

An Focal

In Focus:

'Getting to grips with men's health: pages 16-17'



Special Feature: International Week 2009: pages 20-21"

10 February 2009
Tuesday

Official Paper of the University of Limerick Students' Union

Volume XVII, Issue 9
FREE

Expert expresses concern for pitches

By Aoife Ní Raghallaigh
News Editor

AN EXPERT on pitches has expressed "great concern" at the standard of the facilities made available for UL Clubs on campus. Richard Hayden, of Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI), was recently asked by the SU to come to UL and provide a consultation of the pitches.

STRI have previously provided consultations for a number of high quality international facilities as well as being responsible for laying pitches for the Champions League Finals.

The issues surrounding the outdoor sporting facilities in UL have regularly been the cause of grievances amongst UL Club members. The inadequate drainage system and commercial clubs being prioritised on the UL Bowl has left the UL Clubs with limited training facilities and substandard pitches. The current drainage system under the pitches was put in place 15 years ago and is now completely obsolete and has caused problems for a number of different clubs. The pitches on the 10 acres have failed a number of Eircom inspections, forcing the Soccer Club to play their quarter-final Harding Cup match in Fairview on the other side of Limerick.

Members of the GAA Clubs have also had to begin training on their competitive pitch as their training pitches are no longer suitable.

This is resulting in the competitive pitch having a lowered standard due to the increased wear and tear from

training. UL's supposed best pitch, the Bowl, was originally designed as a soccer pitch but is now being used mainly to accommodate Munster and Ireland rugby teams.

Maguire's Pitch causes the most concern for students. The complete lack of any drainage system has reduced the pitch to a mud bath. Students have also raised concerns regarding Health and Safety on the pitch as a large amount of injuries have been incurred following training.

Éamon Heavey of UL Rugby claims that he "has never seen training surfaces of such a low standard as McGuire's.

"The pitch poses a serious health risk to those who train on it, with the ground being so unstable the very idea of playing a full contact sport on this kind of surface is ridiculous'.

Two members of the UL Ladies rugby club sustained injuries during their training session on the pitches in week one. One player received a knee ligament injury while another went over on her ankle. Clubs are increasingly worried about the safety of the pitches for their members to even train on.

Students are also frustrated at the lack of training opportunities presented to them. With regarding to booking training times, students feel that priority is often given to commercial clubs, such as the Irish and Munster Rugby teams, and not to UL students.

Allegedly, students have even booked training times only to be told that they can no longer train as a commercial team has since



Missing the goal: UL's sporting facilities such as the Bowl have are made available to students only after priority has been given to external organisations such as the IRFU while student clubs are forced to train and play home games off-campus due to the unsafe sub-standard pitches allocated to their sports.

requested the same time. This is requiring students to train on the lower standard pitches, despite having the better pitch booked.

Despite proposals for new sporting facilities on the North Campus, students remain fearful that the situation will not see an improvement.

The €9 million North Campus Development will incorporate the building of a number of synthetic grass pitches for use by both UL Clubs and the public.

Despite this, the Students' Union still has concerns regarding the development.

SU President Pa O'Brien said, "We are worried that the North Campus development will be seen as a solution to the issues surrounding the 10 acres on the south campus.

"We would prefer to see the North Campus Development going hand-in-hand with the regeneration of the ten acres and Maguire's Pitch to build a student based and student-centred facility that those representing the University could be proud of."

Mr O'Brien also explained that the SU were concerned regarding the expense of the North Campus development. There are fears that

a lot of commercial hours will need to be sold to cover the building costs and that this would minimise student use.

There are also fears that intense commercial use would drastically decrease the quality of the pitches within two or three years, leaving students and staff with a below-standard facility.

Members of UL GAA Clubs are also apprehensive about the North Campus Development due to its reliance of synthetic grass pitches. GAA experts have previously claimed that such pitches are not as suitable for GAA matches as hurling

and camogie conditions can be properly replicated on the synthetic grass.

Paul Lee, SU Clubs & Societies Development Officer also expressed concern that "there has been no consultation with the 600 playing members who actually represent UL on playing fields".

Despite the worries expressed both by the SU and students, SU President Pa O'Brien said, "I am happy that the University have recognised that there is an issue and hopefully we can work together to sort it out for the benefit of the students."

Library to implement 'swipe card' system

By Katie Harrington

THE Students' Union has learned that the Glucksman Library intends to introduce a swipe card entry system by the beginning of the next academic year, subject to receiving the funding to do so. The Department of Education and Science has asked library staff to outline changes to be made to the entrance area in advance of Phase 2 of the library extension, construction of which will begin next year. Over the last number of years,

students and library staff have run into problems with Leaving Certificate students taking up study spaces as well unidentified people causing trouble in the library, most notably by making unacceptable levels of noise. SU Education Officer Eamonn Gardiner welcomed the move, saying, "With the Junior and Leaving Cert exams approaching, there have been concerns expressed that our library could rapidly fill up with non-UL students. This

would, of course, stretch the resources at a time when FYP students need to have unfettered access to the library's facilities." Gobnait O'Riordan, director of the library, emphasised that this move was not an attempt to disbar students from other colleges or the people of Limerick city using the facilities, merely to stop the abuse of the facilities by troublemakers. She added that while Leaving Certificate students may also use

the facilities, they would be encouraged to do so primarily after UL students have finished their exams. Identification cards would allow access to the building and would give library and security staff knowledge of who is using the facilities at any given time, as well as giving them the opportunity to revoke access from those who abuse these privileges by removing their swipe cards. Mr Gardiner added, "I have seen [the swipe card system] successfully

adopted in other universities both in Ireland and the UK and I can vouch for the fact that when a common sense approach is taken to its implementation, it is a great success. "Student access to resources is increased by passively controlling and monitoring non-student access to the library. Security of the building, resources and students is also increased as the entry and exit of everyone in the building is monitored."

An Focal Digest

Shorts

SofAntastic

By Jenny Kingston

SofA, the Society of Architecture at the University of Limerick is a student-run organisation established in 2007 to celebrate all aspects of visual culture and the arts.

We run a series of evening talks throughout the academic year with lectures from nationally and internationally acclaimed individuals and groups, including Tarla MacGabhann of MacGabhann Architects, winners of this year's RIAI Public Choice Award and Belinda Tato whose practice won the highly respected Architectural Review Award for Emerging Architects some years ago. We also organise workshops, nights out and trips for our members.

On 11 January last, 25 SofAists headed to Barcelona on what was our first annual SofA on tour extravaganza abroad. Over our four day stay we visited many architectural wonders, sampled some Catalan culture and enjoyed a welcome-break from the Irish weather (with temperatures of approx 23°C every day).

Some of the highlights included the walking tour of public space along the seafront, a visit to the Sagrada Familia, designed by Antoni Gaudi, and Mies van der Rohe's famous Barcelona pavilion.

Join us! The SofA Lecture Series continues this semester on Monday evenings at 6pm (check out our website for dates and venues). <http://societyofarchitecture.blogspot.com/>

Contact us at: societyofarchitecture@gmail.com

ULTV to host wrestling event

By Gina O'Brien

ULTV will be holding a Turkish oil wrestling event on 12 February in the Students' Union courtyard (weather permitting). Students will be able to pick and choose their favourite wrestlers to sponsor and are in a chance to win fabulous prizes in our raffle. Spectatorship is free of charge. It will be a nifty day so come along! For more information contact ULTV society by emailing ultvsoc@gmail.com.

Stables seek late licences

By Katie Harrington

The Stables Club may hold a number of late night events this semester if a court approves an application going before it this week. Because of its status as a club, the venue may be entitled to hold up to nine late night events over the course of a year. If the plan goes ahead, the first of these will take place on February 19 with the next taking place on March 14. It is thought that these events will entice students back on campus in spite of the economic downturn.

The events will be held in support of UL Clubs and Societies, students in attendance will be encouraged to come along and enjoy the night as well as participating in fundraising events and collections.

Clubs and Societies who will advertise the event have expressed excitement about the late night licences.

Niamh O'Donovan of Ogra Fianna Fail/Debating Union commented "It's great to have a place where members of clubs and societies and students in general can socialise on campus, and having late nights means people don't have to split up to go into town."



Members of Karate Shotokan gave a display on self-defence in the courtyard during Student Safety week in week 2.

In Words

"Lads, tell me, is it really hard or just weird?"

Overheard outside the print room last week, a student expresses his bewilderment after attaining his new lecture notes for the semester.

Damien (CSO): "The fire brigade have pulled out"

Emma (PSA President): Why?

Pa (SU President): "There's a fire that day"

The SU President shows his witty side during a campaigns meeting in which the CSO explained why the road traffic re-enactment had to be postponed.

"Shag an international student week!"

El Presidente O'Brien realised the merits of having SHAG week and International Week both on during week 3.

"And that's enough now."

Stables DJ Ber Angley stops suddenly in the midst of being swung around on stage by OPC member Fergal Dempsey during international night in week 1.

"Can we have it north of the border?"

A 4th year class rep's suggestion on combating costs for formal SU balls this semester.

"I got it from Damien!"

A surprised Keith Pigott, SU ents co-ordinator, tries to explain where he got the USB stick with animated porn loaded on to it once opened on the SU Accountant's computer. Damien Cahill, Campaigns & Services Officer, in turn, maintained that he had got it from reception. Well, it came from somewhere, boys!

In Figures

2

The number of late licences that the Stables Club hopes to avail of this semester. Stay on campus for those ones, they promise to be good!

7

Weeks until Rag Week '09...yes, we are counting down to it too!

9 million

The expected cost of the North Campus Development to implement the sports plan.

15 years

How long ago the 'drainage' system was put in place under the pitches.

70

How much SU President Pa O'Brien was bought for at a charity auction event in week 2. Not bad really, considering he's 6 foot 6, that's a good Euro-to-flesh ratio.

200

The number of sheep required for quorum at the Union General Meeting in week 5. And by sheep we mean students. Of course.

Unbelievable

The number of apartment doors that were not just unlocked but open during the canvas by SU exec members in week 1. They could've robbed the lotta'yis!



An architect's impression of the UL Boathouse before its construction. The boathouse will be officially opened in September.

Rise in postgrads to strain resources

An Focal Reporter

A FEAR that already-scarce resources for postgraduate students will be further stretched should graduate students numbers rise in the coming academic year has become a cause for concern for the Postgraduate Students' Association.

The number of postgraduate courses, and hence students, has risen in recent years and, due to the current economic situation, it is being argued that the number of students continuing from

undergraduate to postgraduate studies will rise again next year.

PSA President, Emma Murphy said, "The lack of job prospects in most sectors is ensuring that students cover all of their bases when making post-graduation choices and embarking on postgraduate study seems to be a high consideration for some".

This view has been substantiated by SU Education Officer Eamonn Gardiner.

"The number of queries from current students in recent weeks regarding information on

postgraduate studies have been immense; students are very much leaning towards taking on the extra year of study as they fear not finding employment when they finish."

A number of new structured doctorate programmes will be on offer in UL for the first time from September 2009 and the entry to these courses is expected to be quite difficult and research spaces are required for these students.

Prof John Breen, Dean of Graduate Studies is confident that, "the re-organisation and re-configuration of the postgraduate

desk space in the Foundation Building will be more than adequate to cover next year's intake of research students".

"We agree with Prof Breen on the resources for research students, however our main concern is for the taught postgraduates.

"We have over 90 taught courses at the moment and the PSA has been lobbying for the past number of years for reading and computing spaces for these students to be increased and for the existing spaces to be maintained.

"The increased number of

postgraduate and graduate entry students in UL has not coincided with a development of new or adequate resources on campus, new buildings have been built on campus yet have not created specific postgraduate spaces."

The forthcoming postgraduate fair is expected to see an increased numbers of attendees than those held in previous years.

National organisations such as Grad Ireland have also put resources in place to cater for an increased interest in postgraduate courses throughout the country.

The annual postgraduate fair, which will take place on 11 February, is expected to welcome a vast array of people ranging from students completing undergraduate programmes to those who have recently been made redundant or have simply lost their job during recent turbulent times.

The academic offices, particularly those in the careers services have been putting measures in place to deal with the increased interest in postgrad courses and have increased levels of advertising of all events being run by the careers service.

Funding granted for info screens

Aoife Ní Raghallaigh

THE Students' Union has been successful in its application to the Ulster Bank Enablement Fund for funding to install four 42-inch information screens at key locations around the campus in an effort to promote campus events and activities. Four new screens will be installed in the Foundation Building foyer, the Main Building close to the Student Academic Administration office, the Health Sciences Building and the Students' Union shop.

The SU also hopes to be able to access the existing screens in the library, the Arena and the Kemmy Business School.

The screens will be updated every

morning by the SU Communications Co-op Student, Andrea Gallagher, and will promote on-campus activities and events.

Speaking on the benefits of the screens SU Communications Officer, Aoife Breen said, "We hope the screens will recreate a living campus atmosphere by encouraging people to stay on campus and go to events that are taking place. There are lots of day time and evening events around the campus, but sometimes people just don't know about them."

The screens will also be used to convey any important information to the campus community including any emergency messages or notices affecting the wider campus community.

The information screens will not be

available as an advertising service but will be accessible by the campus as a means of publicising activities for students and staff.

It is also hoped that the screens will see a reduction in traffic to student emails by reducing the current burden on student mailing lists. As student emails have a limited space these mailing lists can often infringe on the restricted memory allocated to the emails.

Ms Breen also explained that the SU would like to thank Ulster Bank as without their generosity and funding the project would not be possible.

She said that the SU will aim to roll out the screens in the coming weeks and hopes to have them fully operative within a month.

Poor results linked to falling attendances

SPEAKERS at a recent meeting of the University's Academic Council argued the link between increasing failure rates in certain modules with falling attendance. Council heard that first year students, in particular, were the worst for attending classes. The Kemmy Business School highlighted its concerns about undergraduate pass rates and attendance at lectures, but other faculties across the University have also been experiencing this "worrying trend" according to SU Education Officer Eamonn Gardiner. Members of the Faculty of Education and Health Sciences proposed that the University should examine the methods by which it provides instruction to students and put forth the suggestion that the large-scale lectures may no longer be the best way to teach students.

The discussion continued to insinuate that a policy of smaller scale classes to heighten interaction between faculty and students may be the best route forward, potentially increasing the number of tutorials instead.

"Undergrads are finding it more difficult to settle into courses which have been changed in recent years and as a result apathy is growing; this in turn results in a tapering off in lecture attendance and the only natural outcome of that, unfortunately, is a greater number of failures," said Mr Gardiner.

He went on to suggest that the University examine how it approaches module grading to include greater interaction between students and faculty during class time so that an enhanced learning experience could contribute to the marking system. He argued that "valuable

information" can be found in the classroom and students should be aware of the negative consequences of non-attendance.

The Academic Council meeting also discussed the increase in documented incidents of plagiarism, copying and academic cheating as well as the related charged of improper referencing of materials used in assignments.

Students' Union representatives argued that many students may not actually know that they were committing these academic offences and advised that lecturers set aside at least one class to explain the elements of academic professionalism including referencing, citation and what constitutes plagiarism. It is hoped that by implementing a policy of this nature would reduce the volume of incidents.

Students to protest over placement dissatisfaction

STUDENTS' discontent with unpaid placements will be expressed in a protest organised by the Students' Union on Wednesday of week 4 at 1pm in the Plaza when they will meet and present their concerns to the Faculty of Education & Health Sciences.

Student teachers, nurses, physios, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, as well as some co-op students, are becoming increasingly unhappy with unpaid placements while still incurring costs such as clothing, travel, preparatory materials and, in some

cases, accommodation over and above that in Castletroy.. Student nurses and other healthcare students can be sent to up to four different locations during a single practice period. Despite this, student nursing placements begin in first year and are unpaid until fourth year when they still receive less than half of a staff nurse's weekly wage.

A fourth Year General Nursing student said, "I'm being sent me to four different places. I don't drive. I'm getting paid but not enough for short term flats in each area and taxis will cost me a fortune. This

isn't fair!"

Students are expected to organise their own travel arrangements for their placement which incur expenses that are not reimbursed.

A third year education student said that he had spent "about £500 for lesson plans alone". He continued to explain that the lesson plans "are often extremely detailed and require many hours of laborious preparation; models, technical drawings or posters and even games."

Another student teacher in first year commented that, "I had to buy a suit and a set of new clothes."

SU Education Officer Eamonn Gardiner said, "UL is famous throughout Ireland as being the national leader in student workplace experiences.

"Student teachers, nurses and other healthcare students in this university are being shafted by the Departments of Education and Health. They expect and demand top-notch teachers and clinical staff, yet they pay nothing.

He argued that students affected by unpaid placements are being "victimised by the very profession which they are endeavouring to



Health Science and Education students along with dissatisfied co-op students will protest in week 4

join".

He confirmed that Class Reps are "agitating for action" on this issue and urged all students to go

to the protest in week 4.

"Come along and let's try to break the chains of educational slavery which bind our fellow students."

Press ombudsman opens newsroom

Jason Kennedy

PRESS Ombudsman, Professor John Horgan officially opened the journalism newsroom in the Schumann Building on Thursday, 29 January.

The event also marked the beginning of a series of journalism seminars by professionals in the media.

Professor Horgan, who set up Ireland's first journalism school in DCU, gave out valuable advice to the MA and BA Journalism students in attendance.

"To be a good reporter, you need a very high boredom threshold, but you can never start writing too young. There are few more satisfying jobs in the market."

Professor Horgan also spoke of the ego and corruption that is involved in journalism today.

"Journalists are powerful, but power can corrupt. Rubbing shoulders with celebrities does not make you a celebrity yourself."



The newsroom will be an invaluable resource for UL's journalism students

"There is a tendency in the media to kick people who can't kick back. Some newspapers have a very narrow view as to who is vulnerable and who is not."

Professor Horgan also spoke on his job as press Ombudsman.

"In an ideal world my post would be a last resort, not first port of call."

"Newspapers are under no legal constraints to be fair, but if they get a reputation for unfairness, they will suffer financially."

Professor Horgan told of one story against a newspaper, whereby they published a picture

of a "little, old lady" vandalising a bus shelter by writing expletives on it. In fact, the elderly lady was washing the words of the shelter.

Professor Horgan also spoke on the future of journalism in Ireland.

"The job for life just isn't there anymore, but journalism is constantly reinventing itself and I have no doubt that journalism will itself to the new era with verve."

"Journalism isn't a steady job, but that's why it's so interesting."

Prior to Professor Horgan's speech, President of UL, Professor Don Barry made a

brief speech, outlining the history of news. Professor Barry also spoke of the "tremendous pleasure" of having Professor Horgan on campus to officially open the newsroom.

Professor Horgan held a questions and answers session after his speech, where he was quizzed on his role as press ombudsman.

Also in attendance was Mary Dundon, journalism course director, and a number of members from the Limerick media.

The following week's journalism seminar was given by the Irish Times senior editor, Peter Murtagh.

Date announced for boathouse launch

Aoife Ní Raghallaigh
News Editor

UL BOATHOUSE Management has announced that the boathouse will be officially launched in September 2009. The launch comes after numerous teething problems surrounding the building work and the input of hours of hard work by students, clubs and societies and Paul Lee, SU Clubs and Societies Development Officer.

The development was coordinated by the Students' Union and was largely student-funded although it also received support from the University itself. The project began in 2001 when UL students passed a referendum in favour of the boathouse.

Building work officially began in 2006 when ground was broken for the first time. The cost of building the boathouse is estimated at about €4 million.

The state of the art boathouse is currently open and is used by members of the Rowing Club, Sub-aqua Club, Kayaking Club and Mountain Biking

Club.

The facility also contains a café, pontoon and launch jetty which are open for public use.

It also incorporates Ireland's only indoor rowing tank which is potentially the fastest in the world. The tank was designed by international rowing tank designer, Dick Perelli, and will be able to simulate various weather and weather conditions. The rowing tank will also provide a unique training facility of international standard for UL students and can accommodate up to 16 rowers at a time.

C&S Development Officer, Paul Lee is extremely happy that the building will soon be launched and said, "It is important to have an official opening when students are around and to give students who helped pass the referendum a chance to attend". It is also hoped that Minister for Arts, Sport and Tourism, Martin Cullen, will be present at the launch.

WLSU specials

- Chicken/mushroom/chicken & ham pie- €1
- Birdseye Potato waffles & Birdseye oven crispy fishfingers
- meal deal only €4
- Goodfellas Deeply Delicious pizza- only €2.99
- Big Al Sweet Chili/roast mini fillet - half price! €2.17
- Spar apple juice - half price! €0.79
- Basset bag range...buy one get one free! €2.50
- Kellogg's Just Right 500g/Cornflakes 750g/
- Rice Crispies 600g - 2 for €4.99!

STAR BUY!

Buy any roll or sandwich from the deli, and get any 2 of: M&M chocolate, apple/banana AND Ballygowen Still 500ml for €1.20 more!

See Euro Crunch offers in store:

- Nutri grain cereal bar...2 for €1
- Muller Corner range...2 for €1
- Club orange can range...2 for €1
- Spar washing up liquid range...€1
- Kitten soft white toilet rolls...€1

OPENING TIMES

Main Courtyard Shop:

Monday - Thursday 08:30 - 20:00

Friday 08:30 - 18:00

Saturday 11:00 - 17:00

Dromroe Shop:

Monday - Thursday 08:30 - 19:00

Friday 08:30 - 18:00

Ticket sales begin Rag Week '09

Ticket sales for this year's Rag Week went on sale from the Students' Union at 10am, today, Tuesday, 10 February with all profits going to the designated Rag Week charities.

The Limerick Mental Health Association and the Limerick Branch of the Irish Red Cross joined St Gabriel's School and Milford Hospice as the charities selected to be the beneficiaries of year's Rag Week charity campaign when the Welfare Working Group made the announcement at the first Class Reps' Council of this semester on Tuesday of week 2.

Top Irish act Republic of Loose will make a special appearance on Thursday, 12 February to kick start Rag Week '09 at the official launch party in the Stables. Tickets for this event, priced at €12, can also be bought from the Students' Union.

SU Ents co-ordinators, EPM, along with the SU officers have been pushing the campaign to publicise this year's events and to promote the charities that will reap the benefits of the campus' generosity.

With yellow and black colours adopting the theme of warning signs, the line-up for the week has been made public weeks in advance of the 30 March kick-off date.

In addition, 3,000 lanyards with the line-up have also been distributed across the campus. Students are advised to hold on to their lanyards as the limited edition souvenirs will guarantee them certain privileges and discounts on selected Rag Week tickets and merchandise.

Prestigious debating final at UL

THE University's Debating Union, with support from the Law department, will play host to the 2009 final of the prestigious Irish Times National Debating Competition on Friday, 20 February. UL has not hosted this event since 1993 and has regarded this as "a fantastic coup for the Union and, indeed, for the University."

Maurice Cotter, 3rd Year Law & European Studies, is also in with a chance of competing in the final if he is successful in the upcoming semi-final in Galway.

DeBU had "huge success" this year in the tournament has been running since November. A record of six members qualified for the quarter finals – three of whom were first years – with Mr Cotter advancing to the next stage.

Over 150 initial entrants have competed in successive rounds to leave just four teams of two speakers each and four individuals to speak in the Grand Final. The winners of the team competition will walk away with the Demosthenes Trophy while the Christina Murphy Memorial Trophy will be presented to the best individual.

As well as this, the three winning speakers will also tour selected colleges in the USA as guests of the National Parliamentary Debate Association.

The competition is considered one of the "most prestigious in the country with its unique debating format and is one which attracts much media attention and showcases only the finest debating talent" according to the Union.

Previous winners include comedian Dara O'Briain, broadcaster Marion Finucane, Supreme Court judge Adrian Hardiman, psychiatrist Anthony Clare while former President Mary Robinson and former Táiniste Mary Harney have been finalists in the past.

The Grand Final debate will take place at 8pm on Friday, 20 February in the Kemmy Business School. This is a 'black tie' event so guests are advised that formal dress is essential.

Med students fear higher pass rates

An Focal Reporter

FIRST year medical students have made complaints to the Postgraduate Students' Association about differences in pass rates between their year and last year's first year students in the Graduate Medical School. The School has increased the threshold required to get a 'green flag' by 10 per cent for the present first years.

"First year students are querying these higher requirements that are in place now but weren't in place for their second year counterparts. In 2007/08, students were required

to attain a 50 per cent average across the combined total of their modules to get a 'yellow flag' (a pass, but in need of more work) but in 2008/09 this was increased to 60 per cent. Similarly, a 'green flag' was given to students who achieved a 55 per cent average in 2007/08, but who would now need 65 per cent.

"While last year was the first year of the course and could be described as a pilot year, students are finding it very difficult to attain these scores in what is already a very difficult course," said Emma Murphy, PSA

President.

The Medical School implements a different progression scheme to the rest of UL, marking students' progress on a yearly average rather than per semester.

"This really emphasises the need for specific regulations and for students to be properly notified that the School does not follow the traditional UL regulations used in other departments," Ms Murphy said, stating that students were confused and frustrated by the marking system in place.

Tackling homophobia with a sparkle

SPARKLES is an unprecedented three-day event hosted by the campus LGBT society, Out in UL, with the theme of 'Acceptance through Understanding: Tackling Homophobia'.

From Thursday, 26 February, members of the LGBT community and their friends are invited to the weekend of "understanding, acceptance and fun" according to Out in UL Co-President Lorraine Curham.

"We want to bring the LGBT community closer together through

fun, social events and create closer ties between all of us. We will only ever achieve anything if we achieve it together."

A launch party in Riddlers on Thursday, 26th, will kick-start the event followed by 'Queerbash' the following night in Tatlers. Queerbash is Out in UL's annual fundraising event, bringing together up to 400 people. Ms Curham promised that, "this will be a night of total chaos". The night will begin with a variety show at 9pm with DJ Jules, DJ Jeff, Fermelda Heidi, Déjà vu, Madonna

Lucia, Sheila Fitzpatrick "and much, much more" all making special guest appearances.

Workshops and talks on Saturday 28th will focus on the LGBT community. Ms Curham explained that there will be workshops in the areas of sexual health, drag, marriage equality and Dublin Pride.

She advised that all the workshops are free to attend and encouraged anyone with an interest to send an email to the society (outinul@yahoo.ie) to register before Thursday, 12 February.

UL PhotoSoc see the lights

Michael Johnson

MEMBERS of UL's Photo Society braved the frozen landscape of the Scandinavian wilderness this January in search of a photographic holy grail: the Aurora Borealis. Only to be found in the Polar Regions, the auroras are natural light displays in the sky, usually observed during the night-time.

Spending five nights in two difference dark site locations around Kiruna in northern Sweden, the society members managed to photograph the aurora on three separate occasions.

Michael Johnson, UL Photo Soc,

said, "While nobody can guarantee seeing the lights, you can maximise your chances of viewing them by choosing a location within the Arctic Circle.

"You should also ensure a dark site for your location: light pollution from street lights, cars, or other man-made sources is to be avoided.

"Cold weather also helps to maximise your viewing chances – hence, dress warmly and bring lots of clothes as well as camera equipment!"

Mr Johnson explained the 'Nordic Lights' phenomena as being caused by the streams of charged plasma from the sun colliding with the edge

of the Earth's magnetic field. As the particles collide, some of them are trapped and follow the magnetic force down closer to the Earth where they collide with gases and start to glow, producing the spectacle known as the aurora.

The colours in the aurora depend on what gas the particles interact with: oxygen causes a green hue; nitrogen causes purple.

Society members chose Kiruna in northern Sweden as their destination for the trip as it is a known location for viewing the aurora.

Mr Johnson also advised anyone interested in photography that the society meets weekly on campus while weekend and day trips to off-campus locations for photographic trips are also planned.

Plans for this semester include visits to the Giant's Causeway, Belfast and Clonmacnoise in the midlands amongst others.

"You can contact the Photo Society at photoul@gmail.com or at the website <http://www.photo.ul.ie> if you are interested in seeing some of Ireland, learning how to take good photographs or improve on your existing photographic experiences."



Post Graduate Students' Association UL

Annual Charity Ball

Friday March 6th
The Limerick Strand Hotel

Dinner at Eight followed by Band & DJ
Tickets €35 from PSA & Students Union

Dress Formal

Comic creator to headline Skycon '09

Mark Brennan

FORMER Nasa contractor and creator of xkcd comic Randall Munroe will be the main attraction at Skycon '09, a one-day technology conference to be hosted by UL's Computer Society, Skynet, on campus in the CSIS building on Saturday, 14 February.

He will be joined by David Malone, who works on IPv6 and Wireless Networking in the FreeBSD operating system, along with other speakers to attend the second conference held by the society, following on from the success of last year's convention.

Representatives of Irish companies will also be at the conference including Havok, whose physics engine is used in over 150 game and digital media, and Daft.ie, one of the most successful websites in Ireland.

This year's conference will bring a number of different experts to UL to give talks falling loosely into three themes: open source, games development and technology in corporations.

Skycon will present opportunities to see how companies are successfully adopting and using Open Source software.

Other speakers, including Martha Rotter from Microsoft's XNA Division, Alan J. Guinane from AIB's Enterprise Systems & Technology unit and Loraine Morgan from UL's Computer Science and Information Systems department, will also make appearances at the conference.

John Flanagan, one of the student organisers of the conference, said, "The key to a conference such as ours is to create an environment to invigorate people with new ideas and directions; it's amazing to see how easily enthusiasm can rub off."

Skynet '09 will begin at 10am on Saturday, 14 February and is expected to continue until 6.30pm. A full timetable of events plus additional information as well as registration details can be found at skycon.skynet.ie.

ULTV's bid for the BBC

TWENTY-three television and media enthusiasts from UL travelled to London over the mid-semester break to visit the BBC studios. Members of the new ULTV society ventured to the British capital for a weekend to explore the studios of the broadcasting giant.

Louise McCormack, Co-President of the Society, remarked that, "If you have any interest in television production, or are even just a connoisseur of the box, this is the place to be."

For some of the budding journalists amongst us, the highlight was easily the BBC News studios. BBC news has more viewers than any other news group in the world and the studios were nothing short of amazing."

McCormack, a first year Digital Media & Design student, continued to explain that "For the more technical people like me, using the blue and green screens was the highlight."

Society members also gained hands-on experience at the studios:

"Declan did a fantastic job of presenting the weather while I read the news highlights for the day!"

Six members also had, "some green screen fun" when they took part in a game show.

The co-President praised the tour, saying, "The studios themselves were amazing – easily the most impressive we had ever been to. The equipment is worth hundreds of thousands in these studios that cost

£45,000 per day to hire."

The students spent two hours touring the studios as part of their weekend sightseeing and bonding in London, "taking full advantage of the favourable exchange rate".



Members of ULTV at the BBC studios in London in January

Ógra plan for semester two

Niamh O'Donovan

THE Con Colbert Cumann elected three new committee members due to vacancies arising in Week 1. Eric Doyle was elected Leas-Cathaoirleach, Ray O'Mahony as Rúnaí and Mark Bradley as Vice Treasurer. All candidates were unopposed.

UL Ógra Fianna Fáil has a strong semester of events planned following on from the successes of the trips to Brussels and the Oireachtas last semester.

On Saturday, 31 January 31st, Cathaoirleach Derek Daly travelled

to the Ógra Fianna Fáil National Conference of Third Level Cumann Cathaoirleach in Dublin. The main focus of this meeting was to discuss members' views on the third level system in its totality.

Topics discussed surrounding this issue included wastage, time spent teaching by lecturers, fees, alternative funding methods. One thing that was made clear by Cathaoirleach Ógra Dara Calleary TD, was that the Minister for Education will entertain the idea of retaining free fees, but a viable,

realistic alternative must be proposed to replace the current funding source.

With this in mind, Minister O'Keefe will attend an Education Forum with Ógra members at the Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis.

On 21 February, one team, two novice speakers and one Irish public speaker will compete in the Munster round of the De Valera Cup Debating Competition. The Final will take place at the Ard-Fheis.

From the 27 to 29 February, the 72ú Fianna Fáil Ard-Fheis will take

place at Citywest Hotel, Saggart.

The Cumann has submitted a number of motions including one calling for the abolition of motor tax in favour of a more environmentally friendly addition to the cost of a litre of fuel and another calling on the government to provide automatic grant entitlements to those made redundant, particularly pertinent at the moment. During March the Cumann will attend an episode of RTÉ's Questions and Answers. In April, Ógra will host a reunion for committee

members who have served since the Cumann was established in 1993

In addition to the above, we will continue to seek guest speakers our members request to come and address the Cumann throughout the semester.

We would also like to take this opportunity to inform the UL community that Joe O'Neill has been co-opted to replace Paul Mulally as Leas-Cathaoirleach Ógra following his resignation due to work commitments. Members should also feel free to use the discussion

boards on Cumann and Ógra Facebook presences.

We will continue to invite members to make their views, on any issues, known to us in a non-confrontational setting. Let us take this opportunity to remind you that the student members of UL Ógra are not the government. We will continue to make representations to our party hierarchy based on feedback from members who attend meetings. (Mondays at 6pm in ULSU)

Ar aghaidh le Fianna Fáil.

Future not so bleak for class of '09

Nicole Ní Ríordáin

OPEN a newspaper or turn on the radio and no doubt the effects of the current recession on the employment sector of this country will be glaringly obvious: job losses, salary cuts and extended holidays that are forced on the workforce. The question on the minds of most students, especially those reaching the end of their studies, is whether they will manage to find a job after graduating in the present economic climate.

Mary Sweeney, Head of Careers

in the Cooperative Education & Careers Division, says that she is "not surprised that graduates are concerned". She advises final year students to look at all their options; between seeking employment in Ireland or abroad, voluntary work or further studies, there are prospects for everyone.

When it comes to entering directly into employment after graduating, Ms Sweeney encourages students to acknowledge that, despite the media, people are still being employed.

109 employers were present at

the Careers Fair that took place on campus last October, all of them wanting to fill vacancies.

However, it will be harder to get a job in the coming year.

"Final year students need to be more positive, more pro-active and more competitive. They will need to make more effort and cast a broader net, looking at jobs in different locations.

"Students need to be thinking of their CV and availing of any experience as it is much easier to get a job when you are already in a job," said Ms Sweeney.

It is expected that the percentage of UL students who find employment abroad, which was previously between 6 and 8 per cent, will increase this year.

This belief is also held by the Careers Division, who emphasise that there are many job opportunities in Australia and Canada, as well as educational and engineering projects in Alaska and teaching vacancies in the United Arab Emirates, China and Korea. This fact is reflected by the 150 students who attended a recent USIT presentation on campus.

Another option for a soon-to-be

graduate is further education. The University will be hosting a Postgrad Fair on Wednesday, 11 February, which is a good chance for students who are considering doing a postgraduate course to come along and see what's on offer and get advice from the experts.

The Careers Division also advises all first, second and third year students to start thinking of their CV, looking for experience and networking with people in the career they wish to follow.

Help is available to anyone who needs it from www.ul.ie/careers, or

alternatively students can drop into the Careers Service office in room E0019 where they can arrange to speak to career advisors and browse the many resources located there.

Students should be mindful of the fact that a good CV will increase their chances of being hired, which is why a drop-in service is available between 1 and 2pm every day, during which advisors assist in improving CVs.

Finally, Mary Sweeney is adamant that good students need not stress about their career prospects, saying that, "good people always find work".

Replaying Lisbon

David Studer

IN THE last edition of An Focal an argument was put forward, using the metaphor of an FA Cup Final, that the defeat of the Lisbon Treaty last year was ultimately a fair contest and that a second referendum would be like replaying a final because the wrong team won last time out.

This metaphor described the No camp as campaigning, “steadily and quietly” and in “an honest and abrasive style”. If it’s one thing Declan Ganley did not do last time round, it was campaign honestly.

He took advantage of Ireland’s laws regarding equal media coverage for a referendum and malevolently played on people’s fears, turning them into their worst nightmares: worries over conscription into an EU army, the introduction of abortion, control over our taxation system. What rubbish. Moreover Ganley and his motley crew of supporters have called our return to the polls later this year as undemocratic and disregarding of the Irish electorate.

From the moment the result of last June’s referendum was confirmed it was inevitable that we were going to have to vote on the Lisbon Treaty again. Anyone with a modicum of knowledge regarding EU politics

would not have been surprised when it was announced that the Irish government was going to hold another referendum.

Indeed, it is notable that when Brian Cowen finally confirmed that Ireland would be going back to the polls that no one was in the slightest bit taken aback.

Considering he and his ministers used every public speaking event they could to stress the importance of being a member of the EU, it was about as predictable as seeing a HPSS student elected to the SU exec.

It is important to take a step back before dismissing this decision to rerun the Lisbon Treaty as undemocratic and unfair to the Irish people and the No campaign team who campaigned so vigorously.

If taken from another perspective, it is clear that Ireland is, at the moment, holding a very strong pair of cards. Cowen could essentially hold the rest of Europe to ransom. And indeed to a certain extent he has underplayed his hand. What he has succeeded in is winning legal guarantees on the issues which were of concern to the electorate and hampered the last campaign: abortion, neutrality and taxation

and a guarantee that Ireland, along with all other EU members, will retain its commissioner.

Considering that Ireland alone has been holding up the ratification process (the Czechs are the only country yet to ratify, mainly due to its Euro-sceptic president), Cowen could have asked for much more. It is perhaps a sign that Ireland will need the future goodwill of Brussels in this current financial crisis that he did not. As far as Cowen, and the other main party leaders are concerned, the ratification of this treaty is vital for Ireland if we are not to be left behind in a two-speed Europe.

This is a view also held by former lecturer on EU Politics in UL, Dr John O’ Brennan. Back in December he called for a referendum on whether or not Ireland should remain in the EU.

His argument was based on the premise that the rejection of Lisbon back in June 2008 was the most serious crisis in external relations since the Second World War, a crisis compounded by the financial and banking crisis. Although a vote on Ireland’s future participation in the Union is perhaps a bit extreme, O’ Brennan’s justifications are

certainly reasonable enough to validate a second trip the polls later this year

Firstly, it is inconceivable that Ireland, with a population of some four million citizens, can hold back the introduction of a new institutional framework for the EU, particularly one that has been democratically accepted by 26 other countries with a combined population just short of 500 million. Surely such a point diminishes any argument that it is undemocratic to have another referendum on the Lisbon Treaty.

Secondly, the recent credit crisis has reemphasised the importance of the EU for Ireland’s economy. A joke that has been doing the rounds in recent months asks what the difference is between Ireland and Iceland. The answer is one letter and six months. I would argue that it is two letters: the EU.

The illusion of our mighty Celtic Tiger economy has been shattered in recent months and with it has disappeared any illusion that we have any realistic economic future outside the EU. Indeed, even in America there is a certain amount of uneasiness about the Irish No vote. For many, a second rejection of Lisbon will turn off any potential



US investors, something that Ireland can certainly not afford to do in this financial climate.

Returning to the notion put forward by the No camp that asking the Irish people to vote again is undemocratic is something I find extremely difficult to fathom. I fail to see how bringing another referendum to the electorate is undemocratic, particularly considering the guarantees and changes the Irish government have secured.

If it is allowed by our constitution, a constitution which the anti-Lisbon

MEP Kathy Sinnott praised while speaking in UL last November as an “absolutely amazing” constitution and “the best of example of a document that upholds human rights”, then surely another referendum is a democratic and valid option for the Irish government.

If it is written in the rulebook of the English FA that a final can be replayed, then there would be no consternation or uproar because it would be part of the rules signed up to by each team. But there is not. There is in Ireland.

Uncovering the Athenian protests



Caitlin Ryan

OVER the winter break, I embarked upon a journey to Athens, where I was visiting a friend. Whilst there, I had the privilege to march in a demonstration. The demonstration was a continuation of protests held in Greece since the 6 December when Greek police shot and killed 15 year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos.

Overwhelmingly, media coverage of the protests has failed to show the brutality of the Greek police.

Rather, European and American media have been using sensational journalism to highlight only the violence of a select few protestors.

On the 9 January we convened

in front of Athens University. The plan was to start at the university, and walk in a circle past the far corner of parliament and back to the university.

I cannot stress enough that the march was peaceful. People were simply marching, chanting, and holding banners, etc. The vast majority of shops were still open, illustrating that shop keepers did not feel threatened by the march.

As the march came around the final corner, passing the corner of the parliament square and heading back to the university, it became clear just how many riot police were present. The march paused

as we came around the corner; I was near the back, standing near the sidewalk and less than 50 feet from a batch of riot police.

The street we were turning onto was on a slight rise, so from my position I had a good view of the marchers who had already gone around the corner.

The march was stopped, with people standing side by side across a three-lane street. As people stood, the batch of police closest to me moved up the street and, without warning or provocation, fired three canisters of teargas straight into the standing crowd. People scattered, and as we walked back

in the direction we’d come from I couldn’t believe the number of people on the street and sidewalk, doubled over from the teargas.

In particular, what struck me was the number of elderly Athenians who had been walking peacefully moments before alongside the students. After several minutes we walked back towards the university and re-joined a group. Riot police walked alongside us the entire way, and this time we were within a block or so of the university before they fired five more canisters of teargas into the crowd.

We stood in the middle of the street for as long as we possibly could, observing the police. As it became unbearable to stay, we walked back up the street. We were forced to walk alongside a row of police because another group of police had pushed us off the street and onto the sidewalk and away from the university.

As I walked up the sidewalk, I watched as one policeman pushed the man in front of me with his shield. The man continued walking past two or three more policemen before he was kicked in the thigh by another policeman. We regrouped again, as the wind blew the teargas straight into our faces,

waiting perhaps five more minutes before walking back down the street towards the university.

Our goal was to get as close to the university as possible to observe.

It was on this third attempt that I saw the first signs of protesters throwing anything at the police. No less than seven canisters of teargas had been thrown at us before I saw any protesters exhibiting any kind of defence.

I watched as cops tackled two young boys from behind. Both were running up the street towards the university, each boy was tackled by at least three cops, and thrown to the ground. They pushed one boy back up the street and dragged the second boy away. I couldn’t see where they had taken him because the cops launched four more canisters of gas.

We were much closer this time than we had been before. Again, we stayed for as long as we physically could before retreating. I could hardly open my eyes, and though I had my nose and mouth covered, even breathing was extremely painful. We made the decision to leave after three more canisters were fired. There were fewer and fewer protestors trying to move towards the university and

it became clear that without a gas mask we wouldn’t make it.

The Associated Press report the next morning claimed that protestors started the violence, but violence on the part of the protestors broke out only after the police fired teargas into a standing crowd.

One street away from where I was, riot police knocked down a 75 year old woman. They dragged her down the street, and lawyers who tried to protect her were arrested, along with several journalists who were documenting this.

When we listen to mainstream media reports of protests around the world, it is crucial that we understand that we often get only sensational reports of violent protestors while reports of police brutality and police aggression are largely ignored. The problem therefore, is not limited to Greece itself.

Obviously serious problems exist in any society where police are shooting civilians, but another less obvious problem exists when the media outside of that society is presenting such a one-sided view of the goings on, and essentially condoning the brutal tactics of the police.

Remembering George W.

Paul Bellew

HAVING attended Barack Obama's historic inauguration, one of the most striking memories of the day was the hostility of the masses towards the outgoing President, George W. Bush. While it was hardly surprising, it marred an otherwise joyous and unforgettable occasion. The critics and criticisms of George W. Bush are many and justified, however, the reception he received on the National Mall was regrettable and out of touch with the atmosphere of the day. It may have served as a protest against his stewardship but it also conveyed a lack of respect for the office of the President.

Before he left office, the outgoing President accurately declared that history may judge him differently than current indicators suggest. It is a distinct possibility. George W. Bush leaves office with one of the lowest ratings of any US President since polling began and the conventional wisdom pertains that history will also place him among the less distinguished occupants of the Oval Office.

However history may be kind to George W. Bush. It is simply too early to judge. Unpopular wartime Presidents or Prime Ministers

redeemed by the passage of time are not without precedent.

Winston Churchill lost the 1945 British general election having won the war, yet was regularly attacked by protestors bearing rotten fruit and vegetables. Today, he is considered the greatest Briton of all time. Harry S. Truman vacated the White House with ratings comparable to George W. Bush, yet is now revered by Democrats and Republicans alike.

Bush's reputation rests on the future of Iraq and the performance of the Obama administration. While he is likely to, and should, be remembered as the man who initiated an imperialistic, ill-planned and pre-emptive war, it is arguably the result of the conflict and its consequences that will determine his legacy. Is it inconceivable that should a stable democracy take root in Iraq and serve as a model to others in the region that Bush will be hailed as a visionary irrespective of the input of the Obama administration?

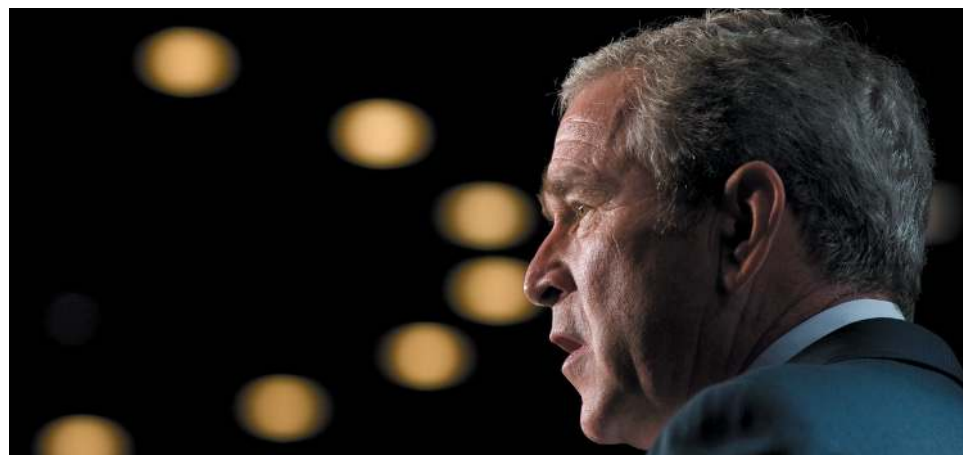
Regarding Iraq, President Obama is in a perilous situation. Elected with a forceful mandate to finish an infinitely unpopular war, he not only has to end it but has to do so

successfully.

Obama does not want to be remembered as the man who lost Iraq. Americans of this generation and the next will be less preoccupied with who started the war but with who lost it. In politics, perception can trump reality: "it's not how it is that matters; it's what it looks like". This harsh reality is not lost on the new President who is already retreating from his campaign promise of a sixteen month withdrawal from Iraq, a stance seemingly more in tune with the constraints and realities of office.

The same applies to the handling of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. Although President Obama has already ordered the closing of Camp Delta within a year there is no clear indication as to how this is to be accomplished successfully.

The nightmare situation for Obama involves former detainees released as part of his plan partaking in a future attack on US soil or US interests. In his last public address, former President Bush cited keeping America safe as one of his major accomplishments post 9/11. This is another yardstick against which Obama will be measured and Bush compared.



Bush's ultimate legacy may not be as negative as currently perceived

In his inaugural address, the new President declared that America would not compromise its ideals for its safety. While admirable in rhetoric, it is impractical in reality should the US suffer an attack with Obama at the helm.

While events at Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib have consistently aroused vigorous opposition and revulsion abroad it has been a slower process in the United States. Criticism of these policies has gradually emerged in mainstream politics as the spectre of the 9/11 attacks fade further away.

However, in the event of another

attack on the US mainland, President Obama could be forced by public opinion to adopt the very policies and practices that he now attempts to repeal. Ultimately, the majority of American citizens would gladly compromise ideals for safety in the wake of a terrorist attack despite lofty pronouncements to the contrary.

Again, while this situation is hypothetical, it is not unfeasible. Bush would be credited as the President who kept America safe; Obama, the Democrat who was weak on national security.

It may seem like sacrilege to some in comparing George W. Bush with Winston Churchill and Harry S. Truman but the historic comparison is worth noting. Their cause may have been nobler, yet it is results and consequences, rather than motives, that are remembered.

While the likelihood is that he will be remembered as an unpopular and damaging President, especially given the economic meltdown that occurred on his watch, there remains the potential for redemption and an acclaimed position for George W. Bush in American history.

Postgraduate Study Fair: Wednesday, 11th February, 2009 12-3pm, EGO-10

Do you think you might be interested in Postgraduate Study when you graduate? If so, you are in good company as about 25% of UL graduates go on to some form of further study or research every year. We expect to see a significant increase in interest this year as students face into an uncertain job market. You can certainly improve your employment prospects by gaining a further qualification, as this allows you to develop additional expertise and skills which can be very attractive to employers. Choosing between the vast range of postgraduate courses available can be very difficult, even stressful. To help you explore and evaluate these options, the Careers Service is organising a Postgraduate Study Fair on Wednesday, 11th February. This will take place in EGO 10 from 12.00 to 3.00 and will be open to all students and graduates, regardless of year of study.

What happens at a Postgraduate Study Fair?

The Postgraduate Study Fair is somewhat similar to the Careers Fair which was held in October. The objective is to provide you with information on the range of postgraduate study

opportunities available in Ireland, and in some UK colleges. Specialist staff from all the Irish Universities, Institutes of Technology, and other institutions will be available to answer questions on a range of issues including: selection procedures, application process, financial support, course content, employment prospects, etc. It will be a very informal atmosphere with plenty of opportunities for individual discussions with the experts.

What colleges will attend?

We will have about 30 exhibition stands covering the main postgraduate study and research opportunities in Ireland, and some overseas. UL will be very well represented as each College will have an individual stand with information on research and taught programmes study options. For a list of exhibitors, check the website at: <http://www.ul.ie/careers/careers/events/fairs.shtml#postgrad>.

How to prepare for the Fair

- Call in to the Careers Service at E0019 and check out the sources of information on postgraduate study in Ireland and abroad.

- Collect a free copy of the

Postgradireland Directory, make note of courses that interest you and prepare a checklist of questions in advance of the fair.

- Pre-register online at <http://www.ul.ie/careers/careers/events/fairs.shtml#postgrad>.

- Check the Postgraduate Study section of the Careers website at: <http://www.ul.ie/careers/careers/postgrad/> and the Postgraduate Directions section of the Destinations website at: <http://www.ul.ie/careers/destinations>

- On the day, turn up early, collect a Guide to the Fair and select the stands you want to visit.

- Call to the UL Careers stand if you have any general questions or if you want some advice on the day.

- If you want to discuss any of your options after the Fair, arrange a meeting with a Careers Adviser.

Whether you're a first year or final year student, you're very welcome to attend the Postgraduate Study Fair. There's something there for everyone. Mary Sweeney, Head of Careers Cooperative Education & Careers Division www.ul.ie/careers

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A dream that never was

John Condren

DAY by day, this country plummets further into the depths of economic misery. Jobs are lost, families are broken, and illusions are shattered. And just like every crisis that has gone before, in our long history of fiscal catastrophes, it is the ordinary man – the factory worker, the farmer, the fisherman – who must pay for the weaknesses of a corrupt and irresponsible Government.

A Government that has turned a €1 billion surplus into an €8 billion deficit in less than a year.

A Government littered with mindless, selfish TDs who, every month, collect their grossly inflated salaries and tend to their carefully cultivated pensions while destitution and despair stalk the housing estates and the schools and the hospitals.

A Government that has forgotten how to govern.

Or rather, one that never knew how to in the first place.

“Where be your gibes now? Your gambols? Your songs? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar?”

So spoke Prince Hamlet in glum tones to the skull of the court jester Yorick, and well might Irish patriots peer in astonishment down from heaven and ask the same questions of an Ireland that has lost its cheerful and expansive spirit in the face of the menacing storm that looms darkly on the horizon.

We were never made for this affluence.

We weren't designed to have Volvos where Volkswagens would do; we weren't intended to holiday in the Maldives or Mauritius where Majorca or even Mullaghmore once sufficed.

We were reared on boxty and porridge, not bagels and paninis. We once envied other nations for their wealth, we committed the mortal sin of covetousness, and now we are suffering God's retribution for it. What goes around, comes around.

So says my parish priest anyway. Whatever the truth, this country is hemorrhaging money at the rate of knots.

The likes of George Lee and David McWilliams have consistently predicted it since 2005, and while once they were vilified now they are venerated.

Every week, another company announces cutbacks in staff numbers and publicises its relocation plans. But who is to blame for this mess, and who can resolve it?



It is all too easy to impugn the politicians. Yes, Bertie and Biffo between them have made a spectacular mess of our comfort zone, and poor young Lenihan, likened to a doctor trying to do the job of a vet (he is a lawyer with no accounting qualifications) is taking the media and public rap for it, as he tries without much success to steer the good ship Celtic Tiger to safer waters away from the nasty coral reefs of World Bank and Global Recession and Stock Market Meltdown.

We were encouraged to invest in property, because we voted for the 'cute hoors', dishonest and self-serving local councillors who were all too willing to grant planning permission for houses (and only houses, mind, no fripperies such as shops or schools) to builders in return for bulky brown envelopes.

This corruption applies across every political party, and is an irrefutable point – why else have we had three costly tribunals running in Dublin Castle for the entire past decade? We have no oil, no gas or coal worth speaking of; no gold or diamonds or iron ore. Talked up by Bertie Ahern, who sowed seeds of panic in young people not already on the property ladder, council houses swiftly became the raw materials of the New Ireland, and because their prices were vastly inflated our cost of living shot through the roof and our crippling mortgage repayments and caused family strife and unhappiness. As in the parable, our house was built on sand, and

now it is crumbling.

Our essential public servants – the teachers, the nurses, the Gardaí – are now expected to contribute to the national interest and meekly accept the pay cuts proposed in their sectors. Expect a year or more of constant strikes, as these upstanding and enterprising workers, striving to do their jobs despite being disgracefully underfunded, will refuse quite rightly to pay for this over-waged Government's blunders since 1997. When the Government visibly impose significant pay cuts on themselves in keeping with our new-found need for thrift, then perhaps the rest of us will follow suit.

Even better, how about cutting down on the numbers of civil servants and junior ministers? Our nation is famed throughout Europe for its pettifogging layers of bureaucratic interference at national level – and that's saying something, seeing as many of the rules our bureaucrats are charged with implementing now come from Europe. Nevertheless, we all know that won't happen. What, civil servants impose pay or hour reductions on themselves!? Hell will freeze over first.

But the best scenario of all would arise if Mr Cowen were to awake one sunny spring morning and instead of rehearsing another bland, boring and boorish speech about his continued aims to, “ensure the future stability and viability of the country's economy going forward”, decided to go for a little stroll in the leafy peace of the Phoenix

Park.

And while he was there, sure wouldn't it be grand if Mary McAleese was at home in the Áras for once, with a big pot of tea and some of those nice lemon creams she always keeps for momentous occasions such as peace treaties with the North or the dissolution of governments.

And after a nice chat while sitting over tea and biscuits in the conservatory, with Martin waved away out of earshot (three's a crowd, you know), Brian could quietly confess that he is just unable to continue as Taoiseach, and that Enda or (better still) that troublesome little Meathman Richard Bruton deserve a go at running the country and actually providing a bit of constructive leadership.

“Are you sure Brian?” Mary would purr in that deep Down drawl, and when Brian would nod in dumb misery and sink his face into his hands in shame at his arrogance and ineptitude since May 2008, Mary would quietly reach for the box of Kleenex and, more importantly, the template for general election announcements...

What a splendid dream I've just awoken from. Almost as real as the dream of an Irish economy that used its money wisely and was managed by competent politicians and responsible bankers.

Maybe when (or indeed if) we Irish ever enjoy prosperity again, we'll know what to do with it. I wish to God I could say that with confidence, but right now, looking at the mess we're in, I'm afraid I can't.

Another opportunity lost

Eric Doyle

LAST year the attacks in Mumbai reminded the world that the threat of terrorism has not gone quietly into the night. While here in the West the number have attacks have dwindled, that does not infer that the issue is anywhere near resolved. In India the personal cost in lives is still being felt and tensions remain high, particularly as Pakistan stubbornly refuses to make any honest effort to stamp out the extremists in its Northern provinces.

As part of the ongoing investigation, India has recently presented Pakistan with a dossier alleging that Pakistani citizens, with either tacit or complicit approval by elements within the Pakistani military, where behind the attacks in Mumbai, India's financial hub and largest city. The evidence has been received with muted acknowledgement in Islamabad. This has complicated the acrimony between the two long time rivals.

The response from Islamabad was to conduct a probe into the possibility that the attack was planned in there. The results of which last week come as no surprise as Pakistan refutes any suggestion that the terrorists used Pakistan as a base to plan and launch the attacks. The implications of this for the region are poor.

The recently elected new civilian government of Pakistan has yet to impress upon its military its authority effectively. The result is a state which is still controlled largely by military interests. Military interests that are said to be sympathetic to the Islamic fundamentalists involved in the ongoing war in Afghanistan and terrorist activity in India. The recent attacks have renewed allegations claiming Pakistani involvement in state-sponsored terrorism.

The conflict in Afghanistan long ago fell out of the headlines in mainstream media. The very nature of the conflict was unsuitable for media coverage more interested in the shock and awe of the Iraq campaign. However, despite its low-level coverage, the reality is that it has remained stubbornly intractable mainly because Pakistan has allowed extremists to organise in its northern tribal lands. These very extremists are the same people who struck on 26 November last year.

A notoriously ungovernable region historically, Pakistan has done very little to secure the area over the years. The Taliban after its crushing defeat at the hands of NATO and the Northern Alliance forces in 2001, fled into the North Western regions of Pakistan where they set about launching an insurgency back across the border. This was facilitated by the failure of the Pakistan military government of the time under General Pervez Musharraf to hunt them down. This has led to claims that the Pakistani military, or at least elements of it are in league with the jihadists.

This cannot be acceptable from a supposedly civilian government. So far as evidenced by the response to the atrocities of 26/11, the new administration under Yousaf Raza Gilani has done little to address the problem other than pay lip-service to transparency and international law. The response two weeks ago was no different to what would have been expected of the military regime. It suggests a government unwilling to face up to the damning realities that face Pakistan today.

Gilani needs to break with the past to effect any change and defeat the fundamentalists that have destabilised the North-western provinces and endangered the very viability of his government. The tribal belt in Pakistan is a breeding ground for extremism and has blighted advancement in Pakistan for years.

If the war in Afghanistan is to come to a satisfactory end, which it is far from at the moment, as in fact the conflict has become ever more intractable as US and NATO forces are unable to strike at the Taliban strongholds in North-west Pakistan, then Gilani's government is going to have to do alot more to live up to its promises last year.

Pakistan-Indian relations, along with the wider welfare and security of the wider region depend on a more assertive responsible administration in Islamabad which is willing to take its military and the Taliban remnants in the north in hand and also the realisation that both nations welfare is dependent upon that of the other.

Only time will tell if that is possible but, in the meantime, it would seem another opportunity for long-term gain has been disregarded in favour of blinkered short-termism.

Columnists

Running
on empty

Paul Carty

Walking from through the car park of my apartment block, I couldn't help but notice the sheer number of cars there. And some of them were very new cars. It's an exclusively student apartment block.

One of the most intriguing effects of the boom times is the proliferation of cars among the student population. It could serve as an indictment on our shockingly bad public transport system or, more realistically, a characteristic of the laissez-faire attitude to money that has prevailed in this country for the last ten years.

Ireland is possibly the most car-dependent country in the EU. One only needs to take a cursory glance at driving test waiting times to see how big a priority it is in most Irish lives. My own pink licence was acquired more at the behest of my parents than any serious inclination on my part. They urged me in typical Irish Mammy and Daddy fashion to, "get it out of the way".

I suppose the fact that a lot of my friends had not only gotten their licences, but had their own cars went into the bargain as well. Plus, having a girlfriend at the time that was driving her own car was another factor in getting my arse in gear with the licence situation.

There were about ten people in Leaving Cert driving to school when I was there. I'm fairly sure five or six of them actually owned the cars too. It's incredible when you think of it really – not even finished school and driving your own car.

Then, of course, you head to college and the plethora of Golfs, Fiestas, Civics – even the odd Mini Cooper – buzz about the campus. Most kids in France get scooters when they need transport, but here in Ireland a Vespa simply will not suffice: Golfs are the order of the day here.

And you have to wonder how long can this attitude be sustained in Ireland? While one can appreciate that some students have endeavoured to lovingly own and run their own chariots of choice by their own means, how many are being subsidised by Mammy and Daddy?

And how much longer can the aforementioned old pair afford to entertain such a luxury? Perhaps it's time for their precious tots to become familiar with the inside of a bus again.

The average person driving a 02 Golf will pay €333 road tax per year, €1000 on insurance, €300 on servicing and dispenses with €1100, on average, on petrol based on someone living an hour away from UL.

Add it all up and it comes to €52 a week to run your car. Factor in rent, living expenses and a touch of drinking during the week and you'd want to be working a tidy little number at the weekends to cover it all.

The rest of us must content ourselves with slumming it on the buses and trains. As bad as they are, they're a more viable alternative to a lot of students than having a car. As much as I'd love to have a car right now myself, it'd be economic suicide having one while still in full-time education.

For those of you who work hard to keep your car, I admire your graft. For those of you who don't...well, let's say the gear changes won't be as smooth this year.

I Spy

*I Spy's take on losing one's virginity
(if you choose) in University.*

I know by the time many of you land in our fair University you could star in your very own pornographic film (the youth today!).

Yet, for a lot of people, their first sexual encounter will be in University. This week, I will attempt to lift the veil from those virginal sexual encounters which often epitomise our first few years in University. It is, after all, an age of exploration, sexual awakening and often just self release (which is now officially sanctioned by the Pope so go mad.)

As you may have noticed, there are many attractive young women and men attending our University... not the Leaving Certs who study in the library now...I mean real women!

Whether you are a first year or a seasoned pro, you'll know that college is the time to enjoy yourself. It's a time to become more comfortable with the opposite (or the same, for that matter) of the species in a comfortable environment of pressure-free experimentation ending in emotional and physical nirvana. Well, that's how it should be isn't it?

Well of course it shouldn't! Your first sexual encounter shouldn't

be Romeo and Juliet like, it should be awkward and embarrassing and messy melange of inexplicable moving parts.

It should look much like a Labrador trying to tune an FM Radio and shouldn't sound much different either.

It should be a wonderful coming together of two people who have absolutely no idea what they're doing. It should be comical, memorable and indeed at times... special.

A friend once told me that his first sexual experience was so bad that when he lay down on the bed exhausted from his (god-like) effort, which was high on energy but low on class – a bit like Terry Phelan – the girl turned to him and said, "That was pretty good... I suppose...".

Yet he took that white lie as a personal victory; a momentous sweaty victory; the monkey had been shorn from his back and he could now boast about his new-found sexual "experience" – that being the singular form.

Whatever rules or moral standpoint you take on sex you're free to explore what you're comfortable with at university as long as you have a willing accomplice be they the same or the opposite sex.

For many men it's often just great to get it out of the way. For women, it's generally a much more personal encounter. This isn't always clear to us boys when you're battling the monkey that lives on your back, but, remember that sex where both parties are comfortable and trust each other is miles better – and generally more adventurous which is a bonus.

How much sex you're actually entitled to rests on many different factors which are apparent (looks, charm, size of wallet). It's always good to make an effort for the ladies though, so don't forget to wash and even brush your teeth (I hear they like that).

After that it's up to you how prolific you attempt to be. I once knew a man whose very name would spark fear into heart of any Mary I women; he was more than prolific: he was an epidemic. He once had five women on the go until one night, four of them arrived into Clem Smith's pub within 15 minutes of each other; he was caught by the balls and not metaphorically either.

While this kind of behaviour is not to be condoned or admired by anyone except those who realise what a legend that guy is, attitudes can be very different. I once thought that I would be ready to

get married after fourth year and that I would have had such a hard couple of years partying that I would only be fit to put out to stud.

As the end draws near I realise now that I would have more of a role umpiring drive-by shootings in L.A. than getting married, which brings me on to reminding you that condoms are a necessity unless you want your instant of pleasure to become the greatest responsibility known to man.

Yes, that's right – sending your girlfriend for the morning after pill while you sit at home in bed wondering whether it will work: did she take it? does she secretly want to marry me? is she secretly sitting upside down in the front room so as to aid fertility? All very pressing issues, I know.

If you choose not to take part in sexual activity, just cuddling is super; not like staying up all night having sex – but not bad either.

I Spy's take would be to go with the flow. It doesn't matter when it happens or when you choose to do it, the main thing is that you're comfortable and happy with what you're at.

Until then, you always have what the Pope recommends and he knows his stuff having sworn off the old sex. Until next time, take it easy.

Are we here more than two weeks already? Just to let you know but that big fiery demon in the sky that caught a few people by surprise in week one is known locally as 'the sun'. It is rumoured to have astounding powers of renewal, regeneration, life giving, and is even said to assist in the drying of clothes. Don't look at it directly as it is very, very shy and doing so will only cause it to run and hide. Oh you already did? Right enough, another 40 days of darkness so.

The union

To matters considerably more parochial. The SU has embarked on a large scale effort to promote itself to all and sundry and that's a good thing. Well we think it is. Though we still reckon the new SU logo looks like a half arsed version of the GAA logo done by someone who didn't get through the interview for an Art and Design course. We're of the view that this logo could have gone a bit further down a more radical road, how about adopting two students then body paint them in the union colours and have them be a living logo for the year. That said if the SU is actively reminding people about all these exciting things they get from it; bookshop, regular shop, erotica shop, advice, then it is also reminding people that they are paying for said things and it

might occur to some that they don't like paying for things especially if they don't use them. Could we, in fact, see the beginnings of another round of anti-SU sentiment from this campaign?

Student Union life is all about cycles. Weeks turn into semesters that cycle around into years and then years that finally cycle around into degrees, and Kara Thrace cycling around again so that..ok.. I've been warned before about too many Galactica spoilers. Anyway, in another example of things coming around once again we're being urged to put the 'raising and giving' back into RAG week. I'm not sure when the raising and giving was surgically removed from RAG week, or who it was that was in charge when the decision was made that it should be taken out. Didn't someone see who took it and take the time to get their registration number? Seriously people if you're going to allow unnamed entities to steal away in the night with concepts like 'raising and giving' then you're just leaving yourselves open to all kinds of problems. And I'm not just talking about attractive ladies making off with your kidneys in the dead of night. (I still say the scar makes me look cool) You could end up losing your vim and vigour, even your joie de vivre if you're not careful, not to mention

your perspicacity. Raise and give by all means but don't be thinking that you're unusual in doing so this year. It has always been part of the RAG week tradition and long may it remain so.

Continuing on the cycle shtick, we'll likely get more of the same old rigmarole once the election seasons starts. People will say just about anything and even more will believe them when they say it. 'I will fix student services' (and not in the way we did for that tomcat that caused us so many sleepless nights) 'I will fight for the night bus', whether the retention of it, or the extension of it or just to be allowed drive it in a demolition derby. 'I will fight to sort out concern X and issue Y, and just let me at problem A'. There are always loads of calls for action, but typically little detail that people can probe and measure after the fact.

In short, candidates say they will change everything and end up achieving comparatively little. Better for someone to do one really important thing and do that really, really, well than to be all over the place touching bases but never quite hitting the spot. Am I right, ladies? I wonder if there is an archive of promises kept somewhere about the SU house or even an SU President's Book of Secrets, containing the location where the

Deep Throat

reactor is buried, the pathway to the boathouse annex, the meaning of the hidden mile and in just what direction is the old Thomond building supposed to be facing in, that also holds all the promises ever made and what was actually done after people had secured their election?

The college

Money, money, money. The Don is really going to be sweating the crease on this one. I wonder if the college will find some important activity in the coming year that the college engages in that needs more of the capitation money, with the result of reducing the cash available to the SU and hence to clubs and societies. I wonder what long term planning capacity (what with largely new teams of sabbats each year) there is within the SU to ensure that we're not caught without brash in pockets. We mentioned last time of writing that the college had a bit of a problem with its overdraft. Well it's getting worse, much worse. A cash grab for the capitation might be the one thing that could revive interest in

the SU proper; after all it is your cash the college would be making off with into the night. Is there much appetite for radical action, like say, turning Scholars into a mid-west version of Bada-Bing?

Also with the Battman talking mergers and specialisation for third level, one wonders where that might leave UL. Would we be once more under the yolk of UCC, or even taking orders from NUIG? That said merging with NUIG, (just so long as they know who is wielding the salted whip, and who is wearing the leather basque) with sub-degree campuses in Mayo/Sligo/Tralee/Letterkenny to form an Atlantic University has its appeal. Is that all part of Ed Walsh's master plan, to be the founding president of a new university all over again? Might that be the real Atlantic Way? Still, Chance the Gardiner's military experience could prove invaluable in repelling any unappreciated advances. Block the gates with buses, electrify the fences, and then all we have to worry about is frogmen coming down the Shannon.

Speaking of harsh times: where is our monorail? Usually when things go south economically we find some vanity project being proposed by the powers that be to divert the attention of the populous. And there are none neither so populous nor easily distracted as undergraduates. So where is our monorail, or whatever it might be? Suggestions to the usual address – thethroat@gmail.com

The wider world

Since the announcement of the departure of Dell, the Castletroy Park Hotel has gone and possibly even more businesses in the time we've gone to print. It says something about the university that most of those visiting college seem to either stay in the Lodge or in town. Either we're really cheap or people like to be close to the exits points of the bus/train station. Now just think what kind of integrated student village complex the Hotel and surroundings would make. Might we convince the SU or the college to buy the lot?

As always UL Prevails!

Postcard from UL

Notes from a German Erasmus student

Alexandra Gdanietz

A Fresh Approach

Jason Kennedy

Diary of a First Year

AFTER five weeks of getting up at two o'clock, watching unhealthy amounts of daytime television and eating actual, proper home-made dinners, I'm back to early starts, late nights and dirty plates left by the side of the sink. It's good to be back.

One of the things I'm really looking forward to this semester is the ULTV drama series. I somehow managed to worm my way into the cast last semester and met most of my fellow thespians at that stage. All the cast, the writer and the director met up last Tuesday for a script reading, but we ended up in stitches laughing most of the time. This was followed by a bonding session in the Scholars. Everyone involved in it seems to be really sound and I'm looking forward to filming with them.

It's a shame most of them didn't hit London with the society. You see, I come from a very small town in the middle of Tipperary. I'm asked for ID in the nightclubs, I'm asked for ID in the off-licence and I'm even asked for ID in the old-man pubs, but in England's capital it seems I can actually pass for an adult. The one time I was asked for ID was going into the Electric Ballroom nightclub in Camden, but that didn't bother me, because everyone was being asked. The bouncer did go on to say, after looking at my ancient passport picture, that if I'd have gone for Harry Potter, I would have beaten Daniel Radcliffe. Every bouncer is a feckin' comedian.

The nightclub itself happened to be a metal club, full of people with Mohawks and great, big bushy beards. I'm about as metal as a Tellytubby with a case of the squirts. Still, had a fantastic night and overall the trip was great craic. It's fair to say we met some colourful European characters, but the one that really sticks out for me is Ricardo, the topless, bespectacled Dutchman who took a fancy to one of the lads playing guitar, and I have the pictures to prove it.

So we're all back to normal life back up in Limerick. I've already landed myself a committee position on ULTV soc, I've been out to spots I haven't been to before and I've discovered just how cruel the people who make the timetables can be.

One of the lads only noticed recently that it is actually me that writes this here little column, and said to me: "I read it a few times and thought that whoever writes this is a bit of a twat." Thanks bud, I never felt more like a journalist in my life.

"Don't panic, it happens every year!" That's probably the best way to summarize my exchange experience at UL last semester.

As an Erasmus student one has to face plenty of new impressions: First of all being totally drenched with rain is nothing out of the ordinary. Meanwhile I am well equipped with raincoat, umbrella and the like.

By the time I managed to deal with the unfavourable weather I found myself confronted with new everyday challenges.

Living with Irish housemates is not always a walk in the park. Soon I figured out that I wasn't the only one. There is something about Irish way of living: Avoiding housekeeping, destroying a great deal of furniture, smashing food, drinking as far as it'll go.

One thing's for certain: the Irish know how to party! They drink you under the table, they just can't help it.

Don't get me wrong, I spend a wonderful time with my housemates on campus, besides the Irish are very polite and helpful. Never did I experience a situation when I couldn't bother Irish students with my bumby English skills!

Village Manager can cause far more trouble than flatmates: "People could've died because of you!"

I had a very nice village manager unless it happened to be my birthday! Inviting more or less 40 people to my apartment might not have been the best idea I ever had, but still it was my birthday and what is more a great chance to get to know people.

After whopping two hours the Manager showed up to end the party by screaming at every single puzzled Erasmus-student. Someone

obviously couldn't take a joke. Anyway, before I knew what was going on, I was found myself condemned to incredibly 10 hours of community service including litter picking, window cleaning, store room clearing. How could it be different?!

Things tend to be unforeseeable over here, but that's what it makes so thrilling.

Besides all the settling in, I totally fell in love with this green island. Ireland is beautiful and it offers so many opportunities to travel and discover.

Cliffs of Moher is definitely a Must and when the sun is shining it just can't be better! Cork was one of the first trips I did with the International Society. Dublin gave me a bit of a city-feeling coming from a big city like Berlin I felt almost home.

By contrast Killarney and its gorgeous Nationalpark, the Ring of Kerry, Galway and Connemara and last but not least Dingle-Peninsula come up with fair and beautiful landscapes, pulsating pub-life and wonderful Irish traditional atmosphere. At least there is a castle in Limerick.

Erasmus surely made me find friends for life, I was regular guest at stables, I got 'egged' during Halloween (just fort he craic of course) and there is no doubt that I spent one of the best times ever at a place, which enjoys the worst reputation in the Republic of Ireland: stab city!

A few days ago I returned to UL to spent my second semester and I hope it will be as brilliant as the first one: Ireland, will you ever let me go? "Don't panic, it happens every year!"

Letters to the Editor

Not insulted by Lisbon II

Dear Madam,

I am writing this letter in response to the article on page 9 of the last issue of An Focal (vol. XVII, No. 8) entitled 'Lisbon II – an insult to the Irish'. Mr. Condren's fear of the European Union and his general ignorance of the workings of this remarkable organisation cannot be forgiven with a poor (and possibly xenophobic) soccer analogy.

While my knowledge of soccer may not be sufficient to question the possibility the FA ordering a replay in a final, I am comforted by the fact that that information affects my life in absolutely no way. The possibility of a second Lisbon referendum however, does...and quite considerably, and not just my life but all of yours and all the of the four hundred and ninety-four million other citizens of the European Union.

While, unfortunately, all of the 494.8 million EU citizens were not asked to vote on the Lisbon Treaty; 0.8 per cent of the total EU population were – the Irish! Normally we are good Europeans and proud of it, we did have a moment of madness at back at Nice, but generally most of us are aware of the huge benefits EU membership has for us.

Cue Celtic tiger greed and callowness. People forgot all too easy just how terrible pre-accession rural Ireland was, not to mention the primary reason the EU exists: to maintain peace in a continent that has been ripping itself apart (along with the rest of the world) since before Europe even had a name. Interestingly since the inception of the EEC in 1957, the only conflicts in Europe have involved The Basques, The Balkans and us!

The impending Lisbon revote may seem highly insulting, and funnily I would agree in some ways with Mr. Condren, however Lisbon is not the battle the No camp have led you to believe it is; that was back at Nice, that is where we lost.

Now thanks to the ridiculous Nice/Amsterdam sagas we have a little thing called 'Closer Cooperation'. 'Whaas dat?' asks the pig farmer from Arklow – Closer Cooperation allows a small group of Member States (26 MS maybe?) to press ahead with integration when there are dissenters (us).

Thankfully this tool has yet to be used fully; maybe Lisbon will be its first outing. If that's the case, where does that leave Ireland? We cannot remain members of the European Communities (as we currently understand it) once it is subsumed by the new legal entity (and no longer exists as it does now) – the Union if the other 26 MS want it to be.

We will be left in limbo at best or shown the door at second best. Worst case scenario in my humble opinion is that we will be only to happy to reject Lisbon II and begin the slow painful process of de-urbanising the nation.

Back to the fields to work, back to a time when Ireland was 'Europe's premier food producing country' – while we're at it why don't we resurrect

Dear Madam,

"To hell with the free market and give us back our former independence as Europe's premier food producing nation". I have never heard as much idiocy in one sentence and especially from a person who is in third level education!

The first ever lecture I had in UL taught us that Ireland is a small open economy. This means that if the world economy is in recession, we get hit twice as hard. It is now more than ever that we need the EU. Our finances are in such a bad state that the EU is fast becoming the only place we can borrow from.

This country has gone from being the equivalent of an Eastern European state to a modern country and the funding for this came from the EU.

Look at how a small economy like Iceland has collapsed and they do not have the support structures that we have within the EU. Mr Condren's statement to turn away from the EU is foolish. What is it that he envisages? A new Celtic tiger era led by the agricultural sector or a small country with 4.2

million people taking on the world?! He needs to come back to reality for a few moments and think about what he is implying. I'm sorry for his woes as a farmer but it is a small sector in the economy in terms of jobs.

The Lisbon Treaty, when held again, will be pivotal. The 'No' campaign was fuelled by lies (yes lies!). The thoughts of conscription and legalising abortion were laughable, yet the lack of good sense by the Irish people amazed me.

Voting no in important referendums doesn't punish the government as much as it does the entire population and for generations to come if we don't say yes the next time. I'm glad to hear Mr Condren voted yes the first time and did so for the right reasons so don't throw it away next time and vote against because the farmers were "shafted" in the budget. It's tough for everyone, not just him. Everybody is suffering and what we need now more than ever is security and co-operation with the EU, which is becoming the most formidable combined economy in the world.

As a benchmark to assess whether

Pol Pot and ask him for advise on how to reclaim the fields and make Ireland 'for the Irish' again.

We can reopen the Magdalene's and enjoy living off of butter vouchers and becoming the new low-wage capital of Europe. While Mr Condren's DeV-like vision of rural Ireland may seem plausible to some, it exists purely in fantasy. Even if his plans for the farmers, and our current membership status were possible, simple knowledge of the common market dictates that non-members (maybe us?) pay tariffs to sell goods within the common market – that's how the system works.

As non-members we can take comfort in the fact that raw-unprocessed materials take the lowest band, comforting for farmers, not so for anyone involved in food processing, agri-science or food-science – or any manufacturing industry for that matter – or services.

With agriculture currently making up 12 per cent of our workforce, it is comforting to know that with all the foreigners gone, we the remainder of the workforce should be easily absorbed into agri-business and a new second biggest industry – human trafficking, I know ill be on the first coffin-ship to Brussels claiming asylum when Mr. Condren's plans come into fruition.

The No camp was aided to victory all too easily be a man who played on ignorance and fear. The claims of the No camp varied from completely fictional to racist and ultra-conservative.

But as Mr. Condren has remarked 'he deserved to win because he battled hard for what he believed in' – reminds me of another man with a different accent to those he led into insanity; who played on ignorance and fear; who's claims varied from completely fictional to racist and ultra-conservative – and he too battled for what he believed in.

Thankfully many throughout Europe, often fighters in resistance movements, and latter the founders the EEC, disagreed and thought he deserved to lose for what he and all fascists believed in.

I hate to over simplify things; but remember this is a reply to an overly simplified article on an immensely over-complicated topic, so complicated one might argue that there should never have been a referendum in the first place.

I won't explain why we now have referendums on European treaties here; use your freedoms and rights to discover this information for yourself; travel to any of the 26 other countries were are united with and see what the EU stands for and talk to those who know and ask a simple question based on a quest for knowledge not as a fashionable opportunity to attack. In Varietate Concordia.

Michael Burke

MA European Integration

the Lisbon Treaty is good for Ireland, look at both the 'Yes' and 'No' camps. The 'Yes' camp consists of all major parties and social partners. The 'No' camp consists of the group 'Libertas' led by Declan Ganley and Sinn Féin among others. Declan Ganley made most of his money from America (the EU's main economic rival). I have read Sinn Féin's economic policies and they are worthless to say the least. They would make this recession twice as bad as it already is within weeks.

So, if Mr Condren would kindly save us from his petty arguments I would greatly appreciate it and for the good of the nation, please vote yes.

Mike Loughnane,

UL Graduate

P.S. The Government had to act strenuously on the pig meat issue or they would have been accused of being lax on food safety issues. (I am not a Fianna Fail supporter or a political activist by the way, just to clarify any preconceptions or motives that may be suspected I hold).

The real true meaning of Christmas

Dear Madam,

I was appalled at the article on The True Meaning of Christmas (An Focal, XVII, 8, page 9). It was blasphemous, profane, ignorant, foolish, poorly researched, and badly written. The things said about Christ were abhorrent to anyone remotely acquainted with Holy Scripture (which Jesus said cannot be broken – John 10:35). He is a Person, very God of very God, the Eternal and Only-begotten Son of God, not a "force" (John 1), fully man and fully God, and He has ascended to the highest heaven (not the clouds). And further it is a vile offense [sic] against God's gracious love and His righteous and holy character, to claim that He "loves" those who He torments eternally in hell for their wickedness. He is love and therefore "hates all workers of iniquity" (Psalm 5:4-6), and His very "soul abhors the wicked" (Psalm 11:4-7), on whom He will rain "fire and brimstone".

The Holy Spirit is not a "force" either, He is a Person, and He does not "touch" every man. In fact, the Holy Spirit only works in the people whom God has graciously (unconditionally) chosen to save from hell (Romans 9:11-23; Eph 1:3-14). This work is a spiritual birth (Eze 36:26; Eph 2:1-10) by which we now believe in Christ and begin to do good (do something according to God's Law, from a true faith in

Christ alone without works, and for the glory of God alone), where before we could do nothing but sin (Jer 13:23). The Bible never speaks of "mortal" sins, rather it tells us, "there is none that seeketh after God", and "there is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Rom 3:10-18). And we all have consciences to testify to ourselves about our own sin, so that we are without excuse (Rom 1:16-21). In fact the only way to escape eternity in hell is by having perfect righteousness, because God is infinitely holy and just.

There is no salvation from the wrath of God apart from this Christ, who in love, died to bear the full punishment for the sins of those the Father has given Him, and who rose again, so that His people would have His righteousness by faith alone without works, though this faith produces good works (Rom 5:1-11). "Sticking with Santa" will do no good on Judgment Day (Rev 20:11-15). Santa is just another example of a false god created by the depraved imaginations of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Whosoever believeth in Christ will not perish, but those who will not believe are condemned already. May you repent and believe.

Samuel Watterson

4th Year,

Environmental Science

FEE group to continue anti-fee campaign

Dear Madam,

It was unfortunate that in all the many articles in the last An Focal of 2008 (vol. XVII, No. 7) about the anti-fees protest on Monday 17th November (against Minister Cullen), some of the key, undisputed, facts of what happened were lost amidst angry condemnations and claims of "bringing the university into disrepute". I just want to point out some of these basic, undeniable facts:

1) Our SU officers, following discussions at class reps and on the fees working group, advertised that a protest was being organised "to prevent Minister for Arts, Sports & Tourism Martin Cullen, TD, from crossing the Shannon River". We were going to block "both the vehicular Thomond Bridge and the pedestrian Living Bridge" (ULSU Press release).

2) Instead, SU officers decided not to block the Living Bridge. They let Cullen come up to the student protest, give the impression that he was giving up and then cross the

Living bridge instead. They didn't consult or even inform the students of this change of decision, instead they told us to go to the pub.

3) When 80+ students (i.e. members of ULSU) decided to continue the protest by going up to the Living Bridge, SU officials came to try to break it up, a few minutes later they came back again, and again.

4) When the minister did emerge from the opening the UL students at the ICO proceeded to chant anti-fees slogans (having voted not to try blockade), gaurds [sic] established a cordon keeping them at a distance and he drove off.

These are the facts. The SU officials will argue that they couldn't try to prevent Cullen getting to the ICO opening, as that would lose them 'respectability', that as the elected officers they were fully entitled to not consult the protestors about this and that they were right to try stop the second protest as they were concerned about offending University officials, like Don Barry.

FEE will argue that decisions to blockade or not must be taken democratically, that the officials should have carried out what had been agreed and that simply respectfully lobbying won't work, what is needed is a mass campaign to defeat the government's plans and the pro-fees University heads.

FEE believe that the next months will be crunch time where the anti-fees movement will either win or lose. Around the country, FEE has stated the task of bringing together a wide layer of second and third level students, college staff and activists from various organisations (e.g. Student Unions, college societies, Labour Youth, Ogra Shinn Fein, WSM and Socialist Youth) to build a national campaign to defeat fees. We need to now move on to a discussion on the kind of campaign and tactics that are needed to win. I hope An Focal can be an arena for this discussion.

Ann-Katrin Orr

UL FEE Campaign, 2nd Year, Law & European Studies

Editorial

An Focal

University of Limerick
 Students' Union
 University of Limerick, Plassey, Co Limerick
 Volume XVII, Issue 9
 Tuesday, 10 February, 2009

Letters to the editor (Aoife Breen, 2008/09) may be sent to the above address or alternative may be emailed to editor@ulsu.ie. Please note that submission of a letter does not guarantee publication, but you never know, you may be lucky. Recycle An Focal (and all waste paper) in blue skips located at the rear of your building.



Taking the blame

The Students' Union has often had the finger pointed at it for neglecting students' needs, for not listening to what students actually want, for operating as a closed shop, for being unconnected with the vast majority of students – in short, for being wholly unnecessary. Perhaps this is the view of many readers, in fact, even if it is overlooked that this paper is produced by the Students' Union in the first instance.

In week 1, all five sabbatical officers and members of the SU executive spent an evening in the apartments in Brookfield. There was no ulterior political motive other than to engage with the students that they are supposed to represent and to interact with them, quite literally, on a one-to-one basis.

Students were surprised, to say the least, to open their doors to SU officers. Who were these people? Why were they knocking on their door? What did they want? Nothing, really, just to see what was going on and if there were any issues bothering the residents.

The campus is struggling to thrive; anyone can see that. The life is slowly being swept away. So, the SU must find new ways of reaching out to the people that it claims to represent. If students are not coming into the SU building or stopping the officers on campus, then there is no other option but to physically go to every student's home and ask them.

Of course, the easy way out would be to assume that if the problem isn't being heard on the grapevine or hasn't been brought to the immediate attention of any one particular officer, then it doesn't exist. But that's a painless escape button and one which would certainly keep students thinking that the SU is far apart from it.

The truth of the matter is that when officers knocked on doors students were all too willing to tell them what was going on; they did have issues; they did have concerns; they did have questions. But what's more important is that the SU did not know of all of these and could only provide answers to some of the queries – for now.

Over the coming weeks, SU officers will continue to canvas various student villages and houses in an attempt to see what is really going on. If one knocks on your door, let them know. Without raising the issues you will give them the all-clear to think that they are doing a good job in their happy-go-lucky world.

In week 5, when the Union General Meeting comes around, how about coming along to that too and putting the questions to them in front of the rest of the college? Stick it to them and make sure that they are held accountable; make sure that they are held responsible for making UL better for you.

Pa's Propaganda

So it's been a busy first few weeks but I'd be lying if I said I wasn't enjoying it. I haven't been out as much as first semester but that just means I'm working more effectively on those early mornings; being less drunk can do that I think you'll find.

We were very happy to have Richard Hayden down lately, he's like the king of grass (the legal stuff), and he's even laying the pitches for 2010 World Cup in South Africa. He was very helpful on the issues we are having with our pitches and hopes to propose a way forward where we can deliver quality synthetic pitches hand in hand with re-developing the turf pitches currently available to our students. The University acknowledge that the pitches are in an unacceptable condition and we seem to be making progress on a solution but of course the key is in the delivery of this, so I'll keep you all updated.

We also launched our Rag Week branding last week, you will all have got posters I'm sure. We think there is something in the line up for everyone and we're trying to keep

ticket prices low for you. The headline acts are just a taste of what's going to be a crazy week. In the Rag Ball alone (Thursday) there will be as many as 15 acts playing over 4 stages. This gig will close off the main courtyard from 2pm and will have the same festival feel as The Oktoberfest Freshers' Ball had, so I would get my ticket for that one early.

We will also be completing our information screens project soon. This will be a system of 42 inch plasma screens around campus which basically tell people what's going on. I think they'll be a great addition for publicising events etc. I want to thank Clubs and Societies for their support of the project and Ulster Bank for their sponsorship of it.

That's it really except to say that Gavin Harte, a renowned expert on Climate Change is coming to speak to us in Week 4. He does show at the Picnic and all that so we're lucky to have him down here. I think it will be Wednesday but watch out for details.

Take it easy,
 Pa



Corrections & Clarifications:

In An Focal, vol. XVII no. 8, it was incorrectly stated that Ciaran Lyne was the author of the article, 'Lisbon II – an insult to the Irish' (page 9). The author of this article was John Condren.

In the same edition, Luke Holmes was incorrectly stated as the author of 'When can we vote?' (page 7). The author was Daniel K. Sullivan.

An Focal apologises for any confusion that may have arisen as a result of these errors.



Cartoon by Larissa Mirtschink

UL Club members are disappointed by the increase in bus fares as they prepare for their routine journeys away to train off-campus

Student Speak

With all this talk of balls and cockiness, Welfare Officer Caitriona McGrattan asks the boys of UL are they too cocky to check their balls...

Tighearnan Noonan
1st Year MMPT
No I feel me balls in public all the time!



Ruán Dillon-McLoughlin
4th Year Construction Management
My balls are too cocky to be checked.



Eamon Heavey
2nd Year Law & Euro
No...I always check them...once or twice a week.



Mick Moore
3rd Year, Materials & Construction
I test me testies regular!



Rob Maher
Stables staff
No, I check them every so often



Jim Heneghan Alumnus
I don't know how...what would a lump feel like...I've had an STI test though!



Albini Mathieu
Erasmus
It's important to be protected.



Derek Daly
4th Year Business
No I don't just check them, I have them serviced on a regular basis.

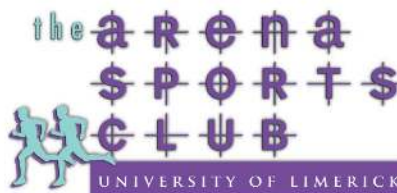


Aidan Healy
UL Connect Co-ordinator
No I'm not; Get the f*ck away from me



Gerard 'Gucky' Guckian
4th Year Applied Computing
No...well, they're not soft anyway. You need to have a good rummage down there once in a while





- **OUR FOOD IS MADE DAILY IN OUR KITCHENS SO IT'S ALL FRESH!**
- **WE WILL ALWAYS GREET YOU WITH A SMILE.**
- **OUR STAFF & CUSTOMERS ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE BUSINESS OPERATIONS - WE WILL STRIVE TO LOOK AFTER ALL OF YOU AT ALL TIMES!**
- **WE SUPPORT LOCAL SUPPLIERS AND PRODUCE FOSTERING REGIONAL GROWTH AND EMPLOYMENT.**

OUR GUARANTEE TO YOU - NO CHEAP STUNTS!

In this very competitive environment, we realise that times are hard and people have less money to spend. The Stables Club, The Paddock Restaurant, The Plaza Café and The Arena Sports Club have all been on this wonderful campus for many years serving the campus community. We have been successful because of your loyalty to us, our staff's loyalty to the business and the relationships we have created with the local community and suppliers.

This year, we are aiming to maintain our price levels and also the number of staff that we employ here, while at the same time increasing the quality of our products and service and the variety of food options. As an organisation, we will not provide an inferior quality product for a cheaper price simply to attract your custom as we do not feel we would be serving you well in doing so. If you have any suggestions about what we offer please fill in a comment card. We promise that we do read each and everyone that we receive.

Thank you for your loyalty over the years.

In Focus: Understa

Pat “The Gospel” Robertson talks about his first STI test

To tell you the truth the first time I had unprotected sex happened for one reason and one reason only... I had no clue how to put on a condom and didn't want to look stupid in front of the lady friend I had just brought home. The sheer stupidity of that still annoys me, so let me tell you should do adequate practice before you arrive at that juncture. I aint trying to preach (pardon the pun) but being promiscuous is much like white water rafting; you have no business in that boat without the requisite life jacket.

2-3 months after the incident I decided that it was time I did my penance and booked myself in for the dreaded test. I had no itching, no scraping, no general discomfort but for that in my mind. We often hear about how many STI's have no symptoms; so while the infection may not be apparent it could be damaging you or the person you pass it on to permanently, scary eh? That's something you would never wish to do so I thought I had a bit of responsibility to make sure I was in good health.

I attended at my local doctor rather than an STI Clinic. I felt a bit intimidated by the whole STI clinic setting, and my Mother's friend actually worked there which made it an even less attractive option.

I then decided to go with a completely new Doctor, the doctor that had served me so well for so long didn't seem an option. I'm not sure why really. I just recall thinking about how he had sorted all my sore throats and scratches and scrapes as a young kid. This made me feel that I would prefer him not to handle my penis and that our relationship should be maintained at general ailments. I wonder if Doctors get self conscious at all?!

I entered the surgery about 12 in the day. I sat there with a myriad of questions running through my head. “Relax you fool!” I thought, he must have seen thousands of penis' by now so yours will make no difference to him. I arrived in and explained the situation expecting to get a sympathetic ear, I was mistaken!

“Do you have sex often?”

–“Well as much as I'm allowed really?”

“Do you always wear condom?”

–“Well I just kind of figured out how to put one on there really, so like....”

“Stupid, Stupid boy”

I sat back aghast. I'll take my penis elsewhere if this keeps up I thought, he doesn't deserve it, and I'll take it elsewhere I tell you. As I dropped my trousers I felt uneasy to say the least. I don't care how professional a Doctor is, no man feels comfortable dropping his pants to the twang of a latex glove donned by a man you just met and whose name you couldn't possibly pronounce. There was a sense of foreboding as he moved in for the kill, stalking me like a lion about to massacre an ailing gazelle.

He deftly rolled the foreskin back while I stood, my body gently creased in anticipation, pretending I was looking at some art on the wall ”mmmmmm,very nice picture you have there Doctor mmmm”.

Realising art was setting a bad precedent I moved to more manly subjects “how's about that Rugby eh, class so it is, sure Paul O'Connell's a fuppin ledge”. The manly statements rolled off the tongue with great ease. There was no escaping the fact that this stranger was about to penetrate my extremities with a foreign object.

I have to admit that the first few tests aren't bad at all. If you are getting properly tested you should be checked for everything including Aids, Gonorrhoea and the dreaded Syphilis which eventually makes you go mad apparently. The first couple were urine and a general swab test but what was to come next would stay with me forever.

The doctor moved nonchalantly yet threateningly to a huge tube of lube and spread it over what looked like an unlit sparkler. He then proceeded to press this, coat hanger for want of a better word, into my terrified penis. While in there he gave it an extra jiggle to get an “extra good sample”. When he exited this alien object from my penis I exhaled and mentioned how that stung quite a bit. It was more the shock I think. The betrayal that something which had brought me only pleasure in my life had turned against me.

I exited the Doctors office like a man who had been through something epic. Something life changing. I had faced up to the unlit sparkler test and come out still standing.

I waited anxiously for the news on my now precious sexual health. What if I had contracted HIV I thought? It is possible and it does happen in Ireland. I think there was (find number from bubbles) new cases in the mid west this year so it is out there.

After three weeks I received my certificate of health. As I recalled my experience I recoiled in shock. Yet this was soon overcome with the greatest of pleasures. I was safe and healthy and a danger to no other. I could now let my willy run free again. It had all been worth it.

So in the Gospel according to Pat Robertson (that's me) you have two options when it comes to STI's. You can practice safe sex (fun) or you can go through the test (not so much fun). If you need to go for the test then do, it's not as bad as it sounds and God knows I'm not the toughest man to have had the sparkler test. The discomfort as dramatised by I above is real, but what's also real is the relief when you realise your healthy and well! As the saying goes “don't be silly wrap to willy”. Go forth and spread the good word.



No laughing matter

Cairiona McGrattan

For men all over Ireland the thought of discussing penile erectile dysfunction (ED) is almost as bad as the thought of suffering the condition. ED is a medical condition which describes the failure of a man's penis to harden sufficiently and/or remain hard enough for penetration.

Although ED is quite common, the causes of and implications that go with the condition remain an uncomfortable and embarrassing topic among the wider community.

However, with the advancement of modern medicine and technology, those suffering from ED have more opportunities to have a full and healthy sex life. The key to successful treatment of ED is understanding the variety of causes which lead to the condition.

ED can be brought on by a number of physical and psychological factors. Physical causes may often be symptomatic of a larger health problem and therefore persistent cases of ED should always be brought to a doctor's attention. A decrease in the blood supply into the penis or an increase in the blood supply out of the penis is a common cause of ED in young males.

However, experts say that the ED is usually as a result of a combination of both physical and psychological factors. Stress is high on the list of psychological factors as is a lack of confidence, which may lead to performance anxiety.

The physical causes of ED can be successfully treated with prescription medicine and for those that fall into the 20 per cent that the drugs don't work for the other treatments include injections into the penis, vacuum devices and surgical implants.

Unfortunately, there is no such quick fix for ED caused by psychological factors. Men suffering from ED must be willing to explore the psychological side of their lives in order to get to the root of the causes.

ED is not a fatal condition but it can have long lasting psychological effects on men and their partners. If you or your partner has been affected by penile erectile dysfunction please contact your GP or local health centre for treatment and advice.

Name: Kieran Phipps

Course: 2nd Year, Languages Education

Would have a problem with checking your testicles for lumps?

No, no problem; it's my health after all like!



Name: Mick Moore

Course: 3rd Year, Materials and Construction

Would have a problem with checking your testicles for lumps?

I check them regularly. I checked them last night; I was a bit worried about the right one, but it's ok.



Ending Men's Health

Grabbing life by the balls

Jason Kennedy

COMEDIAN Des Bishop has told An Focal about the importance of making use of the University's counselling services.

Mr Bishop, who will be bringing his new comedy show to the University Concert hall on the 28th of February, advised all students who feel they need emotional support to contact the relevant support group.

"College can be an emotional time, what with being away from home and all. Nobody likes to admit those things to each other, in the kind of macho world of being a young in college."

Mr Bishop especially encouraged young men to get in touch with support services.

"There's a lot of peer pressure. Irish society shuns men who are open about their emotions."

Mr Bishop also told of his own personal struggles throughout his college life.

"I struggled so much in my college years, especially in first year. If I didn't have a place to go to and people to talk to, I definitely would say I would have killed myself, straight up. It's not really a laughing matter. It's very serious."

Mr Bishop also spoke on testicular cancer, a disease that he has overcome a number of years ago, prior to becoming a household name.

"I hadn't a clue what was going on when I found out first. I had a friend that had had testicular cancer before and he went through a lot of chemotherapy so I just presumed that I was going to spend the next year and a half of my life sick."

"A lot of the shock and dread was alleviated when I found out how treatable it is."

"I found out on a Thursday, I met a specialist on the Friday and on Monday morning I was in a coma getting my testicle removed. It was all done. I was totally happy

with that.

"There wasn't really an all clear time for me. After 6 weeks I went to Brazil on holiday. That was it. After 6 years you don't have to worry about testicular cancer. Truth be told, I think I only went to two out of about 12 checkups afterwards."

Mr Bishop also spoke of his shock that the 'Evening Herald' published his cancer story on the front page.

"I answered a few cancer questions, just thinking that he was going to put a little strip in the paper. Later it was on the front page. I couldn't believe it. I was just in complete shock."

"I'm not one of those people that use their personal life for publicity. I didn't like that sensationalising of my life. Nowadays I'd be a bit more media savvy."

Following that, Mr Bishop went to the Irish Cancer Society and asked if there was anything he could do to bring publicity to the organisation. He then wrote semi-humorous articles in the 'Sunday Independent' based on his cancer experience.

"A lot of funny stories came out of the process. I wrote most of those jokes when I was in hospital and was bored. Actually, come to think of it, I was probably a bit out of my head after the operation."

It didn't take long for Mr Bishop to include references to his cancer in his shows, but ditched them soon afterwards, feeling the timing wasn't right.

"I left the cancer jokes for a few years and when I came back to them they were so much easier to do because it wasn't so fresh in my mind. It was easy to be funny for the sake of being informative about cancer."

Despite being clear of cancer for over eight years, Mr Bishop is still heavily involved in campaigns for testicular cancer awareness,

having recently been a patron for Brown Thomas's 'Respect Your Tackle' campaign. He also appeared alongside Ronan Keating in the 'Men Keeping Fit' campaign for men's health. He is also a fan of Lance Armstrong's wristbands.

"I've done so many different campaigns I find it hard to remember which one's which. I've always tried to be as helpful and informative in bringing awareness to men's cancer."

However, Mr Bishop did not take part in the 'Grow Your Tache for Cancer' campaign, where people grew sponsored moustaches for cancer awareness.

"I still think the idea is great though."

"I met one of the Irish rugby team members during the campaign who was wearing a fake moustache for cancer. He said to me "Where's your 'tache?" I said back "Well I think my missing left testicle is just a bit more of a testament to my support for testicular cancer."



Mr Bishop urges any student who feels they may have testicular cancer to get it checked out straight away.

"It's very important for men to get checked out if they think they have any problem down below, even if it turns out to be nothing. Don't delay; I delayed for three months, like an idiot. It doesn't have to be that big of a deal if you get it checked out early."

Mr Bishop, who hasn't drank since he was 19, also spoke on the perils of overindulging in alcohol.

"Alcohol is a very overrated

social elixir. If you think that your drinking is becoming a problem, I highly recommend that you get in contact with some sort of support service. It's never a bad idea to have an objective source to see what's going on with you."

Mr Bishop also spoke about his upcoming gig on the University's campus.

"I always look forward to gigs in UL. I like Limerick and UL anyway. I've been gigging in UL from very early on in my comedy career. There's just something different about there."

"I've been up there from when

no one knew who I was. I was the MC for RAG week back a few years ago as well. It's always nice to go back."

His new show has been getting very positive reviews so far and is currently touring across the country.

"This show is quite different to the ones that gone before it. It moves on from the Irish a bit and I hope the guys up in Limerick will like it."

Tickets for Des Bishop are currently available from the University Concert Hall.

Are you too cocky to check your balls?

Caitriona McGrattan

TESTICULAR cancer is a young man's disease, and yet this is the age group that has the greatest sense of invincibility from the illness. Things can go wrong with your testicles slowly, quickly or very fast indeed. Knowing what your testicles normally feel and look like makes good sense so that changes can be spotted and advice sought quickly if needed. The best time to check your testicles is in the shower, it's a great excuse for taking a bit longer in the morning.

A few conditions that affect the testicles are serious so always get any unusual lumps or bumps checked. Testicular cancer represents only 1 per cent of all cancers in men, but it is the single biggest cause of cancer-related deaths in young men aged 15 to 35 years.

Signs to watch out for:

- a lump in one testicle
- pain and tenderness in either testicle
- discharge or pus from the penis
- blood in the sperm at ejaculation
- a build-up of fluid inside the scrotum
- a heavy or dragging feeling in the groin or scrotum
- an enlargement of the breasts with or without tenderness
- an increase in size of a testicle (one testicle is normally larger than the

other but the size and shape should remain more or less the same).

How to check your testicles

Check your testicles monthly in the following way:

- do the self-examination lying in a warm bath or while having a long shower, as this softens the skin of the scrotum (skin sac that holds the testicles), which makes it easier to feel the testicles inside.
- examine the scrotum, looking for any lumps on the skin or swellings inside.
- cradle the whole scrotum and testicles in the palm of your hand and feel the difference between the testicles. One is almost always larger and lying lower. This is completely normal.
- examine each testicle in turn, and then compare them with each other. Use both hands and gently roll each testicle between thumb and forefinger.
- Check for any lumps or swellings as both testicles should be smooth except where the duct that carries sperm to the penis, the epididymis, runs. This lies along the top and back of the testicle and normally feels bumpy.

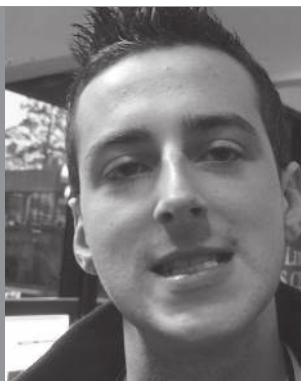
If you have performed a self-examination and found a lump, you are advised to go to your doctor for further examination. Early detection and early treatment is the name of the ball game!

Name: Mike Toomey

Course: 2nd Year, Computer Games Development

Would have a problem with checking your testicles for lumps?

No, it could be something as serious as testicular cancer or a wart...that's scary sh*t!



Name: Peter Shone

Course: 2nd Year, Environmental Science

Would have a problem with checking your testicles for lumps?

No, I'd be quite worried if something was wrong.



SHAG Week Special

Welfare Working Group: Sexual Health Survey

Male / Female

Status: Single / Spoken For / Married

Age: _____ Orientation: Ladies / Fellas / I play for Both Teams

Sexual Activity

1) Which of these bases have you tried out?

- First Base- Kissing
- Second Base- Manual Handling
- Third Base- Oral Introduction
- Fourth Base- The Whole Hog (vaginal/anal)

2) Lets Talk About Sex Baby- Who do you turn to about sex?

- Your Partner
- Your Parents
- Your Friends
- Your Priest during confession
- Other:.....

Protection

3) How often do you practise safe sex?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Never
- Only if my partner insists

4) When do you use protection? (Tick more than one answer if necessary)

- For Second Base
- For Third Base
- For Fourth Base
- Or only for full-on intercourse/penetration

5) What kind of protection do you use?

- Condom
- The Pill
- Condom and Pill
- Female condom
- Other:.....

Let's Get Physical

6) What is your favourite position?

- Missionary
- Doggy
- Cowgirl
- The double-kangaroo scissor kick.
- Other:.....

7) When are you most likely to, ahem, "do it"?

- I'm a morning glory person
- Brunch
- After Home and Away
- After a Night Out
- All Night Long

Sexual Health Checks

8) Concerning your number of sexual partners, are you...

- Romeo and Juliet (1 partner)
- Lothario (1+)
- Casanova (10+)
- James Bond (25+)
- A Character from Sex and the City (50+)
- Gene Simmons (4,000+)
- Obviously lying (10,000+)

9) Have you ever had an STI or STD test?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, how many?

10) Have you ever had an STI or STD?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, which one(s):.....

11) Do any of the following embarrass you?

- Buying condoms
- Calling sexual organs by their proper names, and not referring to them as your 'bits'
- Talking about STIs or asking for sexual advice
- Putting on / asking someone to put on a condom

12) Where on campus would you most like to get down and dirty?

- The Library
- Ski Slope
- Venus Labs
- Schumann Fountain
- Photocopying Room in the Students Union
- The Living Bridge

Prizes gallore

If you would like to be in with the chance of winning one of our two great prizes for filling in this survey, please provide your ID number or email address below. Prizes include return Ryanair flights and an iPod Nano.

ID Number:.....

Email Address:.....



SHAG Week Special

My first STI test

I remember my first STI test like it was yesterday; not because it was in any way painful but because of Nancy, my gynaecologist's lovely nurse. The day started out like any other Wednesday that summer; I got up, had a shower, put on a pair of colourful knee-high stripy socks and went to work. On my lunch break I headed into town and waited in the reception area of my Swiss gynaecologist. After answering the usual 20 questions when you visit any doctor; do you smoke? Do you drink? Do you get much exercise? etc. I was directed to undress behind a small screen like something you would expect you see on Casualty or ER by my kind-hearted, although not very fond of witty jokes, gynae. My humour was lost on her when I referred to the towel she gave me to cover my nether regions between the screen and the examination bed as no bigger than a postage stamp.

As soon as I was comfortable on the bed my doctor began to explain the procedure and the different gadgets she would be using; '...and this I will use to hold you open while I insert the swabs' she said as she held up a small inoffensive looking set of retractors 'We call it the duck because it looks like a duck's beak, don't you think?' Unfortunately once again my humour was lost on her as a quaked away heartily to myself. The part of the test which requires a tissue sample from down below takes only a few minutes, five at the most. Two separate swabs of the area are taken and are placed into test tubes to be sent to the lab. The second part of the test involves giving a small blood sample to be sent to the labs too. I spent about forty minutes in the clinic from start to finish.

The reason I remember this test so vividly is not only because it was my first but because, as I said above, of the lovely Nurse Nancy. I first met this very pleasant lady while I was waiting in the waiting room; she offered me tea. The next time I saw Nurse Nancy was when she walked into the doctor's room and I on the midway through my examination. I had my feet in the stirrups and there was no other way to describe the position I was in other than that I was presenting. Nancy smiled at me. She spoke quietly with the doctor and then turned to me and said 'Nice...' she paused (a little too long in my opinion) and then continued to say '...socks' and winked at me. What did I do? What could I do but laugh? Nancy joined in, and eventually so did my doctor but I'm not sure she saw the joke in it. I completely forgot why I was there I laughed so hard.

After three years of tests every couple of months having an STI test has become as routine as having my teeth checked by the dentist, my feet by the chiropodist or my tonsils by the doctor, sure my waxist sees just as much as any gynae when I visit the beauty salon for my monthly Brazilian. STI tests are part and parcel of a healthy sex life; I hope your next test is as fun and memorable as my first!

Sexual Health Myths Busted

There are so many myths about STIs and sexual health going around. Sometimes it's hard to know what to believe and what not to, so we in the Students' Union have busted the most common, unusual and funniest sexual health myths floating the campus.

Myth: Contraceptives protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Fact: Other than complete sexual abstinence, no contraceptive can guarantee 100 per cent protection against contracting an STI. However, sex without any protection will leave you 100 per cent open to contracting an STI, so always practice safer sex!

Myth: You can tell by looking at someone if they are likely to have an STI so you just have to be a good judge of character.

Fact: There is no stereotype of people who have STIs. The person sitting next to you in a lecture or on the bus into town may have one; you yourself might even have one and don't know it yet (make a note to get an STI screening).

STIs are common enough to affect anyone who is sexually active.

Myth: "I don't have any of the signs or symptoms of sexually transmitted infections, so I can't be infected!"

Fact: Not all STIs have signs or symptoms, especially Chlamydia. If you have had unprotected sex you should visit your local STI clinic and get tested.

Myth: You can't get an STI from oral sex

Fact: Yes you can! Herpes, syphilis, chlamydia, gonorrhoea and HIV can all be caught during oral sex. Use a glyde dam, dental dam or flavoured condom when participating in oral sex.

Myth: You can't get pregnant during your period.

Fact: Fertility is an individual thing but someone who has unprotected sex while they have their period can get pregnant, although it's less likely in the first couple of days of your period. Unprotected sex can also leave you open to contracting an STI so

always practice safer sex.

Myth: The risk for getting HIV is declining.

Fact: This is a dangerous assumption to make. HIV is one of the fastest-growing serious healthconditions. Always practice safer sex to help protect yourself from contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Myth: Women no longer have sex after menopause.

Fact: Far from going off it, many post-menopausal women are having their best sex ever.

Myth: Men have a higher sex drive than women.

Fact: Sex drive is fueled by testosterone, which men have in higher levels than women. However, men are increasingly reporting lower sex drives and much of it could be lifestyle-related. Women now know much more about how their bodies work and how to enjoy themselves in bed and as a result their sex drives are as high, if not higher, than their male counterparts.

Sexual Health Contact Numbers

SU Welfare Officer

061 202519

Services available

- Information and advice on safer sex and sexual health
- Free condoms

Student Health Centre

061 202534

Services available

- Contraception Clinic/Morning after pill
- Screening for STIs
- Advice on safer sex and sexual health

UL Counselling Service

061 202327

Services available

- Advice and support around issues of sexuality and sexual anxieties
- Daily drop in from 11am to 12noon and 3pm to 4pm
- Free condoms

STI Clinic, Mid-West Regional

061482382

- Lines open Monday to Thursday, 2pm to 4pm
- Waiting list of five to six weeks with emergency appointments available

Limerick Family Planning Clinic

061 312026

Services available

- Contraceptive advice
- Morning after pill
- Pregnancy tests

Red Ribbon Project

061 316661

Services available

- Confidential helpline to help with issues including STIs, HIV and Sexual Health (Opening hours Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm and Wednesday 9.30am to 7pm)
- www.redribbonproject.com

Rainbow Support Services

061 468611

Services available

- Support around issues of sexuality and sexual orientation
- Helpline 061 310101 open Tuesday evening 7.30pm to 9.30pm

Limerick Rape Crisis Centre

061 311511

Services available

- Medical and legal information
- Support and advice

Aids Alliance, Limerick

061 310001

Services available

- Support and advice on general sexual health and more specifically in relation to HIV and AIDS

Most GPs offer basic STI testing as well as contraceptive advice and sexual health information. So if in are in any doubt, contact your own GP or a GP in the Castletroy area.

International Week Special

1000 students on the move every year

Patricia O'Flaherty

In the 2008/09 academic year, almost 1000 students will travel to and from UL on academic placements. We in the International Education Division welcome visiting students from 20 EU countries, including Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus, Greece and Malta, and from the US, Canada, China, Korea, Singapore and Australia. UL students have travelled to 16 different EU countries this year and to Australia, the US, Canada and Singapore. For travel within the EU, grants are payable to support travel and living expenses and there is an extra grant if the student takes a language course before beginning the formal study programme. 276 UL students are spending one semester abroad this year, with 13 of these enrolled for the whole year in a partner University.

To date, there is no funding for international placements (outside Europe), but there are still 56 UL students going to these destinations in 08/09. There are plenty of countries to choose from internationally, with opportunities for placements in less visited countries, such as Brazil, Korea, Thailand and China. Most UL students who take up these placements are from the College of Humanities, where programmes have an integrated placement abroad, but, this year, students from more "exotic" programmes, such as Mathematics and Forestry have packed their rucksacks and headed off to far flung places.

The International Society at UL is working hard at providing opportunities for Irish students and international students to meet up. They started with a "speed-dating" evening which was reputedly a great success. Most universities abroad have international offices and student networking groups (Tilburg in the Netherlands gets the best reputation) which organise trips and social events, designed to allow students from different countries to get to know one another. Once you are based in a particular country in central Europe, Austria for example, train and bus transport allows you to visit lots of neighbouring countries. Making friends whilst on placement gives students a great network of connections all over Europe or internationally for the rest of their lives.

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"UL students have travelled to 16 different EU countries this year"

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The Granada experience

Caitriona Hogan

So there I was, perched on a ski-lift high above the Sierra Nevada with the beautiful Atlas Mountains in the distance... and I had to pinch myself (through countless layers of clothing) to believe that I was simply enjoying what is one of the many merits made possible by the Erasmus study abroad programme.

Generally those of us who are... co-ordinately challenged, shall we say, pose a threat on the slopes and are best to steer clear of them but that didn't stop me. I had heard from a source that there was a skiable mountain range just half an hour from the student city of Granada and if it was true I sure as hell was going to explore it. Crowded though it may have been, and icy on occasion, it was certainly worth my while.

That it not to suggest, however, that skiing is all my Erasmus experience had to offer. Prior to that, a few of the girls and I had got together for a trip to Barcelona (€30 with Ryanair) which was short but definitely sufficient time to take in all that the city had to offer.

With the help of our lovely tour guide Julia, we visited La Sagrada Familia, Barcelona's uniquely designed cathedral, Las Ramblas, the city's main thoroughfare, El Triángulo shopping centre, Barcelona Zoo (where the albino gorilla is long deceased, do not be fooled!) and the pub/club strip of Puerto Olímpico, which is impressive to say the least.

The handy thing about having friends stay on Erasmus in different cities is that, if you wish to travel, you have a floor to stay on and,

with any luck, a free guide for the duration of your stay.

Before Barcelona came the all-important trip to Morocco, the port of Tangiers specifically, which only set us back €65 (including return ferry and two nights in a 3* Hotel, terms & conditions apply).

Tangiers was an eye-opener. Although we opted out of the offers of camel riding and a trip to Marrakesh, much to my eternal regret, what we saw in the city of Tangiers was enough to give us a taste of life there. Walled open-air markets were very common, where fresh (if a little fly-invested) fruit and vegetables were on sale, as well as meat of every description.

At one stage I remember seeing two live snow-white bunnies badly concealed in a cage under the butcher's stall, though I'll refrain from imagining what his intentions with them were.

Of course, if you find that you are content to stay in your city of choice for most of Erasmus then fear not, for chances are it may contain all you need and more. I cannot speak for other European destinations but, in the case of Granada, every day was a chance to discover new restaurants and watering holes, shops and general sites of interest.

The city itself was made up of broad granite-paved streets (a threat to early-morning revellers, especially after a fresh wash!) and different sized plazas, connected by narrow side-streets, which scooters somehow manage to get through.

If you are feeling homesick head to Hannigan's 1 or 2 or Paddy's where you'll be served by the man

himself.

Otherwise, there is the Chupitería or shot bar, countless good tapas bars where a beer and pizza slice is €1.80 and two awesome jazz bars, both called Bohemia. The nightclub scene is equally impressive with Capital, El Principe, Mae West, Puerto Cinco and, the best two, El Camborio and Granada 10. El Camborio is a popular Erasmus disco in the caves of Sacromonte in the city with four dance floors and a roof top terrace, best at the weekend. Granada 10, the biggest club in town, is an opulent disco, set in a 1940s theatre whose crystal chandeliers, panelled walls and plush seats have all been preserved.

Culture vultures can visit the cathedral, the markets and the lesser known but very cheap Arabic baths in the Albayzin. Last but

not least, the fabled Alhambra fortress must be seen to be believed but if a visit is not on the cards walk to El Mirador de San Nicolas, a plateau within the city, for the best views and also the chance to witness an impromptu flamenco song and dance session by Spanish gypsies.

I would be lying to you if I were to say that there are no difficulties in coming to live in a foreign city. I clearly remember one day trawling the city to find the elusive registration office, even mistaking a government office building (out of which we were promptly shooed) for it.

But gradually the city becomes your own. Pick the most random subjects on the university timetable while you can. And don't stress. Erasmus. Socrates. EU-sponsored holiday. No matter how you see your stay abroad, make it memorable.



International food for thought

Hyangsook Sung,

I would have to admit that I was not very enthusiastic about the international food fair at first. I have never been a good cook, even with right materials and ingredients back in Korea, let alone in a far foreign country with no "Korean" stuff. I was not sure if I could get all the ingredients needed, and was greatly worried lest everyone at the fair should think Korean cuisine sucked. I would have given it up but for my fellow Korean

students.

Indeed, it seemed to be going quite bad. We got the ingredients the day of the food fair, and a lot of the essential ingredients on the list were missing. Honestly, I thought it was going to be a disaster. After a few hours of depressing kitchen work, we managed to cook two "Korean-ish" dishes, but then the car which was supposed to pick us up never came (and it started to rain, as usual.) I was already in a quite low mood when I got to the fair.

It turned out that people actually

didn't care much about how good I cooked. They knew that I was not a chef at a five-star hotel restaurant, and had enough courtesy to pretend to like the dishes. (Or did they really like the food? I doubt it.) Maybe I didn't have to be so anxious after all? I started to relax, and then realised that people were really enjoying the event.

There were two Japanese girls in their fascinating traditional garments, and an Irish guy in a Chinese traditional garment. Someone from other country

suggested that we exchange our food, so we gave him crappy Korean food and got some really hard bread in return (with an excuse that it was much better when warm).

We stayed there until long after all the food was gone. I tried the Chinese garment on, was taken pictures of (not pretty!), and enjoyed a lot. By the time to go home, I was really glad that I participated. It would be a great fun to have such an event once again. I do wish I could participate more this semester.

International Week Special

Ireland through Hong Kong's eyes

Wilson Chan

In Ireland, there were several days in which we had the opportunity to visit the nature there. We all were amazed by the size of the prairie which you can never see in Hong Kong, the very crowded place. Being stimulated by this environment, a question popped up in our mind: why can the Irish enjoy their nature with such a large piece of land while Hong Kong people have to squeeze into a small island which needs to be reclaimed over and over for extra spaces?

So, with such a difference in nature of the two places, what influence would it have on people's living style and relationship?

During the trip, through activities such as field study, we had the opportunity to explore the ecology of Ireland. This inspiration has triggered our thoughts on the relationship between the people and the environment, as well as their living style in different countries.

In Hong Kong, the fast-paced environment tends to breed workaholics; employees are forced by their employers to work extended hours. Besides workers, students also need to attend tutorial classes after school and study over night because of the pressure from public examinations. That is why lots of people in Hong Kong are struggling to find a balance between work/study and family life.

Unlike Hong Kong, we seldom find workaholics in Ireland because they highly value their social life. People in Ireland work neither at weekends nor for long hours. The standard Irish office hours are from 9:00am to 5:30pm with an hour for lunch.

Many offices, including the government departments, are closed between 12:30 and 2:00pm. When it comes to students, they do not usually need to study over night or attend tutorial classes even though they also have public examinations. That's why people in Ireland usually have sufficient leisure time as well as an enjoyable life.

Irish people love music very much. Many of them can play a music instrument like guitar, piano or violin. In Hong Kong, there are also lots of teenagers who can play a musical instrument.

However, they are usually forced

by schools, teachers or parents to learn it because this possibly gives them a ticket enter the "better" schools. They treat it as a skill and they practice because they want to pass the official examinations. That's why some of them may only know how to play a few songs required for the examinations and they will only play the music instruments during lessons or competitions or formal performance.

Irish people treat music as a habit and they practice because they enjoy playing it and they want to improve. They may not obtain high grades but they may know how to play different songs that they like. Besides having practices at home, it's common for them to play at party. After eating and chatting with family or friends, one of them may start playing the piano or guitar and people will start singing freely together in a relaxing, artistic and romantic atmosphere. It is like the medium for them to express themselves, share joy and involve everyone to have fun, and this is how they enjoy life.

Usually, Sunday represents the 'Family Day' as it is the official public holiday all over the world. But what about Saturdays?

When you come over to Ireland and have a casual chat with the Irish, they will probably ask what you normally do on Saturday nights.

Saturday nights symbolizes a relaxing time for the Irish people. Especially for the Irish youths, after the 5-day schooling, they usually enjoy their free weekends with friends.

However, we, the Hong Kong youths are normally busy taking extra tutorial lessons or having a tight schedule attending the extra-curricular activities arranged by our parents.

Saturday nights means a relaxing night; the Irish will most likely spending their time in the pubs.

It is reasonable, if not rational, for Irish to have more time to spend with their friends and family so that they can have better communication. One of our host families even built the warehouse and the office next to his house. This would be probably impossible in Hong Kong due to the restriction of land use and the lack of land that can be used in commercial and residential areas. Even though the grown-up daughters or sons may move to another city, like Dublin, they will go back to their hometown and visit their family very often.

All in all, the Irish that we met are having a simpler life than us. In Hong Kong, we will go to karaoke or hang around in shopping centres, but the Irish people do not, because karaoke, shopping centres and cinemas are not as common.

Instead, in Ireland, they have beautiful beaches, forests, football fields, and thick atmosphere of music. Also, there are no underground railway in most of the places in Ireland, sometimes if we want to go to the cinema, or bars in the other town, we need to drive for at least 30 minutes to the town nearby, so the transportation is not as convenient as Hong Kong.

In the place we stayed in, Castleisland, we can see some pubs on the street. After having dinner, Irish people will go to the pub for some drinks. People insist on spending time enjoying life, rather than working long hours.

Houses are much bigger than apartments in Hong Kong (In Ireland most of them are houses) but one of the reasons why is because of the height between the floor and the ceiling. And, what could be happier than having a spacious and comfortable home?

In fact, this trip has inspired us so much that we can't just tell in words. However, as a short conclusion, we are all impressed by the environment in Ireland and the Irish way of life, which are very different from the ones in Hong Kong. We have all looked into the differences and reflected ourselves. And we are looking forward to explore and experience more in the future.

My journey to the wet, wet west

Matou Kurz

I'm slowly sipping a cup of overpriced coffee in the airport hall; boarding will start in fifteen minutes, and I'm trying to imagine what it's gonna be like in Ireland. Little do I know that the reality will be much more interesting than my wildest expectations... Anyway, off I go!

The flight was pretty boring, the promised turbulences didn't take place, and even though it looked like the pilot was trying to touch down in the waves of Irish Sea for a while it left me completely undisturbed – if they can land the Airbus A320 on the Hudson, I guess they can land it everywhere. When we are still above the clouds, I am trying to enjoy as much of the sunshine as possible; Ireland isn't exactly famous for its nice weather.

Dublin, the city that never sleeps, lies in front of me, finally. I am staying at my friends' place tonight. It's quite late, and I wouldn't make it to Limerick by a reasonable hour. I've no idea where they live, but luckily I wrote the address on a piece of paper, so it'll be no problem at all for the taxi driver to find it.

Wrong!

An older lady, approximately 65 years of age by her looks, stopped for me. I read out the address.

"Huh?"

I showed her the paper, but she had no idea where it was either (I guess they haven't heard of GPS navigation in Dublin). It didn't seem to bother her much though, so we hit the road.

"Are you any good at reading maps?" says she while passing the road atlas to me.

"Well, I'll try my best."

I managed to find the street after a while, and showed her in which direction to go.

"I'm grand, I know where to go; once we get closer we can stop to find the exact location in the map."

In about ten minutes we stopped to discover she had gone to a completely different quarter of the city. Some pretty intensive reading of the map was then needed from my part (the taxi driver couldn't find her glasses); it unfortunately cost me about two euros, as in Dublin they charge you not only for kilometres passed, but for the time too.

After that, my driver (luckily for me) admitted it was all her fault and turned the taximeter off (if she hadn't done that, I would have probably been completely ruined). She eventually stepped on the accelerator again, and we went back, supposedly in the correct direction this time.

I noticed some cars tooting at us, but I didn't get it – she wasn't going that fast or anything. When we stopped at the traffic lights, the driver in the car next to us started doing wild gestures. She lowered the window and we could hear the unpleasant news: "You have no headlights!"

I started feeling a little bit anxious. She claimed she had had her parking lights on, but I wasn't really sure to be honest.

On the next roundabout she took a wrong direction, but luckily for us, noticed it quite early. After one more consultation with the map, we took the correct course (at last!), and I was happily reunited with my friends in about ten minutes. After all, it wasn't that bad, a sightseeing tour of Dublin for only €17.

I had to get to the main bus station the next morning. My friends told me all about the dreadful bus system in Dublin, so I decided to take DART (the acronym stands for Dublin Area Rapid Transit, but it isn't exactly fitting as you'll see) instead. When I arrived to the nearest stop, the information board was saying the train would be up to twenty minutes late.

After 25 minutes, a voice from the loudspeaker announced we were to go to the other platform since there was a slight problem on the rail. Having to climb a very steep access platform with my heavy suitcase, I managed to get to the other side in the end.

After about another ten minutes of waiting, the voice told us to go back to the first platform – the issue had been solved it said.

"Oh no, not again!" (Ok, in reality I said something much more profane, but it wouldn't get published).

Undergoing another exhaustive ascent, I managed to get back where I had come from. The train eventually came, but it was so full I didn't manage to get in. I was pretty sure I missed my bus by then; my only solace was the fact the bus was going every hour.

I finally got on the bus to Limerick. As we started going further west, it began to rain and I'm slowly getting an idea what the weather in Ireland will be like.

"Don't worry," I say to myself; after the Dublin experience it can get only better.

The local university is the best one in Ireland after all.

Or Europe?

Well, definitely better than the Trinity College.

In Limerick, they have the biggest campus, the biggest swimming pool and the best sports arena in Ireland.

Did I mention they have the biggest swimming pool? Fáilte go Cathair Luimnigh!



The Advice Bureau

Education In Focus

Final Year Projects

Eamonn Gardiner - Education Officer

Final Year Problem. F*cks You-Over, Period. Forget Your Potential/Pals/Pints! It's a staple part of academic life in this university.

Make no mistake, the FYP will be the bane of your existence as a fourth year student in UL. It is designed to test the skills that students have learned over the duration of their studies.

Students undertake a research project examining one or more components of a topic relating to their course of study in UL. Titles and subjects vary; they have to!

Quite simply, you are being asked to conduct new research in an area which has not been looked at before. Thus, although you may draw on existing research in the area, you must also conduct some of your own primary research. This can take the form of interviews, questionnaires, constructing models and machines or reading primary documents.

The first thing you should look for is an area that interests you. Then begin to look at it critically. Break down the larger picture into a smaller, niche study. Explore that and try to find some aspect of your field which you feel you may be able to conduct original research in.

Next thing you need to do is find someone to supervise you. In courses where you have chosen a major, it is usual to find a lecturer within that department to supervise you. However, do not be afraid to approach a lecturer and put your case to him/her. Once you have your supervisor, you should arrange with them a timetable that you will stick to. This can be daunting when you have nothing done since the last meeting, but, if you find you need more time, approach your supervisor and ask for some advice. Remember, this is part of their job! For students in difficulty the best thing to do is email your lecturer and ask for a meeting for ten minutes to set you on the right track.

The next step you should take is to start your research. Try not to get sidetracked in archives and libraries, especially if your time is limited and away from UL.

Remember that most historical and law libraries require you to only use pencil and eraser, so come prepared!

For engineers, scientists and all those planning experiments, take your timetable and double it. And then add a few days. Nothing with an FYP goes according to schedule. Don't be caught short on time at the last minute and in need of an extension! If you are going to order materials, bear in mind that problems may occur and, if they do, you are the one who will suffer.

It's never too early to start writing. Whether you have sixteen-hundred or sixteen-thousand words to write, don't get hung up on it. Get out the pen and start throwing down words. You will feel better the more you write.

Give yourself breaks and treats when you reach targets. For every thousand words/chapter you write, head out with your friends or the cinema or something. Show your supervisor your work; they will more than likely rip into it and you will initially feel bad about the experience, but what you should take away are their suggestions. These will allow you to improve your approach and will give you a foundation for your next chapter.

When you are finished, leave it alone; rest a bit. Then proof read it. Print it off and go through it with a red pen, highlighting your mistakes and fixing them. Then leave it again and rest for a while longer. Then return and proof it again.

Check page numbers, spellings (Hit F7), introductions, acknowledgements (mammy; daddy; supervisor; boy/girlfriend(s); housemates), references, etc.

Do not get caught out for plagiarism when you made a simple mistake by not referencing something properly! When you've done that, get a friend to proof it for you; ask them to see how it reads and don't lash out at criticism. It still has to be read by complete strangers, even if it is your baby. See if changes can be made and then leave it.

Print it off as soon as you can and get it out of the house and out of your mind. There are several on campus printing locations (SNAP, Print Room) and all are good and reasonable. Bear in mind your FYP is not the only one! Get it printed early; see if you need to book it in to be printed and bound. Check Department guidelines and make sure the final copy satisfies them.

Then hand it into the department. And relax.

If you have any FYP-related queries or problems, call into Eamonn Gardiner, Education Officer in the SU anytime.

Show me the money!

Assistance you may be eligible for but never knew about: the Maintenance Grant

What is it and how much is it?

The maintenance grant, also known as the higher education grant, is there to help with the cost of attending third level education in most colleges in Ireland, and for Irish students studying in the UK and other EU states. The amount received varies according to the number of dependent children in a family, the number of children and parents attending further/higher education and a family's or individual's reckonable income.

Successful maintenance grant applicants receive varying amounts; from having their student services charge, which for post grad includes having their tuition fees under €6,270, paid to €6,690, which is the full maintenance grant for those living more than 24km away from home.

Who is eligible? As always terms and conditions apply...

Family and/or personal income is a key factor assessed in maintenance grant applications. Other conditions include nationality, residency and previous study. Course length is also a factor; those on part-time courses, access or foundation courses and short courses are not eligible to apply for a maintenance grant.

So called dependent students, those under-23 on the 1st of October of the previous year, are allowed to earn up to €3,809 per annum through part-time and summer work, any income there after and their parent(s) or guardian(s) incomes will be assessed. While independent mature students' income and that of their spouse will be assessed in maintenance grant applications.

Students with EU nationality are eligible to apply for the maintenance grant; this includes Irish students, as are students from the countries within the European Economic Area. Students who have official refugee status, those who were granted humanitarian leave to remain in Ireland prior to 1999 and those who have been granted permission to remain in Ireland under the Immigration Act are also eligible to apply for the grant. Spouses and children of Irish nationals and nationals from other EU member states are eligible too.

Eligibility for a grant is linked to the number of years of previous study or intended study in either further or higher education. Any previous study in further or higher education will be taken into consideration in assessing eligibility, regardless of whether the maintenance grant was received at the time. The grant schemes require that students and/or their parent(s) or guardian(s) have lived in the local area for a minimum period of time.

Placement and Erasmus/Study abroad do not affect the awarding of the maintenance grant unless they lengthen the period of study. In fact students may receive more funding if they must move further a field for their studies.

Post grads who are in the receipt of research grants may still apply for the maintenance grant so long as they do not receive more than €16,000 in funding a year.

How, when and where to apply?

Applications for the maintenance grant should be made in the summer before the beginning of the academic year. The closing date for the receipt of completed application is usually at the end of August. Applications for the maintenance grant require a lot of supporting documentation so make sure to leave plenty of time to collate this information.

Change of circumstances

The application process for the maintenance grant allows for a change in a family's or an individual's circumstances. Grant applications are based on the last full financial year, i.e. grants awarded in academic year 2008/09 are based on the 2007 financial year. However if an individual or a family experience a change for the worst in income levels, for example a reduction in working hours or unemployment, after the 31st of December and it is likely to be permanent then students may apply to be assessed based on the new income level.

For more information on the maintenance grant please visit www.studentfinance.ie, contact you local VEC or local authority or email the SU Welfare Officer, welfare@ulsu.ie.

Let's talk about sex baby!

An Focal sex columnist Annie Glyde-Dammes

Following a rather spur of the moment 'challenge and bet' scenario with a friend of mine, I was inspired to write a column on 20 things to do to avoid sex (yes... AVOID...) The challenge posed by a friend of mine is to last 20 days without having any form of sex i.e. a return to the days of a PG13 relationship where kissing is the maximum sexual contact allowed. After agreeing to this challenge I began to wonder how I was going to manage to avoid that particular hobby of mine. And so to the twenty things to do to take your mind off it;

1. Go to the gym – nothing takes your attention away from sex more than the pure exhaustion that goes with having run 10 miles (unless of course you're a long distance runner)

2. Get your adrenaline rush elsewhere – jump out of a plane, bungee jump, go paint-balling, etc.

3. Spend a day looking up pictures of STI's – nothing will put you off sex faster.

4. Release your frustration in other ways – go into the arena and beat the punching bag to a pulp (figuratively rather than literally) or go to a kick-boxing lesson

5. Start/finish/continue with your FYP – nothing kills your enjoyment of life and all things faster

6. Play "The Link" – a game sweeping UL's first years where one is linked to another for a period of 24 hours straight (excluded bathroom breaks). Nothing will stop you having sex more than having someone stuck to you 24/7.

7. Read a book with absolutely no sexual content – I suggest some choice paragraphs of the bible or failing that relieve your youth with some Harry Potter, Artemis Fowl or Twilight.

8. This one time, at band camp... I learned to play a new song – Do it, it will help distract you for at least an evening or two.

9. Call your neighbours and have a night of hanging out – have a few drinks, have a Pro-evo tournament, play the Wii.

10. Have a duvet/child day – eat toasted cheese sandwiches, watch cartoons, eat ice-cream and marshmallows, refuse to get dressed etc.

11. Have a film/box set marathon – watch all the Star Wars films or an entire season of 24

12. Clean your room – unless you're very, very neat it's probably a state, your kitchen too.

13. Make a scrap book or organise your photos

14. Play with some other balls – go bowling with your friends

15. Do a jigsaw – a really complicated one that requires all your concentration

16. Have a 'random trip' day – decide that you're going to visit a random county or tourist attraction that you've never been to for example Leitrim.

17. Spend some time cooking – make freezable food like Lasagne, Bolognese or Chicken Curry for the days when you know that you're not going to be up for cooking.

18. Pick a member of the SU sabbatical team and stalk them for a day – I suggest Pa, he's the easiest to spot.

19. You know all those Clubs and Societies that you signed up for in the early weeks of college – yeah, go to one of them, you might like it.

20.Oh to hell with distractions, just go have some fun.

STIs Uncovered: Chlamydia

Description:

It is a bacterial infection.

Effects:

You can pass it on to your sexual partner(s). It can lead to problems such as pelvic inflammatory disease and infertility.

You can pass the infection to your baby during birth. It can cause premature labour and low birth weight.

Cause:

- Intimate genital contact.
- Unprotected vaginal, anal or oral sex.
- Infected fingers to eyes.
- Unprotected rimming (mouth to anus).
- From a pregnant mother to her baby.

Symptoms

In around 80% of women and 50%

of men with chlamydia will have no symptoms.

Women:

- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Stinging or burning sensation when you pass urine
- Bleeding between periods or heavy periods
- Pain or bleeding during or after sex

Men:

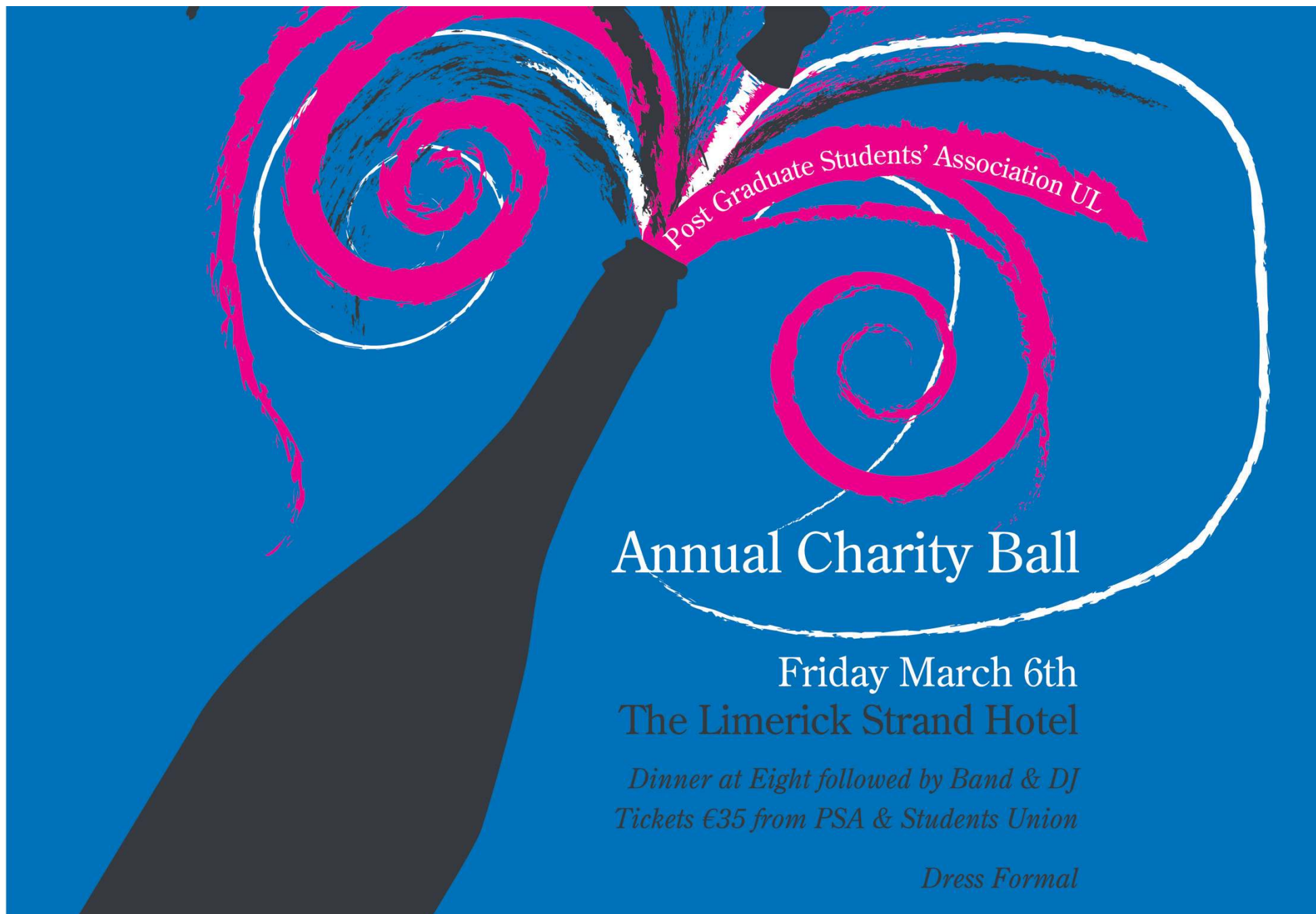
- Discharge from penis
- Stinging or burning sensation when you pass urine.

Treatment

Antibiotics – for you and your partner(s).

Prevention

Don't have intimate sexual contact. Or Have safer sex – always use a new condom correctly and put it on before you have sex.



ULSU Nitelink - Timetable for Academic Year 2008/09

Route A 19:00, 20:30, 22:00,

- Stop 1: Dromroe Village
 - Stop 2: Thomand Village
 - Stop 3: Cappavilla Village
 - Stop 4: Plassey Village
 - Stop 5: College Court
 - Stop 6: Groody Student Village
 - Stop 7: Courtyard Student Village
 - Stop 8: Brookfield Hall
 - Stop 9: Parkview Hall
 - Stop 10: Park Mews (Kielys)
- Returns to UL via Flag Pole Entrance

Route B 19:45, 21:15, 22:45,

- Stop 1: Kilmurry Village
 - Stop 2: Elm Park
 - Stop 3: Oaklawns
 - Stop 4: Kilmurry Lodge
 - Stop 5: Brierfield (Back of the Estate)
 - Stop 6: Woodhaven
 - Stop 7: Annacotty (Synotts)
 - Stop 8: Spar (Dublin Road Bus Stop)
 - Stop 9: Courtyard/Brookfield Roundabout
- Returns to UL via East Gate entrance

Route C 23.30 Only

Route A+B Stops on Request
Drop off only

Caught on Camera

International Night in the Stables during week 1



Halloween Ball
photos taken by
Michael Johnson,
UL PhotoSoc

Out & About: Rag Week 2009: Hear it here first! Ents Listings



Charities

Down to the brass tax of it, they're the reason Rag Week was invented – raising funds to help out those in need and helping organisations to continue with their fantastic work. None of us know when the time may come that us or a loved one may need the assistance of these charities; maybe you know of someone that already does.

Be it with sharing your time or your money, it's your participation in Rag Week that will make those much

needed cheques to the deserving charities possible. All money raised from Rag Week will be divided between four charities. The following are two of the four charities that will benefit from our week of debauchery!

The Milford Hospice

First established in 1928, this local voluntary organisation provides both in-patient and home care facilities in Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary. Covering a 25mile radius in any one area throughout the mid-west region, Milford Hospice is a

non-profit organisation funded entirely through patient fees and voluntary health insurance income, so your money will be going to good use.

St. Gabriel's

St. Gabriel's provides services to children and young adults with physical and mental disabilities, available either on site in a new purpose built centre at Dooradoyle, Limerick or in the child's home, pre-school or school. Serving the mid-west region, St. Gabriel's is another cause deserving of your hard earned euros.

Daytime stuff

Seven weeks to go...things are getting serious ladies and gents, the time has come to dig into those pockets and So, you know what's going on each night, but Rag Week wouldn't be Rag Week without the daytime madness! Spread over three days, here's an outline of what you can expect:

Monday 30th – get ready to watch your friends do things they never thought they would...or be told you've done so yourself – the hypnotist is back!

Tuesday 31st – comedians, you can't beat them, so how could we leave them out!

Wednesday 1st – April fool's day...hmmm, could be trouble...could be confusion...so we threw in a magician to make things even more confusing!

Throughout the week stuff like beer and pizza eating competitions, fights involving jelly and spinning around on wheely bins...not to mention the duck and raft races...oh, and the Red Bull paper airplane race...only in Rag Week!!!

Ticket Update

Seven weeks to go...things are getting serious ladies and gents, the time has come to dig into those pockets and guarantee your place for UL Rag Week 2009! Until further notice, today, Tuesday, 10 February, is now the most important day of your life ever...that is until Rag Week, which let's face it, is the most important week of your life...ever! Yes, Rag Week tickets will officially be on sale at 10am on Tuesday, 10 February! Going to just one gig, going to all events, getting your hands on one of the golden wonkas...what ever you had planned on doing today, make picking up your tickets as important in your plans as the cup of coffee that got you out of the leaba this morning!

Events

FRED, Christy Moore tribute, SASH!, Hells Bells, Wolfe Tones, Blizzards...the fun and mischief that comes with - it's going to be a festival baby! And what better way to celebrate the sale of these magical tickets than a ticket launch party – any excuse eh?! The fabulous Republic of Loose will be in the Stables Courtyard on this Thursday, 12 February, to launch this momentous occasion. With Rag Week being a whole seven weeks away, and with the cold weather still clinging on, this will be the ultimate Rag Week 'warm up'!

Volunteer Call

1. Feeling generous with your time?
2. Want to help out unselfishly with this raising-money-for-charity business in a bid to be a better person in 2009?
3. Or is the thought of free tickets, free merchandise and an exclusive party held in your honour a temptation just too attractive to resist.....?

For whatever reason, Rag Week can't happen without help from volunteers and is a better event because of them. A few hours of your time and you can check all three reasons off your list! We'll be filling the Rag Week days with plenty of fun and obscure activities and we need lovely people like yourselves to donate some of your time to join in and help us make this Rag Week legendary. If you're interested, drop an email to regina@eightball.ie.

The Rag Week Warm Up
Thursday February 12th - Week 3
The Stables. Doors 7.30pm

REPUBLIC OF LOOSE

Tickets €12
on Sale From ULSU Monday Week 2

ULSU ENTS sponsored by **Ulster Bank** **eightball**
Survival's a little easier with the Ulster Bank student account. PROMOTIONS & MEDIA

Students' Union General Meeting it's coming...wednesday, week 5

you'd be maaaaaad to miss it!

all motions for consideration
at the UGM to be submitted
in writing to the Communicatios Officer
by Wednesday, 18 February, week 4,
sucommunications@ul.ie
or call into the Students' Union.



Follow Paaaaaaa to the UGM!



Footballers beaten in McGrath final

Tomás McCarthy

UL: 0-6
Cork: 1-13

BEFORE the Sigerson campaign began for the UL footballers they made the final of the McGrath Cup. A tough campaign saw UL grind out victories against Limerick, WIT and Waterford. The final saw UL pitted against Cork in Páirc Uí Rinn on the evening of January 24.

Cork boss Conor Counihan persisted in playing an experimental line up as he had done for the whole tournament. The hosts started much the brighter. The Rebels fired the first four scores including two from Conor McCarthy. UL were held scoreless until the 17th minute but were level by the 24th minute thanks to three Enda Varley points. In tough conditions Cork added three points in a row before half time. These came courtesy of Conor McManus and two from Kevin O'Sullivan. They led 0-7 to 0-4 at the break.

Cork dominated the second half as UL only got two scores. Conor McCarthy, the Cork captain finished up with four points to his account. Substitute Seamus Hayes added a goal with three minutes remaining to give the Leesiders a ten point win 1-13 to 0-6.

UL's only scorers on the night

were Enda Varley with three points, David Moran with two and a single from Johnny Buckley. Although UL failed to become the first third level college team to win the trophy it was a satisfying campaign overall.

UL played all of their games away from home but that didn't dampen their spirits as they came out fighting with three wins.

Cian O'Neill learned a lot about his players in the McGrath campaign in preparation for the Sigerson. After years of disappointment they showed that UL football is far from being dead in the water.

Cork: K Murphy; B Crowley, N O'Donovan, K Harrington; D Murphy, E Sexton, R O'Sullivan; A O'Sullivan, A O'Connor; C McCarthy (0-4), F Goold (0-2), P Kelly (0-2); M Harrington, C McManus (0-1), K O'Sullivan (0-3). Subs used: C Keane for Kelly (yellow card, 33 mins), S Hayes (1-1) for M Harrington (50), S O'Sullivan for C McManus (51), R Brosnan for Goold (56), P Gayer for Crowley (57).

UL: K O'Malley; S McKeown, C O'Mahony, R Brady; L O'Dwyer, M Moloney, D Rattigan; D Moran (0-2), F Lynch; D Bracken, S O'Shea, S Lonergan; E Varley (0-3), P Byrne, J Buckley (0-1). Subs: P Hogan for McKeown (yellow card, 11 mins), K O'Brien for Varley (46).

Referee: D. O'Mahony (Tipperary)

Soccer team reach final four

Tomás McCarthy

UL 1-0 IT Tallaght

THE UL men's soccer team defeated IT Tallaght on January 29 to progress to the semi finals of the Colleges and Universities Football League. It is the first time UL has achieved such a feat.

The match was switched from the UL grounds to Fairview Rangers ground in Limerick. The club were very grateful to Fairview so that the team could maintain some sort of home advantage. With the weather being drizzly and a bit windy it was not ideal for flowing football. There was nothing between the teams for most of the afternoon. UL though did break the deadlock on 28 minutes. Martin Deady's free kick found the net as the home side got a crucial lead.

In the second period Paul Cummins' had the best chance for UL. His header though was well saved by IT Tallaght keeper John Shanahan. IT Tallaght began to exert more of an influence as the game neared its conclusion. They had four corners in injury time but still couldn't carve out an opening. Despite this late pressure from the Dublin outfit the UL rearguard held out for a historic win.

UL have been impressive all season long. They topped the Premier South table with three wins and two draws scoring 23 goals in the process. In this game though a single goal proved sufficient as the team go on to contest a semi final that will hopefully produce a similar result. They now join the holders UCD as well as UCC and Letterkenny IT in the hat for the semi finals. All credit must go to the players and the management team for a job well done.



David Bracken of UL making a run toward the Cork goal (photo by Niall Browne, UL Photo Soc)

UL advance in the Sigerson

Tomás McCarthy

UL 2-12
NUI Maynooth 3-5

THE UL footballers made it through to round two of the Ulster Bank Sigerson Cup with an away victory over NUI Maynooth on January 28. UL would have been expected to advance before the encounter but the hosts were determined not to make it easy. Dublin forward David Quinn found the back of the net in the opening period to leave Maynooth 1-4 to 0-5 ahead at the break. Nigel Dunne added another goal in the

35th minute but UL dominated the rest of the half. With Kerry duo Johnny Buckley and David Moran in flying form Cian O'Neill's team found their way back into the game. A 39th minute penalty from Moran and another goal from Buckley gave UL a six point lead with five minutes remaining on the watch. Nigel Dunne fired a late penalty for NUI Maynooth but UL had already ensured victory by that stage. It was hard earned but UL eventually ran out four point winners on a score line of 2-12 to 3-5.

The UL manager Cian O'Neill was pleased with the win but not overly enthusiastic about the performance. "It was a game of two halves" he commented. He was "disappointed" with the first half display saying that his players possibly believed that they would "steamroll Maynooth". "We started to play our football though in the second half". O'Neill wasn't happy with the two penalties that Maynooth scored from describing them as "outrageous decisions". He did compliment the defence though. "In general terms

we defended well. They only scored eight times in the match to our fourteen". The UL manager also said that the players "learned a huge amount" from the game. Looking ahead O'Neill was quietly confident. "I have every belief in this team. I think we can go on and reach the Sigerson weekend". UL were due to play UCD in the next round of the competition in early February. Meanwhile, in the Ulster Bank HE Freshers Football Division 1 Championship UL were knocked

out by Athlone IT by 2-8 to 1-5. In the Ulster Bank HE Senior B Hurling Championship UL defeated WIT on a score line of 1-14 to 1-11.

Scorers:

UL: J Buckley 1-7 ((0-5f) , D Moran 1-1 (1-0pen,0- 1f), S Lonergan 0-2, D Bracken, K O'Brien 0-1 each. NUI Maynooth: N Dunne 2-2 (1-0pen, 0-1f), D Quinn 1-1 (0-1f); P Callaghan, R Corcoran 0-1 each. UL: K O'Malley; S McKeown, C O'Mahony, R Brady; L O'Dwyer, M Moloney, D Rattigan; D Moran,

P Byrne; S Lonergan, S O'Shea, P Larkin; D Bracken, F Lynch, J Buckley. Subs: B Mulvey for Larkin (43); K O'Brien for Bracken (55). NUI MAYNOOTH: M Hennessey; T Gallagher, B Kinahan, C Freeman; P Cashen, G Brennan, C Lynch; N Coyne, G McArdle; R McCabe, N Dunne, P Maher; D Quinn, P Callaghan, R Corcoran. Subs: K O'Brien for Kinahan (22); G O'Connell for Corcoran (48); N Jordan for McCabe (51); C Cody for McArdle (55); S Leamy for Lynch (58).

Comment

UL sports round-up

Meeting the team: UL ladies rugby

Tomás McCarthy

Hockey

UL suffered defeat in their opening Irish Senior Cup game on January 24. UL lost 3-2 at home to Bandon.

Basketball

The UL basketball club are currently in preparation for the inter-varsities. This year's competition will be held in UUJ and takes place from February 26 through to March 1.

OPC

The Outdoor Pursuits Club in the past few weeks have planned trips to Mangerton and Ballykeefe. The club is also busy as it is hosting this year's inter-varsities. The climbing wall is also open on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Ultimate Frisbee

The Ultimate Frisbee team is hosting its annual tournament on Saturday,

14 and Sunday 15, February. There will be over 20 teams competing with possibly over 200 players, including teams from England, Scotland, Italy and Holland. For more information, check out the club website at <http://www.ul-ultimate.110mb.com/> or email ultimatefrisbee@gmail.com.

Fantasy Football

There is still time to join the UL fantasy football league on premierleague.com. The code is 312760-68704. Currently GVR Wavin, Team to beat and Leary's Lads are battling it out for top spot.

Comments

Fed up of the sports editor? Need to get something off your chest? The email address is mossy.mccarthy@gmail.com. Also check out our bebo site at www.bebo.com/anfocalsport.



UL Ladies hockey were defeated in their opening Irish Senior Cup game away to Bandon (Photo by Niall Brownen, UL PhotoSoc)



photo: ED Kelly

Name: Catherine Mason (Fason)**Age:** 21**Studying:** 4th year Sport Science**Position:** Second Row**Funniest moment on the pitch:** Giving teabag a face full of crotch in a lineout that went horribly wrong during the league final in Galway.**Funniest moment off the pitch:** Singing "O Holy Night" in March with Laura O' Mahony after the varsities while flaking kiwi's at people or belting them with a giant yellow plastic oar (Oar of shame!!).**Best memory of the team:** Intervarsities in my second year in Maynooth, Jesusland!**Ambitions for this season:** No casts/dislocations and to win the varsities beating UCC at home in the final and reclaim the crown.**Name:** Elizabeth Cronin**Age:** 28 (Golden Oldie)**Studying:** 2nd year Primary Teaching Mary I**Position:** Front Row/hooker if Tara's injured or if the team is desperate!!**Best memory with team:** Getting to play my first full game was delighted.**Ambitions for this season:** Play as many games as I can and for us to win back our title, The Intervarsities!!**Name:** Lorna Barry**Age:** 22**Studying:** 4th year Sport Science**Position:** Attempted scrum half!**Funniest moment on the pitch:** Guesty slowing down after breaking through the gain line so she could hand off yet ANOTHER person.**Funniest moment off the pitch:** Spending a night with a certain drunk forward in the hospital after a post-intervarsity night in the Lodge.**Best Memory:** Playing with all the great girls over the last 4 years and especially winning both the league and Varsities 2 seasons ago**Ambitions for this season:** Getting back what is rightfully UL's The Intervarsity Cup especially in UCC's backyard!!**Name:** Anna Caplice (AnnaBannana/Spongebob/Bob)**Age:** 19**Studying:** 1st year Arts**Position:** Back Row**Funniest moment on the pitch:** When my shorts and knickers were pulled clean off me at training!**Funniest moment off the pitch:** Everyone rugby tackling in the Lodge.**Best Memory:** Build up to the match in the bowl against the pigs!!**Name:** Mary Rose Flanagan (Rosie)**Age:** 18**Studying:** General Nursing 1st year**Positions:** Flanker/prop/second row**Funniest moment on the pitch:** Spending all the time with Bob and Niamhie such a laugh!**Funniest moment off the pitch:** Being lifted by Eileen the little scrum half who lacks lineout technique. The consequences were inevitable, both of us landed on our ass!**Ambitions for this season:** To win something this year!!**Name:** Fiona Reidy**Age:** 20**Studying:** 2nd year New Media and English.**Funniest moment on the pitch:** Being lifted in a lineout at training for Connacht for the first time, went flying over the head of the front lifter nose dived into the ground and then realised the lifter had pulled down my shorts in all the action. I was mortified in front of our male coach. I tie my shorts every time now though!!**Funniest moment off the pitch:** Lodging after the varsities. Catherine Mason and Laura O'Mahony singing Jesus can't play rugby post varsities, classic!**Ambitions for this year:** Win both the League and Varsities beating UCC in both finals!

If you'd like An Focal to meet your club or team, contact the editor for more information.

Who Are Ya?

Name: Eoin King**Age:** 18**Course:** Law and Accounting

(some laugh)

The Basics**Name:** Ed Kelly**Club:** UL Bohemians**County:** Tipperary**Position:** 2nd Row**Nickname:** Gelly or Farmer**Sporting Heroes:** Roy Keane or Paul O'Connell**Biggest sporting achievement:** Representing Munster u-19s last summer**Whats the best thing about UL Bohemians?**

Going out on the piss after winning matches!

And the worst? The 7.30am weight training sessions and having to sing on bus journeys after away matches**Four To Finish****Describe yourself in three words?** Tall, dark and handsome**Who's going to win the Premier League?** Liverpool, hopefully!**What's the best chat-up line you've ever heard?** One of my mates says, "I'm hot, you're hot, so let's do it"

What are you going to be when you grow up? Unemployed, the way things are looking.

Friends or Home & Away? Tough one. I suppose Home & Away**Chips or spuds?** Spuds**Favourite food:** Sweet and sour chicken**Favourite song:** U2 - 'Sunday Bloody Sunday'**Favourite movie:** Gladiator**Favourite jersey:** Italy Rugby**Favourite number:** Five. Dunno why!**Favourite boots:** Adidas World Cup**Take Your Pick****The Lodge or Trinity Rooms?** T'Rooms**Dunphy or Giles?**

Has to be Dunphy

O'Connell or O'Gara? O'Connell Cup o' tay or cappuccino? Cup o' tay all the way!**Chips or spuds?** Spuds**Friends or Home & Away?**

Tough one. I suppose Home & Away

The winning dream

John Condren

PICTURE the scene. It is October 2009; a wet and wintry afternoon in Croke Park, and Ireland are losing 1-0 in the dying minutes of their final game of the qualifying series for the World Cup in 2010.

Giovanni Trapattoni, agitated and gesticulating, looks on helplessly from the sidelines as his side squander chance after chance to level the match and secure the vital point that will take Ireland to South Africa as group runners-up.

Finally, after the footballing institution that is Bohemians' new signing Kevin Kilbane heads wide from two yards with the goalkeeper stranded on the turf, the Italian's patience snaps.

He withdraws the ineffective Stephen Hunt and the habitually wasteful Kilbane and sends on – yes you guessed it – the by-now slightly-less-pudgy Andy Reid and the prodigal son, Stephen Ireland, sporting an afro that would have done credit to Beyonce Knowles in Austin Powers: Goldmember.

Like Austin, young Stephen – his proud grannies watching from the stands – plays with the subtlety and style of a secret agent. He floats around the midfield, playing a short, crisp and most importantly accurate pass here, launching into a haymaker of a tackle there, all the time harassing the tired opposition.

Reid, meanwhile, despite shedding the best part of two stone, still hasn't learned how to run, but who cares as long as he can still pass the damn ball.

Together, the two mavericks bring life to an Irish midfield too long used to the lackadaisical approach – 'if the ball comes near me I'll try to win it, if not, sure what the hell, the feckin' Wardrobe/Honey Monster/Richard Dunne will mop up the pieces.'

Then we score. Robbie Keane, playing the best football of his life since his inspired return to Inter Milan to play under Jose Mourinho – Zlatan Ibrahimovic having jumped ship from the San Siro to join the cast of Manchester City's revolutionary blockbuster For A Few Dollars More, Part II – is fouled on the edge of the box.

Reid jogs forward with all the speed of a pregnant hippopotamus to take the freekick. Deceptively, his swerving left-footed strike has all the speed and twice the sting of a vengeful wasp as it flies into the top corner. 1-1, and Croke Park erupts for the first time since we thumped the Italians 3-0 with Kevin Doyle – recently signed by Chelsea as a budget version of the dearly-beloved and sadly missed Didier Drogba – scoring a hat-trick. None of them, oddly enough, with his head.

Reid rips off his shirt to show a fine new six-pack – not of the

alcoholic type – and is promptly booked. He shows us that he hasn't lost his rowdy past however, arguing with the referee using much the same language I employed last Rag Week when having a row with a drunken muppet in Supermacs who accused me of skipping the queue.

Hell's bells! As if one wasn't enough, within a minute we score a second goal. Robbie is again involved, his failure to win the Premiership with Liverpool – poor deluded fools – clearly long forgotten as he tricks his way past two Montenegro defenders on the left in the way that Damien Duff used to before he fell asleep at Newcastle airport and woke up without a contract. Robbie's low cross is perfection itself, and who's there to tap it in?

Ireland sends Ireland to the land of the Springboks, and celebrates accordingly. He rips down his shorts again, but this time he's forgotten to wear his Superman jocks – or indeed, any jocks at all – and only realises when the front row of the Canal End recoil in disgust whilst simultaneously cheering. Then, I wake up in a cold sweat.

The dream turned into a nightmare, Joxer stuck the head on Jack / Who wanted to bring Johnny Giles and Eamon Dunphy back. So sang the great Christy Moore – Ireland's Eurovision

entrant in 2009. The roles are reversed, and where Joxer once represented the quintessential Irish fan complete with flag and flagon, reluctant to change a winning formula, that role is now filled by Trapattoni (minus tri-colour and Guinness, naturally). The fans want Reidy and Stevie back; II Trap wants Stevie (if he picks up the phone first) but definitely not that other ragamuffin. Shame, really. We could do with someone who can actually pass the ball.

My own dream has indeed turned into a nightmare, and I wake up with one side of my face bearing the imprint of my laptop's keyboard. It's late January 2009, 4am in Cappavilla, pitch black outside, and I've an FYP to finish.

As I return to the referencing, a wry smile crosses my face.

Andy Reid and Stephen Ireland may not be the geniuses that were Giles and Dunphy, but we could sure as hell do with them right now.

Darron Gibson and Glenn Whelan are decent enterprising midfield players, but if we are to qualify for the World Cup we need the craft that the likes of Reid and Ireland – and maybe that other lost child, Rory Delap – can supply in spades.

Roll on Georgia, and hopefully the stubborn II Trap can prove me wrong.



Andy Reid

Reasons to be cheerful



2009, for better or for worse, will be a significant year for the Irish football team. It will be recalled with fondness if the Boys in Green qualify for their fourth World Cup and reach their first major tournament for eight years.

Otherwise, it will continue the recent run of woe that has dogged us for far too long if we aren't in the draw for South Africa on 4 December. Whichever path we are taken on, the first step will come in the vital World Cup qualifier against Georgia.

For me, there is plenty of reason to anticipate the New Year with a sense of enthusiasm and a realisation of potential greatness, although I appear to be representing the views of a minority.

Let's look at the bigger picture. As things stand we are three points behind Italy with a game in hand. That will probably yield a home win over Georgia, which will leave us a massive seven points ahead of third-placed Bulgaria.

Even if we do not win Group 8, finishing second will bring us to a play-off, a stage we haven't reached in our last three qualifying campaigns. I will be astonished if Ireland finish up outside the top two in this group.

Georgia and Cyprus are already as good as eliminated. Montenegro, while decent, will not pose a threat this time around. There has been talk about Bulgaria challenging us, but a defeat for them at Croke Park on 28 March will effectively knock them out. That leaves only Italy who, despite being world champions, are quite likely to come unstuck against the Irish.

Legendary coach Giovanni Trapattoni has come in for a torrent of unfair criticism for his team selection, particularly from the execrable know-it-all Mr. Dunphy.

It's this simple – the Italian is a genius. What he doesn't know about football management is not worth noting and he may just be a little more aware than most

people of Italy's strengths and weaknesses.

As has been the case for every Ireland match in the last few months, the build-up is dominated by pundits lamenting the continued absence of Stephen Ireland and Andy Reid. That's an issue for another day. We can qualify for South Africa 2010 without the pair. With them we can maintain our record of reaching at least the second round in every World Cup in which we've featured.

There's enough gloom in this country due to the crap economic situation. Trapattoni and his players could very well provide us with a healthy counterbalance if they fulfil my expectations and come at least second in the World Cup qualifying group.

So, don't belittle the valiant efforts of our soccer team. Given our recent fortunes, I'd rather a series of scrappy 1-0 wins than heroic 2-3 defeats. The performance matters – but points are far more

important. We will secure enough of them to make 2009 a memorable year for Ireland.



Liam Togher

Club News Seminar 11

Skydive UL calling for blue skies



Skydiver Mairtin Lally enjoying the blue skies

 Sharon Brosnan

We're back with better weather and loads of plans ahead!

This semester we are training as many students we can to become skydivers. We hold courses to train our members how to skydive solo or go tandem. With our growing number of members we are dying to get back in the air again. We will be holding re-trains in Week 3 for those who have done courses and need to be re-briefed. Once

our members are trained and ready to jump, we go skydiving on Wednesdays and weekends (weather dependent).

With blue skies ahead and loads of jumping we will also be having a few non-skydive related nights out including a Poker night in week 5, and a table quiz in week 6. Our next fundraising activity will be a Pro-Evo Tournament. We'll have the games on Tuesday of Week 4 with the finals in the Stables on Wednesday night, food and prizes,

who could ask for more! Sign up will take place during week 3.

Parachuting packing classes, and of course a few skydive trips to Belfast, Spain and France will take place this semester. We might even skydive into UL! One of our most exciting events will be our Skydiving Boogie during Easter break. We will be jumping with experienced and beginner skydivers all week, a bit of camping, good weather and great craic! Everyone is invited.

Our main trip abroad will be right after exams, we are planning 2 weeks away in Gap-Tallard, France. Once you have a skydive course, and a jump done with Skydive UL you can come with us to France. A two-week skydive holiday right after exams will be a great way to distress.

Keep an eye out for us around campus and if you are interested in doing a skydive course, contact info@skydiveul.org.

UL TaeKwonDo - things to see and do

 Michael Johnson

Welcome back to semester 2 of the academic year. From a clubs and societies point-of-view, it's looking to be a busy time of year and the UL TaeKwonDo club are no different. As per our training timetable, we'll have no less than three training sessions running every week. Mondays 6:45pm - 9:00pm, Wednesdays 9:00pm - 10:30pm and Thursdays 6:45pm - 8:15pm. All training takes place in the Sports Hall in the Old Sports Building (PESS Building) here on campus... for those unfamiliar with it, there's a map and directions on our website... <http://tkdo.ul.ie>.

In addition to all the training, we've a couple of events and competitions coming up. The club is hoping to host the Munster Championship competitions here on campus towards the end of February for the second year running, and it promises to be even bigger than last time.

We're also hoping to organise a trip to Galway for the NUIG college intervarsities in March, make a club weekend out of the event...always a good time out!

We'll be travelling to Scotland this term for a weekend later on as well to train with the Scottish TaeKwonDo team which promises to be good fun.

On a more developmental note, the club are also liaising with other schools in the region to organise a first aid training weekend for members over the term as well. Icing on the cake then, we'll have the C&S ball in March as well to look forward to.

All Club members are eligible for all the activities and events listed above, with the usual caveats about costs, etc. So if you'd like to try something different and new this term, why not come down to training some night to see what's involved or even take part yourself... who knows, you might never look back! The club can be contacted at ul.taekwondo@gmail.com or through our webpage, <http://tkdo.ul.ie>.

Softballers gear up for tournaments

 Eoin King

2009 has opened with a bang in the Softball Club with several tournaments and events on the way. These tournaments are a great way for the club's new and existing members to get to know each other and enjoy the guaranteed craic!

The first is the Intervarsity in Dublin on the 27 February. UL will be playing UCD and other teams which will be clarified closer to the time. UL will travel

up on the Friday and arrive home on the Sunday of that weekend. Accommodation and travel details are organised by the club.

From my own experience as a newbie it is the best way to get to know people in UL and other colleges. New members are all welcome, and no matter how good or bad a player you are, everyone gets included on a team and I can vouch for that!

Four weeks after the Dublin

tournament, UL will be hosting its own Intervarsity. Another fun-filled weekend and with UL's previous winning track record they should prove to be exciting weekends all round.

In this club, it's not all about the Intervarsities though. We do plenty of fundraising events from race nights to duck races. Even if you've never held a mitt or bat in your life it's worth a trip down.

Training is enjoyed by all and

it is also a great way for all UL's international students to get to meet other students from around the college. From talking to previous members (some of which who live overseas, who still come back to visit) it is agreed: "once a UL softball player, always a UL softball player."

To find out more just come to training on Wednesday and Friday on the Astroturf (beside the tennis courts) from 2 to 4 pm.

The Score

Liam Toghher

On The Long Finger

It's not only in college that procrastination is an art form. The Scottish Cup also has a 'tomorrow will do' mentality when you consider that the 3rd round clash between Inverurie Locos and Motherwell has been postponed four times already (it could be more by the time you read this). Come on, lads, a frozen pitch is no excuse!

Score Like An Egyptian

When Mido scored his first goal for Wigan at the end of January, the celebrations were accompanied by The Bangles hit 'Walk Like an Egyptian' over the PA system. I suppose if Clint Dempsey ever scored for the Latics we'd hear 'American Idiot' by Green Day. Who knows?

Back In The Black

It may have taken a good five months but League 2 basement club Luton finally reached the zero points barrier in mid-January. The Hatters had to begin from -30 after going into administration. The survival chase is on!

Riches To Rags

Cameroonian striker Patrick Suffo, who played against Ireland at the 2002 World Cup, is now on the books of Blue Square Premier side Wrexham. Contrast that with the fortunes of his strike partner from the Ireland game, a certain Samuel Eto'o. Oh well.

Open For Business

Craig Bellamy recently became the fourth player to score for six different clubs in the Premier League. The other three are Nicky Barmby, Darren Bent and Les Ferdinand. Bellamy has found the net in the top flight for Coventry, Newcastle, Blackburn, Liverpool, West Ham and now Manchester City.

Line-Ups From Long Ago

Chelsea team v MSK Zilina in August 2003: Cudicini – Johnson, Terry, Desailly (Huth), Babayaro – Gronkjaer (Stanic), Lampard (Petit), Geremi – Cole, Hasselbaink, Gudjohnsen. Five and a half years later only Terry and Lampard are still at the club.

Magic Numbers

Tomás McCarthy

3.5million - The price of one Emile Heskey.

24 - Penalties in the Scottish Cup tie between Celtic and Dundee United after the game ended goalless. Celtic eventually won 11-10.

250,000 - Euros that Tadhg Kennelly will lose after retiring from Australian Rules football. Jack O'Connor might be after him when he returns to the Kingdom.

35 - The number of caps that Phil Babb won for Ireland. An Focal Sport says "Bring Back Babb". Or maybe not.

105 - Euros to gain membership for a term in the UL Arena. A rip off or good value? You decide!

2001 - The year that Tipperary last won Liam McCarthy. They are currently second favourites behind Kilkenny to win this year at 5-1.

A Sports Writers Diary

Tomás McCarthy

17 Jan

Looks like rain Ted! The first An Focal sports section of 2009 is complete!

18 Jan

UL are through to the McGrath Cup final after beating Waterford 0-13 to 0-8.

19 Jan

Ian Dowling and Paul Warrick are spotted in the Sports Bar tucking into a big healthy fry. The food for superstars!

20 Jan

It's good to John O'Shea on the score sheet. For a player who gets mighty abuse here it's easy to forget how much he has won with United even though he is a bit player.

21 Jan

I didn't even bother to watch Burnley v Spurs. That tie was over surely. Maybe not. Just caught the end of the highlights and I couldn't believe it.

22 Jan

The Cork dispute just goes on and on and on!

23 Jan

Emile Heskey is off to Aston Villa. Never really believed that Heskey was a reliable goal scorer and has got some undeserved big moves.

24 Jan

UL lose out in the McGrath Cup final 1-13 to 0-6 to Cork in Paire Uí Rinn.

25 Jan

Back in El Lodginton it's good to be back! Someone thinks that I'm from Cork but I would like to quash those rumours immediately.

26 Jan

Back in The Stables. McGrath suggests that we start a campaign to resurrect Phil Babb's career. Bring Back Babb! Sounds good to me. Another Mayo man wants to get rid of rugby out of the newspaper. I don't think that's gonna work out somehow.

27 Jan

Down to The Stables to watch a bit of Portsmouth v Aston Villa. I get a perfect spot with one screen showing the Villa game and another one behind me with Sky Sports News showing the rest of the scores. Oh yeah and Heskey scores a smashing goal.

28 Jan

UL footballers get past NUI Maynooth in the Sigerson. Great progress being made by that team this year.

29 Jan

Bump into ex-sports editor and legend that is Patrick Mannix. I get a bit of stick for the Liverpool articles. Mannix wants a pro Robbie Keane agenda. I also get called a disgrace in Angel Lane. Has to be expected I suppose! I also learn never to wear a Galway United jersey out again! The UL soccer team narrowly defeat IT Tallaght.

30 Jan

It's absolutely milling rain and I have a paper to get done. Also get to watch a bit of tennis. It's a tough life really!

Give It A Lash Quiz 1

Tomás McCarthy tests your sporting knowledge



1. When does David Beckham's loan deal with AC Milan expire?
2. What is the name of Harlequins RFC's stadium?
3. Which racehorse won his third King George VI Chase on St Stephens Day 2008?
4. Which Serbian international winger have Manchester United recently signed?
5. Where was the GAA's first meeting, 125 years ago?
6. Who knocked Maria Sharapova out of the 2009 Australian Open?
7. Who won the recent World Darts Championship?
8. Which Chelsea footballer has been arrested for drink-driving?
9. Which England flanker has been ruled out of the Six Nations with a broken ankle?
10. Who did Ronnie O'Sullivan defeat in the final of the UK Masters this year?

Quotes Of The Edition

Tomás McCarthy

"Is there a poached egg to come with that? Get yer act together!"
Munster winger Ian Dowling complains about the quality of his fry up in the Sports Bar.

"John O'Shea is legend. What a finish!"
The sports editor goes a bit over the top after his fellow Waterford man finds the net in the Carling Cup.

"Come on Newport!"
One of our loyal readers and a proud Tipp man Martin Holmes from Newport in The Lodginton.

"I want a weekly Ciaran McDonald corner in the paper McCarthy."
Well I don't think Mayo man Kevin McNamara will be getting his wish any time soon!

"The Artane Band would have put up a better show"
Nicky Walsh giving the sports editor fierce slugging about last September's All Ireland.

"Lads there's a fierce anti-Liverpool agenda in that paper. I'll write a strongly worded letter."
Former sports editor Patrick Mannix vents his frustration on a night out in Angel Lane.

"They're fairly flexible alright"
A Stables customer, who will remain nameless, comments on a few members of the UL Trampolining Club.

Answers to Sports Quiz

1. 9 March
2. The Stoop
3. Kauto Sta
4. Zoran Tosic
5. Hayes Hotel, Thurles
6. Ana Ivanovic
7. Phil Taylor
8. John Obi Mikel
9. Lewis Moody
10. Mark Selby

Under the Spotlight

An International Link

David Studer

The International Society is one of the newest societies around campus only being formed early into last semester. However, it has already attracted a huge amount of members, particularly amongst the exchange student population on campus, having already signed up over 250 members. In its short existence the International Society has been gradually emerging as one of unrivalled possibilities and unmeasured potential.

The International Society and its founders have taken inspiration from a former incarnation of the club which existed up to four or five years ago. The old International Society was one of the biggest in UL and held some of the biggest events seen on campus, including the bi-annual food fair which grew into one of the highlights in the

social calendar. Unfortunately, however, the society petered out when two students who were the driving force behind the society graduated and left the university. One of the main aims of the new International Society is to return it to a position as one of the leading societies on campus.

The mission statement of the International Society is drawn from the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) for which we are currently applying to for membership. The ESN, an EU funded body, operates under the mantra of Students Helping Students. One of the central goals of our society therefore is the integration of exchange students into Irish life and more importantly into the University of Limerick campus life. We do this by organising a number of events and activities for our visiting students throughout the year.

However, this society is not just

for international exchange students, it is also a great way for UL students to meet some new people and learn about a variety of different cultures from around the world. Last semester we ran a number of different events including International Speed Dating (from which three couples emerged, one still going strong last I heard!), the World Food Fair, several film nights, a table quiz night, a few Ceilí nights, a Halloween fancy dress party and a trip down to Cork.

This coming semester promises to be a huge success as we build on our foundations from last year. We have been working closely with the International Education Office and having participated in their orientation, we held our first event of the semester, International Speed Dating (one couple has emerged to date). The Speed Dating has proven a great way for all the students to meet new people in similar

situations – starting an exchange programme in a foreign university. Indeed, such was the success of the event this semester that we are considering running it again later in the year for the International and UL students together.

Following this, on Friday of Week One we ran our first film night of the year followed by a party in the Stables. The film was a huge success filling the Jonathan Swift and the Stables afterwards. We also had a new member's night on Tuesday of Week Two, taking our new bunch of international students on a night out in Limerick City.

This Week Three we are holding our first ever International Week. We will be screening two Irish films for our international students - In Bruges and Man About Dog - but anyone is welcome to attend. We will also be hosting two more parties: a Country Colours Night

and a Traffic Light Party. As well as this the UL Karate and Capoeira clubs will be having a demonstration of their talents in the Courtyard and there will be a Pool Tournament hosted by the UL Pool and Darts Club

Over the rest of the semester we have further events planned. One of our Irish students has agreed to teach the International Students a bit Gaelic Football and we hope to have a challenge match up and running by the end of the semester. As well as this we will be organising a trip to the Gaelic Ground on March 1st to see Limerick entertain Dublin and on the 5th April to see Limerick versus Waterford. We also have a trip to the Giants Causeway and Belfast planned over St Patrick's Weekend, Table Quiz and Themed Party Nights in the Stables. Our activities also extend outside the Stables: we have just set up a Book Club for those

exchange students who wish to practice their English. Run by some students from the English department, they meet every week to discuss their readings in an Teach Fáilte.

Finally, we also have secured some hostel reductions for those more adventurous exchange students who wish to travel around different parts of Ireland. Sleepzone Hostels in Galway, Connemara and the Burren have all agreed to a 20% reduction to all International Society members. As the society grows we hope to secure similar offers, just as we hope to extend our activities on campus for both international and UL students.

For anyone interested in joining UL International Society or even checking out some of our events just email us at ulinternationalsociety@gmail.com or go to our Facebook page: UL International Society.



Get A Grip

The Outdoor Pursuit Club are hosting the
CLIMBING INTERVARSITIES 2009



Wednesday to Sunday Week 4 (February 18th - 22nd 2009)

FILM FESTIVAL - Jonathan Swift (B1023) - 7pm - FREE
Wed (18th) - 'Underdeveloped' (Irish film about climbers from Belfast)
Thurs (19th) - 'Hardgrit' (International film with extreme gritstone climbing)

CLIMBING TALK - Scholar's Bar - 7:30pm - €3 Students/€7
Fri (20th) - 'Steve McClure'

INTERVARSITIES - PESS Building
Sat (21st) - Bouldering Comp.
Sun (22nd) - Lead Comp.

Sponsored by:
Ulster Bank

All events open to non-members.
For full details check the website below!

[HTTP://WWW.CLIMBINGINTERVARSITY.COM](http://www.climbingintervarsity.com)

