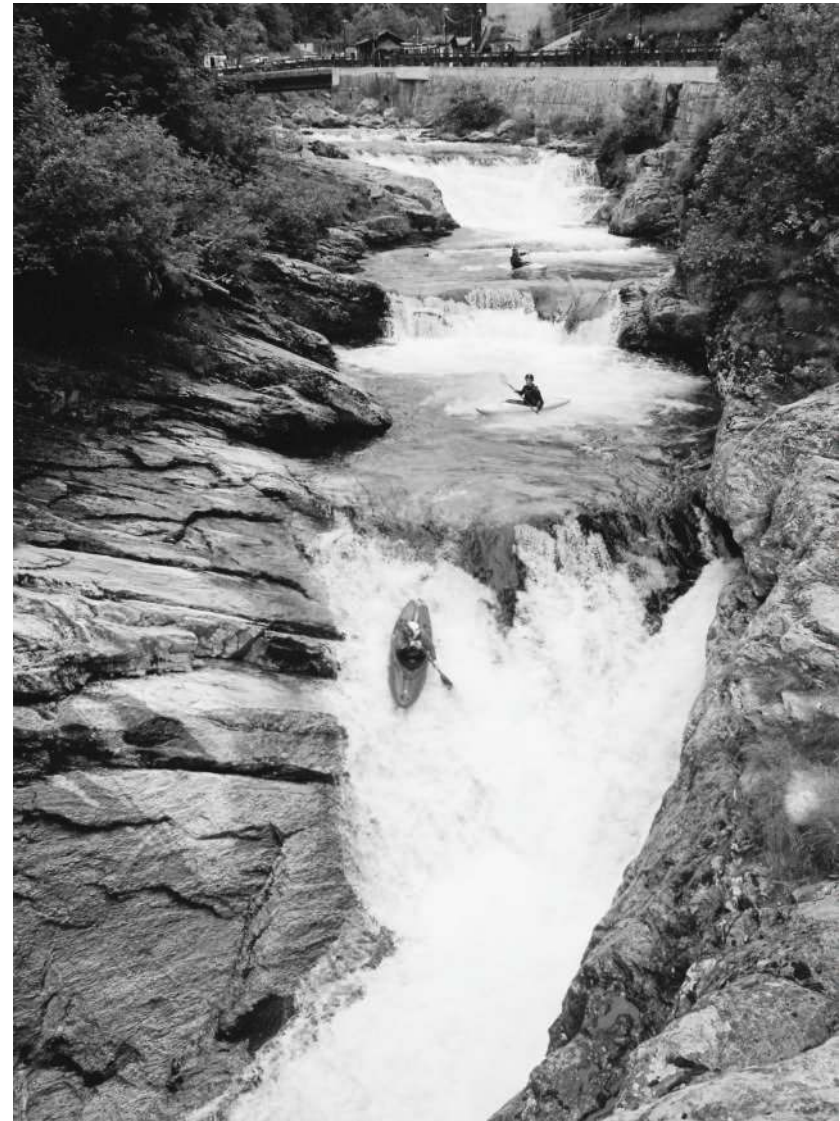
The course of the next eight days that we came to spend in Slovenia proved a blur of great-paddling, great-progression and the never-ending craic that ULKC trips have come to be known for. Our campsite was fantastically located, within a short distance of numerous stretches of river, which catered for all levels of ability. The river that we spent the most of our time on

was the Soča; a fantastic, versatile Alpine river with runs of various difficulties ranging from gentle to more advanced whitewater. Starting with some of the Soča's more beginner-friendly runs; the less-experienced members progressed rapidly; graduating to more difficult sections as their experience and confidence increased. Having spent a number of days on various sections of the Soca, we enjoyed two runs on the Koritnica; an intermediate river, more constricting than the Soča. Slovenia had been good to us but the time had come again to move on.

Our travels had brought us back again to Italy; this time with a larger group staying in the same campsite as we had in our first week. We were again positioned in a great spot for the entire group's varying proficiencies. Though we only had five days in Italy, we managed to fit a huge amount of paddling into the time-span with many of the group getting two or even three runs in per day. Alongside repeat runs of sections that had been covered during the first-week, we also managed runs of the upper Mastelone river and a further section of the Sesia from Scopello village to just above the Sesia gorge.

Alongside the intermediate runs that had been covered, a select group of the club's more experienced paddlers also ran the Eguia, an advanced run of "ass-clenching difficulty". (Marc Carroll, 2012) The final, but by no means the least, bit of paddling action of the main trip came in an excursion to 'Landwasser', a twenty-five foot waterfall just upstream of the Mastelone River. Though we only spent a few hours at the spot, it proved a trip-highlight for some and great-craic overall. With most of the group flying or driving home, a crack-team of eight paddle-fiends carried the flame on for a further week; continuing on to the Briancon area of the French Alps.

France's rivers proved noticeably different in character to those of Slovenia and Italy; flooding and landslides had affected its rivers in their



nature and appearance. Though water-levels were quite high at the start of the week, the group managed to get some decent paddling in over the few days; these included a couple of sections of the Durance River, the upper-Guissane, advanced runs on the Gyr and the Gyronde and a section of the middle Guil.

By June 16th, just over a month after the first few set off, the last of the group had finally made it home. The trip itself, one of the biggest in recent years, proved a great success for the club and a fantastic milestone in the training and development of new and existing members. Though the trip marked the last big event of the 2011/12 college

year, the club is still quite active for the Summer months and as strong as ever.

For a further insight into the trip, take a look at our blog: <http://ulkcalsp.tumblr.com/>

*Foolishly omitted from this article were the travels of club members Eoin Keyes and Neil Slevin. Both spent the summer paddling together and working as raft guides and kayak instructors in the Alps. As some of the club's most active and experienced members, their summer work as professional instructors can only mean great things for future training and development within the club.

UL Ladies Rugby Prepared For Another Exciting Year

Heather Murphy

UL ladies rugby team commenced training 2 weeks ago in preparation for yet another exciting and eventful year with head coach Gillian Burke. Gillian has over thirty caps with the Irish Women's squad featuring as both hooker and prop and we are exceptionally grateful for her time and efforts as her expertise and knowledge are second to none. With plenty of new additions to the squad, UL ladies hope to continue their untarnished record and win their eleventh CUSAI division 1 league title in the competition's history.

Unfortunately last year's Intervarsity's title was handed over to our familiar rivals UCC after extra time and penalty kicks in a tense final. We aim to ensure this cup is only on short term loan and secure our title once again, remaining the country's most successful women's rugby team at college level. On this note we would like to congratulate

the eight members of the squad now representing Munster at both senior and development level, not to forget our one Leinster panellist. As well as our two present members who made the Irish women's seven's squad this summer.

We are kicking off our fundraising with a bake sale, one of many to come which you'll find in the court yard at lunchtimes. This year the club is organising our first trip abroad in seven years to compete in the Amsterdam's Sevens Tournament. As of now our match dates have yet to be finalised, however we will maintain any updates on home games, as your support would be great.

We would like to welcome any new players interested, absolutely no experience necessary. We usually train twice a week in UL and in Annacotty. Anyone interested please contact us through our Clubs and Societies page.



UL Ninja's Ultimate Frisbee Travel To Cork Open

Caoimhe O' Sullivan

The UL Ninja's first ultimate tournament of the year got underway on 13th of October down in Nemo Rangers Sports grounds hosted by UCC.

For the first time it had a women's division. For the UL Ladies it was their first chance to play together and demonstrate to the other teams our vast improvement. Their first game got underway against a tough UCC side but they were out to prove themselves and took an early lead. The game continued with both teams trading points. But soon the UCC girls started to increase their lead towards the end of the game. It was a hard fought game but resulted in a loss for the girls at score line of 8 - 5 in favor of UCC.

The ladies second game saw them come up against a strong Rebel side but they matched their intensity from the previous game and again took the opening points. But Rebel came back and started to bring out their strong zone defense that lead to them to taking the lead. But UL came back at them and closed down the score until it ended in a tight score line of 7 - 9 in favor of Rebel.

The third game of the day saw the Ninja's come up against their toughest game of the day against the club team Jabba. The Jabba girls came out strong with a high intensity and started to take the lead in the game, seemingly leaving the girls behind. But after some great give and go by the team they finally scored their first point. They soon added to that, continually matching their intensity but Jabba closed out the game strongly on a final score of 13 to 5.

The girls' final game of the day saw them in the 3rd / 4th playoff and after

a motivating team talk they went out there with the belief that this game could be theirs. The girls played, in their view, their best ultimate of the day against UCC taking the lead again with some great give and go among the players. Once again UCC began to take the lead but in one last effort they came back at them closing down the score line to only two points. Unfortunately time was against the ladies team and UCC took the game and third place with the final score being 9 - 7. An amazing day was had by the UL Ninja's Ladies that saw them demonstrate and display their newfound experience and ability to put it up to teams they previously could never consider beating. Congratulations to our MVP Laura McGrath and our MSP Caoimhe O' Sullivan.

For the UL Ninja's their tournament got underway similar to ours against a strong UCC team. Unfortunately it was a tough first game for the guys and saw them lose 13 - 4 against UCC.

There following game saw them come up against a difficult Rebel team. The Ninja's had a slow start against Rebel going 8 - 0 down but they slowly found their stride and flow and started putting points on the board. But once again the game resulted in a loss for the Ninja's on a score line of 12 - 6.

The Ninja's third game of the day saw them come up against a strong Trinity team. The team started off well taking the lead in the opening half and continuing throughout the game to always stay in front through some great passes and retaining possession. The game ended in the Ninja's first win of the day on a score line of 10 - 5.

The final game of the day saw the Ninja's come up against an unknown German team the JoGuBears. Continuing with same momentum

witnessed in the previous game against Trinity, the Ninja's took the opening points and from there on they were unstoppable never letting JoGuBears get back in the game or score a point. The result was a confidence boosting 13 - 0 victory to UL. Although it was such a high points difference, spirit remained high throughout the game from both teams.

The second day of Cork Open saw their first quarterfinal in the Cork Open against a French team, The Wanted. The Ninja's went into this game with strong determination to win and get into the quarterfinals. It was extremely close first half with the score at 8 - 7 in favor of the French side. But the Ninjas were undefeated and came out with a huge intensity until the score was tied and it came down to universe point. The Ninjas saw their determination awarded with Niall McCarney making the winning catch to finish the game 13 - 12 to the Ninjas.

The semifinals beckoned and saw the Ninjas paired against the strong Rebel team of the previous day. It was time for the Ninjas to prove themselves after yesterdays disappointing result. Rebel took an early lead but the Ninja's put up a fight and saw them score 5 points in a row during the game drawing the game into an even more competitive atmosphere. The Ninja's continued with a high intensity, fighting their way back against this Rebel side until time was called. On this occasion the Ninja's lost out but were proud of their vast improvement on the previous days result. The final score was 12 - 8 to Rebel.

The Ninja's now turned their attention to the 3rd / 4th playoff optimistic that they could finish third after their great display of ultimate in the previous game. The team they would face was



Jabba. After a great opening, taking the opening points, the Ninja's built on this and drew out a lead. But Jabba soon began to fight back and the score slowly became closer and closer. The game's intensity rocketed as both teams sought to build up their lead.

In the end it came down to a universe point with both teams feeling the affects of an already extremely competitive

game. Unfortunately the final point did not go in the Ninja's favor and saw Jabba take the game on a final score of 14 - 13. Although they lost, the Ninja's did themselves proud finishing 4th overall in the tournament. Congratulations to their MVP Niall McCarney and MSP Daragh Kelleher.

The UL Boarders Week 5 Surf Trip

Jack Hoare

On Friday the 12th of October the UL Boarders club went on our 2nd surf trip of the semester to Lahinch beach, Co. Clare. Following the success of the last surf trip in week 2, demand for this trip was high, as were the expectations of those of us going. We met as a group at 9am near the Stables bar on campus. We opted to car pool down to Lahinch where we would stay as a group in the West Coast Lodge in the centre of the town. From the outset I think everyone realized that it was going to be a great trip, since we were all encouraged to share cars down with people that we didn't know already, it gave everyone the opportunity to talk to new people in the club and start making friends before we got to our destination.

By the time we had arrived down to the hostel the atmosphere was already one of easy-going camaraderie, everyone in the group was already having a good time and we hadn't even got into the water at this point! After we had sorted ourselves out with our rooms and food etc., we rented a few



foamies for the beginners in the group and shot straight into the surf. Lessons for beginners were taught by two of our experienced surf instructors: JJ Doherty and Niall O'Brien, while I myself took a few of the more experienced surfers in the group up to Crag Mór for some very ripplable left-hander waves.

After the first session of the day, we all headed back up to the hostel for a well-deserved lunch. We spent a few hours chillaxing and exploring the town of Lahinch but before long it once again came time to drag on our wet wetties and get back in the water. There was

a great vibe in the water during the second surf that day, as everyone in the club opted to surf the beach break at Lahinch together. After another heavy session of surfing we went back to the hostel where a bunch of us (headed by Aoife Broderick) cooked a "family dinner" for the club and we all sat down and ate together.

The next day the sun came out and we pretty much did a full repeat of the last day. All in all there was good surf, good weather and great company! A fantastic time was had by all.

Student Nitelink Bus



○	Cappavilla Village	19.00	20.00	21.00	22.00	23.00
○	Thomond Village	19.05	20.05	21.05	22.05	23.05
○	Dromroe Village	19.10	20.10	21.10	22.10	23.10
○	Stables Arch	19.15	20.15	21.15	22.15	23.15
○	Kilmurry Lodge	19.25	20.25	21.25	22.25	23.25
○	Brookfield / Groody	19.30	20.30	21.30	22.30	23.30
○	City Centre -Arthurs Quay	19.40	20.40	21.40	22.40	23.40

Introducing a new hourly bus service for students going from UL's north campus and Students centre to the Kilmurry Lodge Hotel, Groody, Brookfield and Limerick City Centre 7pm to 11pm [EX-Cappavilla] every Mon, Tue, Wed and Thurs nights (Semester weeks).



Mike Hynan Coaches

Climbing With The Outdoor Pursuits Club

Ellie Van Niekirk

My name is Ellie and I am a stranger to this magnificent green island, home to the rowdiest most fun-loving group of lunatics I will likely ever have the pleasure of knowing. I am an exchange student from Canada and while I adore my country of maple syrup and snow storms, I'll admit that my farewell in December will be somber and unpleasant at best. I have scarcely felt so comfortable and welcome among a group of people I've known for such a short period of time.

Walking in to the climbing wall for the first time in early September, I found what will undoubtedly be my home away from home for the next three months. The outdoor pursuits climbing wall hosts an array of climbing routes suited to all skill levels and is attended by a warm, welcoming staff who are always more than happy to provide guidelines and helpful hints to new and experienced climbers alike. With an air of healthy competition, members encourage and push each other for success, progress and enjoyment.

In addition to providing climbing hours from 7-10pm every Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, the OPC also runs weekly trips to various locations around the country. Much to my delight, two of these trips focused

on rock climbing and provided wonderful opportunities to explore the realm of outdoor climbing, again with an environment that welcomes all skill levels. The club provides all the necessary gear, from shoes to harnesses, to include everyone who wants to get involved. If recent trips to the Burren and Ballykeeffe are any indication, the OPC climbing club stands in good stead for the referendum in week eight as they strive to expand and incorporate top-rope facilities in addition to their current bouldering opportunities.

I have openly encouraged everyone with whom I've spoken to join the OPC and to get involved and am proud to practice what I preach. I can hardly imagine my time here without the OPC and have trouble understanding why this club isn't on the top of everyone's list.

My only criticism of the climbing club is that there simply isn't enough. I am not satiated by the 9 hours of available climbing time so kindly provided by OPC volunteers; the two climbing trips served only to wet my appetite. Climbing has been an integral part of my unbelievable experience at UL, leaving me hungry for the coming months. Thank you OPC. I will return home with the fondest of memories and wildest of stories because I swear, it's just chalk.



Picture courtesy of UL Photo Society.

UL International Society... Where Do We Start?!

Triona O' Sullivan

Oh lord, where do I begin?! Since the last time we featured in the paper, we have been involved with the fantastic UL40 Celebrations, gone on several trips around Ireland, had an unbelievable mystery tour and that's in addition to our events and activities that run each week anyways!! We are even in the process of finalising our plans for our legendary Belfast Trip (which by the time you read this article, we will all be recovering from!!)

Back in the beginning of the summer we were delighted to be contacted with regards to the UL40 Celebrations and through a series of discussions we decided to run a Food Fair. This proved to be a massive success with over 225 hungry people turning up, as well as Vice President Academic Paul McCutcheon and it wouldn't have been possible without our fabulous team of chefs & cooks from (and I'm sorry if I leave anyone out!) America, India, Germany, Poland, Austria, Spain and Ireland!

It was an honour to get involved in our University's Birthday Celebrations, and I think it is safe to assume that everyone who got the food enjoyed it and to those that went by Irish time and arrived when all the food was gone - ye should know better now when it

comes to free food! ;)

From the food fair we moved onto one of our themed TGIFs and it was on a busy Friday night in the Stables that we held our Black & White party, which we held to toast another Irish Institution - Arthur's Day and everyone partied the night away with the Brilliant Ber on the DJ Decks!

We have also ran three successful trips since we last gave you all an update in An Focal. The first was back in the beginning of September (Week1) when we headed off bright and early to Dublin & Glendalough; our first stop was Croke Park, which I loved, in particular the introduction DVD they showed had Cork playing Kerry and I may have lost the run of myself and yelled 'Up the Rebels!!' halfway through, much to the entertainment of everyone else!!!

From there we trekked across the city and ended up in the Guinness Storehouse where everyone learnt the art of pulling that perfect pint, in addition to seeing the gorgeous Dublin Skyline from the Gravity Bar. Our final stop for the day was out in the Garden of Ireland - Glendalough in Co. Wicklow, immediately we all got stuck in, cooked dinner for 100 people and partied the night away down in the hotel getting to know each other more and see who could sing 'Call Me

Maybe' the loudest!

Our second was to Killarney (Week3) where we headed off on a bright and cool Saturday morning and luck was on our side as there wasn't a drop of rain to be seen as we travelled down the windy roads and along the Ring of Kerry!

Then last Saturday (Week6) our Cliffs of Moher travellers headed off and found that the myths of Ireland were debunked as they were blessed with clear blue skies and sun. They managed to walk on every bit of grass that said 'do not step on the grass' and even play in a playground - much to the delight, of wellEveryone!

The end of Week 5, we mysteriously pulled out of Limerick in buses with blackened out windows in the search of our unknown destination - Galway! With 87 members the craic was mighty, the night was young and it was just the beginning!! Once we arrived in Galway everyone merged into a large group and even though they had been in the country and the society for over a month now - new friendships were made, much to the delight of the trip organisers Ciaran & Caoimhe.

That's not to mention our Book Club which is run every Tuesday in the PSU common room at 6pm, our Study Club which is in full swing out in the Access Campus currently, its not



too late to join up send us an email if you are interested, our International Come Dine with me/Mentor Meals - get sending us in some pictures guys! Sports Club every Friday in the Astroturf by the Arena from 4-6pm, Music Club every Thursday at 6pm in B1023 (Jonathan Swift by Red Raisins), I hope you are all listening into our Radio Show - 'International Power Hour' with Ewerton at 3pm on a Friday evening too and last but by no means least - our weekly TGIF! It really has been proven that the place to be on a Friday night in UL is not the library! But rather the Stables - every week has

been jam packed with craic and banter - we shall see ye there!

P.S - Get ready to hear the results of our photo competition and a really cool event in conjunction with Kemmy Business School in Week 9, keep Wednesday the 7th of November clear....you heard it here first!

Don't forget to Like us on facebook; 'UL International Society', Follow us on Twitter; 'ULIntelSociety' and to check out our website; www.ulinternationalsociety.com



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OÉ Gaillimh

LOOK CLOSER

Postgraduate Open Day

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UL Athletics' Charity Waxing Event A Success

Kevin Moore

On Wednesday 24th of October, the UL Athletics club held their first fundraiser of the year in the Arena Sports Bar. Many of our male athletes whom would usually be seen strutting their stuff on the track, the riverbank or Maguire's fields, arrived that evening in their usually running attire (short shorts!) but not for the usual 'threshold'. The 'victims' who stepped forward on the night ranged from county to provincial and even all Ireland champions, they feel no pain and showed that too (well can't speak for myself!)

From here on we had our 'waxers' in the form of UL Athletics Ladies Captain Una Britton and many of our female athletes, whom only revelled in the joy of inflicting pain on their male counterparts. Don't you worry girls, us guys never forget and we will get our day! Much needed funds were raised. A big thank you to all who contributed, clubs like us need all the fundraising we can get and it's much appreciated. Also a big thank you to the sports bar for the use of their facilities on the night and for the food they supplied.

Last but not least a thank you to our male athletes, some of whom surrendered over 21 years of hair growth! Videos and photos from the



night are on our website (ulathletics.webs.com) and Facebook page. Next up for ULAC is the Irish Intersivity

Road Relays in Maynooth in mid-November. Both our men's and ladies teams are looking very strong this year

and we will have high hopes. The men have only once won this competition back in 2001 and the ladies on four

occasions, the last being 2003. Check out our Facebook page for updates. [Facebook.com/ULAthletics](https://www.facebook.com/ULAthletics).

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Erasmus In Venice

Aoife Coughlan

If ever I regret anything it is not learning Italian before I arrived here. It is my own fault and I know it, however I am managing to get by. Small phrases stay with me and I navigate conversations with the general necessities. It helps that my flatmates try and converse in what little English they have. This lack of fluency in any language that we share is a problem but not a big one. Going out and socializing is the same in any language so in this respect I do not feel a large cultural gap. However there are things in Italy that make Ireland and UL feel very far removed.

A night out is the same in all respects except that it is less messy, more social and there is less music. Yes, there is no equivalent of Molly's or Icon in Venezia, in fact there are no clubs on the island at all. One on Lido attracts the international crowd looking for a taste of home and Mestre on the mainland is the destination to trek to if you need your disco kicks. Other than that it is the Campo Santa Margherita where it seems all of Ca Foscari converges nightly. Get a drink to take away, a pizza and grab a spot on the ground or stand and watch the place slowly get tipsier.

Often you are treated to the shouts of Graduation parties and believe me, if ever there was an incentive to graduate in Venice it is the way they celebrate graduation, so very different from at home. Dressing the graduate up in ridiculous costumes, wearing an olive wreath and parading around the city is all part of the action. Groups of friends and family can be heard loudly singing

the graduation song full of obscenities and mockery for the newly qualified. It's mad and fun and like everything, ends up with copious amounts of spritz being consumed.

Away from university life there are still weekends for exploration. Trieste, Ferrara the local town of Mestre have all been visited, plus a very interesting trip to a Polenta Festival in San dona di Piave. This was brilliant and really shows the culture of the country that is so ingrained in their food. As we were speaking of differences between Italy and home I must cite this as a major one. We are a country that likes to think of ourselves as having a distinct culture and personality but in reality I sometimes feel we play to a stereotype than any real culture.

Here in Italy there is a sense of pride in the country but also regionalism is very much a part of life. The Polenta Festival is a prime example of this. Each village in the area competes for the best side dish to serve with polenta (a sort of corn meal). You get to taste your preferred dish (for me a donkey stew!) and sit and eat on long wooden benches in the middle of the street, a perfect way to spend a Sunday if topped off with a prosecco (free from some kind, if not chancing, old gent) and some roasted chestnuts for the walk back to the station.

Unfortunately there was a train strike that day which left yours truly resorting to hitchhiking. I guess social unrest is at least one thing that is the same here and at home.



“Mestre on the mainland is the destination to trek to if you need your disco kicks.”

Erasmus Diary: Malta

Rachel Dargan

There is certainly never a dull moment (weather or otherwise) in Malta. Unless you get caught in the middle of a thunderstorm, that is!

This was unfortunately the case for another Erasmus student and I last weekend on a trip to Valletta in search of a change of scene. When we left the apartment, the weather was overcast (one of the few times I'd seen it that way up to then) but didn't look too threatening, so we went to Valletta. Once we got there, we wandered around the shops, as all we'd ever done in Valletta was to do with culture and we fancied a change. Once we were bored, we found a café with a huge covered outside seating area (one of many) and decided that there was as good a place as any.

After placing our order with the waitress, we noticed that she was moving people further in under the canopy and that the wind was starting to pick up. After a huge build up to the start of the storm, with strong wind and leaves blowing everywhere, we were actually kind of disappointed to see that the rain came slowly and lightly. We'd just gotten bored of watching the storm when we decided to make our way up to the café to pay. No sooner than we'd stepped out from under the canopy, the rain began to fall with a vengeance. We paid, and legged

it through the streets of Valletta to the bus station, where everyone there was crammed under the only cover from the rain, so we joined them, even though our clothes were already soaked through and waited to get on a bus home (an air-conditioned bus! We were frozen.) Moral of the story – don't leave the house when rain is forecast for Malta.

Once we'd recovered from our very wet trip to Valletta we decided to brave Paceville. The one thing that people don't tell you about going out in Malta, is that Saturday night is the night that all of the Maltese go out and is therefore EXTREMELY busy! In most places you can forget about fighting your way to the bar, never mind getting a seat once you're in there. We battled through Paceville and off the main thoroughfare, where we found a fantastic place called Rock Elements but unfortunately, it didn't have too many people inside so that put us off for staying for more than a half an hour, so it was back to the main 'cattle mart' as is were for the rest of the evening.

Unfortunately, my only complaint about the buses this week is not that the driver had the air-conditioning on when everyone on the bus was soaking wet but also that the drivers pay little or no attention to what is going on around them, even to passengers. On Wednesday night, the stop buttons



on the bus we took to go to the gym in Sliema weren't working, so I got up in plenty of time to get to the front of the bus before the stop. (The drivers don't often stop unless you do that anyway.) Unluckily for me, there were four 'Maltese Wans' standing at the front of the bus (there were LOADS of seats available) and the driver didn't see me trying to make my way to the front

without falling over. He accelerated away from the bus stop but slammed on his brakes a few seconds later after someone flagged him to stop at the bus stop. When he did this, I grabbed the hand-hold on the upper bar in the bus. My legs went from under me towards the front of the bus, and the hand-hold slid along the bar, (they're not supposed to do that!) meaning that I went flying

to the front of the bus where I landed in a heap, and the driver didn't even ask me if I was ok before I got off the bus. But then, I don't think I was that surprised, as ALL Maltese bus drivers are atrocious and don't really seem to care!

A Canterbury Tale

Alana Walsh

Last weekend I took a little holiday from the somewhat horrendous reality that is fourth year and travelled to Canterbury, Kent to visit a friend who has been studying there for the past few years. I'm no expert myself but for those of you unfamiliar with English geography, Canterbury is in South East England. This trip was my first time abroad since I returned from Erasmus earlier this year so needless to say it was a great source of excitement. The flight from Shannon to Gatwick was a painless journey and two trains later I arrived in the city that provided the setting for Chaucer's, *The Canterbury Tales*.

Canterbury city is hugely historical which makes it a very popular choice with tourists such as myself, it is also student filled thanks to the presence of three universities. On my first full day, my sightseeing began with a stroll through Christ Church University on my way into town. The buildings in Canterbury quite often have an olden-town feel about them, making the streets seem really quaint. It really is lovely to walk around. One of my favourite surprises was located at 28 Palace Street – the 'Crooked House' of Canterbury in which the building's lean to the side is exaggerated by its crooked door.

Above the doorway in gold lettering there is a quote from Charles Dickens, "...a very old house bulging out over the road...leaning forward, trying to see who was passing on the narrow pavement below". In the few minutes I spent observing it many other people stopped to take pictures and look at the house.

Naturally, a visit to Canterbury is not

complete until you can say you were in the infamous cathedral, a great example of medieval architecture. I'm not one for reading much into museums and landmarks when I visit them but it's worth a wander around. The stained glass is a beautiful feature throughout and inside contains the tombs of several historical figures and a candle marks the shrine of Thomas Beckett.

After some shopping and more wandering around I finished off my first full day there with a night on the town. There isn't much to say about the nightlife in the sense that it's not hugely different from home, the venue was busy and had a good atmosphere and music. However, something worth mentioning is that I had the bright idea of ordering two baby Guinneses... little did I know (when they made the shot as per my instructions because they didn't know what it was) that it would come to over eleven pounds for the two because it was a "new" shot to them. So I would recommend sticking to the pub's deals!

On my second day of sightseeing the highlight was definitely the Canterbury Museum which features a Rupert the Bear section for the child inside of all us grown-ups. The only criticism I would make of it was since it features Canterbury through the ages and even extends to a Rupert section, there really should be an Orlando Bloom wing, something worth putting in a suggestion box.

Overall I would rate Canterbury as well worth a visit, there is so much to see and do on top of what I have mentioned. Perfect for a break away that isn't too far from home.



The Crooked House, Canterbury.

Erasmus In Canada

Aoife Murphy

Thanksgiving has come and gone. I was lucky enough to be invited to someone's house to experience this annual tradition. While I had copious amounts of turkey in the run up to Thanksgiving, nothing could have prepared me for the actual meal. Needless to say, I was looking forward to it.

Anyway, back to the food. The family had decided to serve it up buffet style (I guess in case they insulted someone by serving small portions.) This also meant that we were free to get up and help ourselves to a second, third or fourth helping of anything we liked. For me this was my first homemade meal in a long time and it was delicious (there were even potatoes, good potatoes). Also, did you know they make Thanksgiving crackers? Like Christmas crackers? I didn't really see the point but it was fun! After the meal we had the "What are we thankful for" circle. Basically, everyone takes turns saying something that they are thankful for. It was nice to experience a traditional Thanksgiving with a Canadian family.

The best part of the meal (though all of it was good) was the dessert (of course!). I'm not a fan of pumpkin pie but pumpkin cupcakes: yes, I am a very big fan. These were probably

my downfall. After dinner it is near impossible to move. I was also shocked to find that some members of the family have to do this for up to three days. Three days! Of non-stop eating!

The next big holiday coming up is Halloween. But supplies and such have been in the shops since August. The cobwebs are up and pumpkins are out. Pumpkins get used a lot over here. Halloween is one of my favourite holidays and I look forward to seeing how all-out people go for it.

I haven't really talked about the nightlife in Sackville until now/ Sackville as I have said before is a small town, when I say small I mean "everyone knows your name" small. The weekend is where most drinking and socialising gets done. Most events are planned for the weekend, like on-campus residence house parties and all that. One thing that shocked me though, I ordered apple cider (expecting something like Bulmers) and I got apple juice. I wasn't happy. There are a few pubs here, small establishments, compared to the places I go to in Ireland. They have a good atmosphere though. Overall, the nightlife is good and the people like to drink and have a good time.



The cider is a lie: "I ordered apple cider (expecting something like Bulmers) and I got apple juice."

Pat O'Sullivan – Chairman Of The Horde



Aubrey O'Connell

Think Limerick sport, think Munster? Think again.

While generally regarded as a sporting capital, Limerick has often been considered a one-team city. By boasting European competition, Munster have ensured that rugby continues to dominate spectator interest in the area, to the detriment of smaller clubs. Now after almost 20 years, Limerick FC make their return to Ireland's premier division. An Focal chatted with chairman Pat O'Sullivan to find out why he thinks the club's resurgence can revitalise the city.

Taking charge in August, 2009, Pat immediately announced his intention to form a strong community bond with the club and initiate new youth development programmes. "I was very conscious of the fact that Limerick had such a bad name, especially in terms of anti-social behaviour. 5,500 people play soccer in Limerick every week, so if the club were to go it would likely increase the amount of guys on the streets. I felt that we could

use the club as a tool to tackle those issues".

Seeing the opportunity to contribute both off as well as on the pitch, the club formed Project Reclaim. This initiative aims to engage local youths on both a sporting and educational level. "We carry out coaching in schools but are also involved in teaching. Where schools have a number of students from disadvantaged backgrounds we provide aid through literacy and numeracy lessons. We have also started a bursary fund which helps those students pursue an education, including University. Education is fundamental to our club, as an educated, well-rounded individual will become a better footballer by having more confidence."

While tackling community problems, the club are still well aware of the struggles they have to face in a league where attendances rarely exceed 1,500. Monaghan United this summer joined a list of teams in recent years to fall to financial difficulty, a fate which Pat does not believe is on the cards. "The club is currently debt-free

and we are seeking to increase sponsorship. Also, the strength of our academy means that we do not require any major signings in the near future".

At present situated in Jackman Park, plans are in place for the club to return to their spiritual home of the Market's Field. Having played their last fixture at the venue in 1984, redevelopment will see the stadium rise to a possible 8,100 capacity. Remaining true to nature, Limerick's new grounds will also provide an outlet for local sports and communities. "It will be a municipal stadium for promoting the sport and helping various communities. In addition to ourselves, both rugby and school's GAA will also be played there".

Although promotion will see Limerick face tougher opposition than used to, Pat reassures that the club will not make any extravagant purchases during the off-season. "We currently have six or seven U-19 players who are more than capable of playing in the senior team. There are maybe one or two positions which, if the right

player came along, we would look at strengthening. But we won't be rushing into anything".

Recent lacklustre International performances have raised calls for a major overhaul of the country's current grassroots system. We asked Pat how academies such as Limerick's can alter the way players are brought through: "Within our own academy we have players who can walk straight into the senior side after a year. We employ skills coaching, sports science and sports psychologists to work with both our U-19's and senior sides. These facilities are fundamental to success and are as professional as could be asked for. If this type of system could be achieved and applied throughout Ireland, we could potentially produce much more talent in the country".

Having hosted Premier League champions Manchester City in Thomond Park this August, an agreement with the FAI now means that the club is sanctioned to organise future glamour ties in the city. Believed to already have approached potential suitors for

2013, the possibility of a big-name cup in the manner of the Dublin Super Cup is now on the cards. With the prospect of drawing more spectators to Limerick, Pat feels that this is an opportunity which should be pounced on. "We had to start from scratch with the Man City game and sold over 20,000 tickets, which was the biggest match outside of internationals at the Aviva. I feel that the tourism bodies who are funded to promote tourism in this region should see these opportunities and make themselves available to lend a hand. This city has a huge asset in the form of sport and it should be promoted".

A busy year by any team's accounts, 2013 could prove just as busy when the Shannonsiders welcome the country's biggest rosters to Munster and grace the Market's Field once again. A well earned break sees them return to action in March. For Fifa fans however, with 13 just released, it will be a longer wait until next September when Limerick make their video game debut and the 'SuperBlues' can be lead to Champions League glory.

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