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Edition 6
Semester 1**



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(ok I can't any more out of that so I'll stop)

Bus Times cut due to lack of Bus Lanes

In their press release issued for the 26th of November, Bus Eireann announced amendments to the timetables of certain city bus routes, but more notably the service to and from the University. The amendments are due to the fact that deteriorating traffic conditions in Limerick had made it impossible for Bus Eireann to adhere to the published timetable.

According to John McLoughlin of Bus Eireann, the new timetable has been a success so far, and, he says, there are supervisors in place to monitor the new service. The timetable amendments are for the morning rush hour and the timetable reverts to normal after 10:20a.m. This

does not help the afternoon rush hour situation. However, the level of pre-



Christmas traffic will cause disruptions to the timetable as it is, so there are plans in place to adjust the afternoon timetable in early January.

There had been comments made within Limerick Corporation that Bus Eireann

are taking what they call 'bully-boy tactics' on board by amending the timetable in this way. In their opinion, Bus Eireann did not consult with enough people before introducing this new timetable. Mr. McLoughlin however, refutes these allegations saying, "I consulted with everyone. I had consultants and engineers to check the feasibility of the plan, and I was left with no choice but to introduce these amendments."

Mr. McLoughlin further argues his case by stating that since the Corporation have taken the city bus service and Bus Eireann's proposed bus route to the University

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UL Lecturers Consider Industrial Action by Judy Roche

A dispute has arisen between the management of the University and the academic section of the MSF labour union, in which UL lectures of all grades are involved.

In 1994, a Governing Body was founded to examine the existing academic promotional system and to make proposals for a system of internal promotions based on merit and on advancing academic ethos. Such proposals were investigated in order to bring the UL promotional system in line with those of other Irish universities. As it stood, the academic promotional system applied only to Assistant Lecturers. The only route to obtain a position as Senior Lecturer or an Associate Professor was through the door of external competition. The report recommended a single internal system for promotions to Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor grades. The Governing Body thus directed the university management to negotiate the new promotional system with MSF (Labour union). The Governing Authority finally approved the consequent signed agreement on June 27th 2000.

The agreement purported to establish an internal promotional system through which all promotions to the grades Lecturer, Senior Lecturer and Associate Professor would be processed. With regard to Lecturer to Senior Lecturer pro-

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This Job Rocks !

Creative Concepts and Promotions

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We are training on Friday 14th December, 2001. It will be at the University of Limerick on Campus.

Interviews from 2 to 4pm

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Contact Student Union for details or phone Paula or Christina on 1850 230032

Check out our website www.ccpireland.ie

Problems finding a Library Seat- you can sort it out!

Essays and exams are approaching. The evidence of this is to be found daily in the library. Everyday it gets more and more difficult to find a seat. You can tour the floor after floor and still fail to find a corner to slip into. The most annoying fact is that a lot of these seats have books present but no bodies. Students report people arriving at nine in the morning, dropping off books and then disappearing for hours on end. This obviously means that precious seats, are been taken up by phantom students and the genuine students, in need of a seat, are at a loss.



The issue has been raised at class reps council and a lack of solutions has been forthcoming. Apparently the fifteen-minute rule still applies but no one seems to be heeding it. There is little that can actually be done by library staff. Librarians have enough on their plate without having to be checking the seating arrangements. Security are dropping off cards informing students that there fifteen minutes are up and they should vacate the seat. That is as far as sanctions go at the moment. There have been various suggestions as to how to solve the problem such as fines etc but these would prove to be impractical. So how to address the problem?

The best idea to come to the fore so far is that of a return to the old days. Those of us who are old enough to remember the old library remember how the system worked there. In the old library if a seat was vacated for more than the fifteen minutes the seat would be commandeered. The seat booking cards were used by most and in general the system flowed freely. So now there is a call for a return to the old system, for an operation 'free flow' of our own. For this to work everyone needs to work at it. One-person removing books from a desk are likely to receive a faceful of abuse.

However if that person is backed up by the majority it will be harder for the desk hoppers to complain.

So if you find a seat that is vacated for more than the fifteen minutes, get a desk-booking card, fill it out and leave it on the desk. If the owner of the books, a bag etc has not returned, remove the items and hand them into security. This desk is now free for your use or another person in need of a desk. Then if you have a desk and are merely leaving for a few minutes fill out a desk booking form. This will let other people know if you intend to return. There is really no excuse for accepting the situation as it is. The solution is simple, now lets do something about it.



Bus Times cut due to lack of Bus Lanes

off their agenda, he had little alternative but to adjust the timetable.



As an attempt to help improve the bus service on the University route earlier in the autumn, it was suggested that some of the buses, which would normally travel the route from the University to Raheen, should travel only to the city centre. This has already been put in place on some of the day's services and has been quite successful.

As regards future plans for the improvement of the bus services, Mr. McLoughlin states that for now they will keep monitoring the bus routes to see if there are any other ways to improve the efficiency of the services and will put in place the new amendments for the afternoon rush hour service in early January.



The new amended timetable is available from the Student's Union and is also posted at the bus stops.

Are they winging it? - Red Bull Analysis Gearoid Holland

The Red Bull energy drink has been surrounded by much speculation as to what it contains and the potential side-effects of its ingredients. Despite various Food and Safety Authorities, such as the North West Food Alliance and the British Food Standards Agency, stating that it is "as safe as any other drinks for adults to consume in moderation", the latter agency did however recommend that the energy drink carry a warning label regarding its high caffeine content for those who may be sensitive to caffeine. Red Bull contains approximately 80milligrams of caffeine per 250 ml can, which is more than Coca-Cola (46 mg), but less than most coffee drinks (about 100 mg in 6 ounces of regular coffee or a small cup of espresso).

When Red Bull first arrived on the market, it was touted as the perfect solution for clubbers who wanted to stay awake until the lights came on at the end of the night (but didn't want to indulge in anything illegal and/or life threatening). Its main appeal was its ability to replenish energy reserves and avoid the need for sleep, thus making it ideal for long journeys or for people with busy schedules. It was also the student's saviour when it came to cramming for exams. However, that is exactly where it is at its most dangerous to the unwary consumer, as even small doses of caffeine can have significant effects on the human body.

Studies carried out by the Australia New Zealand Food Authority into the pharmacological effects of caffeine concluded that low dosages generally improved alertness, reduced fatigue and improved performance concentration on simple tasks, but there was a noted rise in negative mood swings and irritability following withdrawal of even short doses of caffeine. Higher levels of intake have been

associated with anxiety. Withdrawal symptoms generally include, tiredness, weakness, headaches, nausea and flu-like feelings. Caffeine has also been proved to increase blood pressure, but there is no conclusive proof linking it to cardiovascular disease.

The other main ingredient in Red Bull is Taurine. Taurine is essentially an amino acid, and as it is the basic energy unit possesses certain cardio-vascular properties. It is suspected to have certain detoxifying effects on the body, and as it is excreted easily through the sweat glands it has a minimal effect on body weight. Taurine is also used a caffeine alternative that spares you the jitters and side effects of its caffeine counterpart. However, in Red Bull it consists of about 56% of the contents, and exists in a 12.5 to 1 ratio to caffeine.

The other ingredients are various vitamins and sugar derivatives such as glucose and sucrose, fuel for the body to burn when exercising. However, the presence of caffeine partly negates overuse of Red Bull before exercise. The International Olympic Committee specifically advise against it, specifying a urine content limit of 12mg per litre, but as strenuous exercise burns up bodily fluids, athletes who pass the limit before exercise may find themselves breaking it afterwards.

Stefan Pogacar on Yomag.net's Sports Advice Centre warns against Red Bull and other energy drinks for people exercising as it dehydrates many light exercisers who tend to feel very thirsty or throw up on empty stomachs. Isotonic drinks avoid such dehydratory effects, and as for power-lifters trying to develop muscles, bananas are still

the best option. "An Energy drink is nothing more than a coffee with far too much sugar".

Apart from its properties as an energy drink, its appeal as a companion to vodka is also dangerous. As research regarding the long-term effects of mixing many of the constituent chemicals with alcohol or other substances are still unknown, it is clear that there are still a vast range of side-effect as yet undetermined. Studies are still ongoing and it may be many years before the real extent of intermixing substances is known.

Alcohol is a depressant, and mixing a stimulant with a depressant can cause a number of medical problems, according to Gregory Stewart, MD, co-medical director of the Tulane Institute of Sports Medicine in New Orleans. "Alcohol tends to knock you out, and that is good in that it can prevent alcohol poisoning. But if you are taking something that will keep you going, you could raise blood alcohol to toxic levels". As much of the dangers relate to underlying medical conditions that even your GP may not spot, mixing a stimulant with a depressant "could be a prescription for disaster."

On the question-and-answer page on its Web site, the company gives that practice a whole-hearted endorsement: "Can you mix Red Bull with alcohol? Yes!" However, the official line from Red Bull is that "Red Bull does not actively market itself as a mixer for alcohol drinks".

Lecturers consider Industrial Action

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otions, a formula was established which would allow the University management to fill no more than 20% of Senior Lecturer positions through the traditional external mechanism that had previously dominated. i.e. to advertise these positions externally. In the course of the negotiations it was assumed that this applied to all Senior Lectureships including new posts, existing unfilled posts and posts which become vacant by retirement, resignation etc. The move towards these ratios was to commence from January 2000. However from this date to present day only five out of sixteen Senior Lectureship posts have been filled through the agreed internal promotions mechanism. (24% instead of the 80% envisaged.) This is the main grievance of members of the MSF ULbranch and is viewed by them as a clear breach of the agreement.

The University management has not been available to enter into substantive discussions on the issue, despite requests on behalf of MSF. According to Dr. Eugene Gath, there

seems to be a two-tiered system of promotions now in existence, one applying to newly created posts and the other applying to the existing Senior Lectureships that have become vacant by retirement etc. Given that in the foreseeable future, the majority of Senior Lectureships will arise through vacancy rather than new posts created through expansion etc., this would not have been agreed to by MSF members. Mr. Gath also remarked that the annual review initially scheduled for June 2001 had not taken place due to cancellation by the university management, and was once again cancelled in September. They also claim that the 16 externally advertised Senior Lectureship posts were not in fact 'new' posts but had already been 'allocated' before the agreement was signed. This distinction between 'new' and 'previously allocated' vacant posts was never broached in negotiations. Prof. Kevin Ryan (VPA), in defence of the agreement, has stated that the failure to address such a distinction was merely a 'misunderstanding' at the time the agreement was signed and naturally should have been dealt with appropriately. This, it

would seem, would have avoided a fraction of the present day malaise which could consequent in industrial action. Mr. Ryan gave no solid reason as to why the annual review has not taken place, but has remarked only that it failed to do so.

The MSF Academic Representatives believe that in the absence of any meaningful discussions on the issue, there is no alternative but to move towards direct action, up to and including strike action. Previous industrial actions adopted have been one-day strikes and the withholding of exam grades. However Mr. Gath has stressed that no action has been specified regarding the current dispute, and as yet, preliminary hurdles must be overcome. In the event of industrial action, he also emphasised that the utmost consideration will be spared for students, and attention will be paid to students in special circumstances. This proposition will go to ballot on Monday 10th December.

Tricon Success Marred by Robbery

Marian Roche.

On the weekend of Friday 30th November to Sunday 2nd December, the University of Limerick was host to Tricon, a Science-Fiction convention organized by three UL societies, Ten Forward, Fragnet and G-Soc. Among the activities that took place were showings of Sci-Fi movies and episodes of television programs such as "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and "Star Trek: Enterprise". The occasion also included showings of Manga, the Japanese Animation Giant. These all took place in the Jean Monet. In addition, there was Science Fiction and Fantasy Role playing as well as a Sci-Fi version of The Weakest Link, which included contestants from University College Dublin (UCD). A Dreamcast tournament also took place, which was won by a UL student. The organizers had also provided games consoles in EGO10 so that those in attendance could play a wide variety of computer games, while waiting for other events.

The weekend was considered by all involved to be an enormous success, with many visitors coming to Tricon from all over the country. However, the event was could have been spoiled on Saturday night when the Tenforward (UL Science Fiction Society) cash box and the Students Union digital camera was stolen from EG005. However the show must go on, and the society members did just that, all the events went ahead as planned on Sunday, highlighting the

strength of the Societies involved.

The president of Tenforward, Barry Cronin told An Focal that all the equipment they had been using to run the event, such as televisions, DVD players, video recorders, games consoles as well as some of the societies members own personal belongings were locked into EG005 with the Cash Box and the Students Union Camera. The room had been locked by Security when the convention closed down on Saturday night. Members of Tenforward had supervised Security locking up the room as well as the main door to EG010. The back door to EG010 had never been opened during the convention.

When the first of the organizers Aaron Smart arrived the on Sunday, the doors were opened by Security. The missing Cash Box and Camera were not noticed until almost 10o'clock that morning when Mr. Cronin got there. When it was discovered a thorough search of the room was carried out, a bag search was also carried out. When this did not yield the missing items Security were alerted, Security then contacted the Police. When the Police arrived, they questioned Mr. Cronin however there have been no developments yet. It is not known how the thief or thieves got into the room, but there was no sign of forced entry. None

of those organizing the event had keys to the rooms in question.

According to Barry Cronin, the Cash Box held in the region of £500-600 this amount included all the Societies Petty Cash and their takings from ticket sales on Friday and Saturday. The society are confident that it will still be able to cover the cost of the event, as the money that they had received from their sponsors had not been kept in the Cash Box.

The ULSU digital camera was being used by the Society to take pictures of the events in order to include them in this issue of An Focal The camera is worth approximately £800 However according to Patrick Kennedy the ULSU Communications and Campaigns Officer (CCO) the battery charger for the camera was still in his office therefore the camera was of little use to whoever stole it. Mr. Kennedy told An Focal that he believes the loss of the Digital Camera will effect the exposure of Clubs and Societies on Campus to some extent as the camera has note been replaced yet. Also there will be fewer pictures in An Focal until the camera has been replaced. That great UL tradition of Christmas Daze is taking place as I write and I sure pictures of the goings on in the Stables and Scholars will be sorely missed from the next issue of An Focal.

Students Union Data Placement and Training Ltd begins operation

The Students' Union new enterprise, offering a job placement and training service to all University of Limerick Students and UL Graduates has now been set up. It is called the Students' Union Data Placement and Training Ltd (S.U.D.P.T) and is there to help students on campus find jobs (if required) both part time and temporary while in college. We will provide a job placement service for Graduates relevant to their skills and abilities and we have a database of employers from which we expect to have a good source of employment despite the downturn in the World and Irish economies.

S.U.D.P.T will be available to all UL students and graduates throughout the year and will also be involved in securing Summertime and holiday work at home and abroad. Our list of graduates from last year have been contacted to update them on various aspects of the service and to give us the opportunity to keep in touch on a regular basis. For those graduates who have not yet gone into full time employment or have been affected

by recent job losses, our new service is available and we will attempt to match them with a suitable employer.

If you are interested in part time employment now or would like to be considered for full time employment after graduation please call to see me in my office and complete the questionnaire so that we can place you on your database.

I am looking forwards to serving the students and graduates of the University of Limerick in the coming years.

Finally, on behalf of the ULSU and S.U.D.P.T may I wish you all a very happy, safe and peaceful Christmas and a successful New Year in 2002.

Paul O'Connor
Manager S.U.D.P.T Ltd.
Room: SU 016 General Office
Phone: 061-202324

Welcome to Paul O'Connor S.U.D.P.T. Ltd

On Monday December 3rd we welcomed a new member onto the ULSU staff. Paul O'Connor, from Highfield, Ennis rd, Limerick who will be manager of our new enterprise, Students Union Data Placement & Training Ltd (S.U.D.P.T.). Paul was a manager in Bank of Ireland Limerick before taking an early retirement package five years ago when he became Marketing and Fund raising manager of Cerebral Palsy Ireland in Mungret. He finished there on Friday 30th November and joined us on the following Monday.

Paul is joint chairman of the Munster Council of the Athletic Association of Ireland (A.A.I) and for eight years had been chairman of B.L.E., before the different athletic bodies in Ireland amalgamated. He is the founder of Limerick Walking Association and after recently stepping down as President is now the Tours and Functions Officer for L.W.A. He is chairman of the Special Olympics Host Town Limerick Committee, and is also a member of the Limerick City Sports advisory Body (V.E.C) and a member of the Steering Committee for the Limerick City Sports Partnership.

You know what they say! When you want something done ask someone who is busy. We wish Paul success in his efforts on behalf of our Students and Graduates.

Patrick Kennedy

Hello from your Sabbatical Officers



Mick Phelan- ULSU President

Hello again!

Hope you all enjoyed Christmas Daze and you're getting through all the projects and lab exams before the holidays. I'm sick so I'm going to keep this as short as possible.

The court case regarding the renewal of licences of the Stables and Scholars Clubs will be heard on Friday 14 December, so there'll be more news on that when you get back.

Another person has had their membership revoked from the Stables, Scholars and University Arena Clubs for being out of order. You have

already been warned about this, and the clubs are now beginning to take a hard-line view on the issue.

The ULSU website (www.ulsu.ul.ie) has been updated. All the exam papers we could get our hands on are now available from it.

From Monday Week 12 a person will be working on a job placement company which has been set up by the Students' Union, if you want to find out more on this, call in.

As and from the 1st January 2002, all transactions in the SU Shop and the SU Graphics Department will only be completed in Euros. However to make this transition easier and to

cause less queues etc, there will be a Bureau De Change facility available in the SU main reception until the 9th of February. Please change your punts to Euro before going to the shop, as punts will not be accepted.

Hope you all enjoy Christmas and the New Year. Good luck in the exams and enjoy the break.

Now I'm going back to bed.

Mick

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Well hello all,
H a p p y
Christmas to
e v e r y o n e !!!
Where the hell
did the semester
go, I can't
believe its week
12 already. It
has just been a
crazy semester.
I'm going to keep

this short and sweet, just a quick update on things, which have been happening. Safety and Security - as ye can all see in the report there is a big attempt to improve things on campus, however we need everyone to play their part. If something happens to you or someone you know please report it to the Garda, campus security or to myself, and help us stop it happening to someone else. It will be treated with the utmost confidentiality.

Also everyone needs to make a conscious effort to improve the situation. Get yourself a personal alarm (from SU or SU shop), there are only €2.50 and worth it if they keep you safe. DO NOT walk home alone; to be honest this is just asking for trouble and completely unnecessary. The Nite link bus runs from 7pm to 1pm and will take you to the comforts of your home free of charge. The

full timetable is available on one of the other pages of the paper!! (And in the students union) Please use it, the service its there for you, make the most of it.

If anyone has any comments or suggestions to make about how security and safety could be improved please don't hesitate to send them to me, or just call in and have a rant, it would be greatly appreciated.

Single parents - This is to all the single parents out there, are you happy with your accommodation, have you had any problems because you have a baby, what would you like to see improved or changed??? This is the time to do it; I would love to hear what ye all have to say about everything. At the moment I am trying to gather info on where ye are all living and the accommodation situation for all single parents such as the difficulties you have encountered and what your ideal accommodation would be. At least then I will have something to work with for next year.

Outreach - firstly I would like to say thanks and congratulations to all who have given up there time to help others out. It was brilliant to see such a big response at the start of this year (even if it has dwindled a bit!!) If any would like to join feel free, there is nothing better than spend an hour a week helping someone else out, what else

Tara Curley- ULSU Welfare Officer

could be more worthwhile. We have a few projects running at the same time, so you can just pick what you would like to do, from giving grinds to national school kids, to helping older kids out with their homework, etc

Think that's about it for the moment, have a brilliant Christmas and a brilliant new year, try not forget completely about the exams which at going to hit like a bang after ye get back. I'm not saying swot all Christmas just try fit in some study!!!
Enjoy and I'll see ye all next year
Bye

Tara

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Patrick Kennedy- ULSU Communications and Campaigns Officer

Hi everyone and a very Happy Xmas + New Year to you all (and your families).

I'm going to keep this very short as the deadline for going to print looms upon me, lets just say if you're actually reading this I managed to get it finished on time.

Over the last two weeks I've been doing a lot of work of the following areas, Voter Registration, Transport problems and

Wired FM.

I had planned to go into more detail on the transport policies that we are proposing and Wired FM at the moment but unfortunately theres only so much time in the week to get these things done.

As a result there'll be a short edition after Christmas, just b4 the exams when you'll be informed as to hoe the ULSU Executives programme of work is goin so far,

enjoy the Holidays

Patrick

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Tom O'Donovan ULSU Education Officer

Ok it's the last edition before exams and before Christmas so there are a few things I need to talk about. Firstly, the exams. Your exams are around the corner and this is the last opportunity that I will have to address you before them. The main thing is that you still have time to study so don't panic or lose heart. Although it is week 11 and they start in week 14 there are another two weeks in the middle there that are counted in that calendar. You can do a little bit over the Christmas break and still enjoy the time off.

Take the time out to plan what you want to do this will focus your work and should ensure you cover things in a systematic way. Take your time and study in ordered blocks of time with generous (but not too generous) breaks between blocks so that you don't over do it. Staying up until the wee hours in the morning to spend time working will not make that time more productive. In fact the results are likely to be the opposite. Take the time to do a little bit of physical exercise, take a bit of fresh air, go for a walk. This will all stimulate the brain and should improve your study. Alcohol and study don't really mix so don't plan to study the day after you've been out at a party or something like that. You are definitely just wasting your time if you do. Again don't panic and you will be fine. The only other thing I want to say about exams is good luck.

On the other issue. About this time every year I get a little sentimental. Christmas being family time and all that. Let me stipulate right off I am not a religious person, in fact quite the opposite is true. I nearly walked out in protest at the last Christmas mass I attended because of something the priest, a family friend, said, but not wanting to offend my mother who is religious I stayed. Nonetheless I do respect and admire religious people. Anyone who can live by the tenants of their religion and have the faith required to believe what the do deserves in my mind anyway, my admiration.

But back to the specifics. I am getting back to

one of my usual hobby horses, the things that are truly important in life. The people you love what makes you happy with yourself as a person. Participating and making a difference in those areas of you that are part of you soul, to steal a religious concept, being true to yourself. Last weekend I went to the first wedding of a cousin from my mothers side of my family. That branch of our clan, and I really mean to use the word 'clan' because it is the most accurate to describe the relationship that exists in the family, are extremely close. We are like the family structures in Nelson Mandela's book "Long walk to freedom". My cousin is therefore more like a brother to me than a cousin.

It was a very significant occasion in the clan calendar as this is the first wedding of the next generation. Aside from that it was a cracking good wedding and if it is an indicator of what the rest of them are going to be like there are a lot of great family parties coming! On our separate journeys home to our respective residences all over the country and elsewhere after the joyous occasion that Sunday evening we all received a phone call informing us that the oldest surviving member of the clan a grand-aunt of 95 had died while we were all in transit.

She hadn't made the wedding as she had been quite sick for a while and there was no surprise for us in the news that she had passed over. The only surprise was the timing. We will miss her and are sad to see her go but it was probably a happy day for her given the pain she was in. She, like was my mother was also a woman of strong faith and I am therefore sure she is with her God and content. For the rest of us life goes on so we must get on with it.

The sudden contrast of those two events brings me to the point of what I want to say. Life is finite; it has a start, middle and a finish. If we are lucky like my cousin and meet our soul mate we have a chance to share it with someone and in the case of our clan, add to its membership. It is in the greater time frame of history just a blink of an eye. So we are here for a very brief

time and we really can take nothing with us. They only thing we can do is contribute to what we leave behind. To make this world a better place for the newer members of our clan as they come along. Take the time over Christmas to think on that and to think on how you are contributing to the future, if you are at all. Remember the thing about youth it is the time when we have the energy and strength to effect the most change but it is also the time that we waste the most precious gift we have and that is time itself. Think about how you are using your time.

Tom

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Prop. Ena McGrath



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Happy Christmas from Paul Lee

Merrrrrrrrrrrry Christmas,

To one and all I hope the first semester has treated you well in the realm of your clubs and societies activities, hard to believe that there is one semester down already.

In brief performing well so far this semester are, The Equestrian Clubs tetrathlon (an Olympic event that involves shooting/swimming and horse riding). This was hosted by ULA fortnight ago and won by UL for the fourth year in a row as mentioned by Anna Kavanagh in the last edition, well done to committee.

Our female sports persons in particular, the ladies rugby team remain undefeated as do the Ladies soccer team, as ever the Ladies Hockey team are blazing a strong trail. Rumour has it from a student in CIT that our camogie team are hot favourites for the Ashbourne Cup lets hope after recent heartbreak in this competition that this holds true.

Many other clubs and societies are performing well so far, and congratulations must also be extended to our Ten Forward Society, for their successful science fiction con-

ference last weekend "Tri Con".

Good to see the re-emergence of the Men's rugby teams the Physics society and the Lesbian Gay Bi-Sexual Society and a few students are going to have a stab at a Formula 1 society, best of luck to all concerned

Our Sailors appear to be gaining momentum in their quest to dominate the waves

No doubt many are omitted who run weekly events/competitions (Outdoor Pursuits Club/Sub-Aqua/Debating Union/GAA etc) but it is hard to keep up with the volume of activities the clubs and societies are running but credit to all for giving many UL students the opportunity to take part in alternative activities to give the grey matter a break from the projects etc.

Erasmus Student Network & their Foodfair

Council Overhaul

We have had a strange semester regarding our fortnightly

meetings (Council) whereby the student clubs/society members air their views and opinions on the overall direction of the University of Limerick's Clubs & Societies. However the last two weeks have remedied the problem by prompting an overhaul of a system many felt was too bureaucratic and simply did not allow for the useful expression of all individual views. As such this forum is to become less formal in the next semester much to the relief of many dedicated clubs and societies students, a particular mention to all responsible for this but especially the 30 people who met in the clubs and societies office last Wednesday to further refine the idea, thanks a million. Bottom line is that effective communication of ideas and problems were being thwarted by the constant turnover of members fed up with the miniature "Dáil" being run but change is underway and not a moment too soon. I'll work on your suggestions for the new semester and we can implement them at that time but you need to pick two Liaison Officers for the new semester for these meetings. These members will rotate in terms of their attendance.

University of Limerick Arena- Whats going on?

by Paul Lee

ULSU Representative

Univeristy Arena Board of Directors

A lively meeting of the University of Limerick Board of Arena Directors on which myself and Mick Phelan (ULSU President) are the student representatives, took place on Tuesday last. The recent history of the Arena Project, that part that is relevant to the student body, can be depicted in the following way:

The Original cost of project and final cost are vastly different (despite the 50m pool being applied for mid-stream) ... Which may also have something to do with the impending massive legal bill?

All students are paying via capitation for this building and will continue to do so until approximately the year 2018 to the tune, we believe, of 3.5million

Previous verbal agreements involving former sabbatical officers from the time of Bobby O'Connor and Barry Mc Loughlin have changed... such is the nature of verbal agreements?

Based on our belief that the goal posts are being constantly moved, Mick Phelan negotiated a price to keep for two years with the former Arena Manager, Mr. Rowan West, last year. In attendance was Pat Mc Carthy (outgoing president and yours truly) only to be informed 12 months later that this is to be revised upwards by 13% to help facilitate the arrival of the 50m pool.

Having discussed (heated discussion) this with the Students Union Sabbaticals it was agreed to take another "leap of faith" but for 10 % to facilitate the 50m pool which kept prices reasonable compared with other Leisure facilities in the Limerick Area and that this would be "index lined to inflation". A compliment to Mick for having the prices rounded down to the nearest Euro as the habit elsewhere seems to be to round up? Having learnt the lesson with verbal agreements a letter was sent conveying this sentiment and after a delay we received a slightly amended offer, index linking prices to the "Universities rate of inflation". When pointed out that we were referring to the National Rate of inflation, it did not go well with certain directors and another heated exchange took place. Why the big deal? **The University has several rates of inflation, it seems? Which one do you think you would be asked to pay? And how do we know for sure what they are?** The fact they appear to run several percentage points higher than the National Rate of inflation is not acceptable to both of your representative directors.

We wait for further discussions on the issue but will keep you informed. By the way, for the 73% of students who make up the current membership (approx. 1300), those of you have cars should note that in order to act as a deterrent to rogue parking in the arena designated car park between

9.00am-5.00pm it is suggested to become a paid car park (2 Euros). The East Gate Car park is still free though! For what it is worth we objected to this also.

In answer to many club concerns over the Arena and the prices you are being levied at the moment, we raised the issue and were told that "the economic realities" mean that there is no choice but to charge you the going rate as per every other customer of £23.63 per 45 minutes (relative to long term bookings) outside of your scheduled free time.

According to Mr. Paul Donovan the new Arena Manager clubs times over the past three years have increased from 22 hours per week to 46 and now finally to 64.5 hours per week in the Arena which translates into a subsidy in excess of £171,000. It was pointed out the Capital-Intensive Club fund (which was initiated by a student member of the Windsurfing Club) several years ago from the old sports building also contributes an annual figure of £4000 to 5 specific capital intensive clubs.

I can genuinely understand Mr. Paul Donovan's situation, as he has to make the arena commercially viable but when clubs are under funded it is counterproductive to the development of student sports. If they are going to be under funded and then get hit with other costs which previously did not exist in the pursuit of their sports in the old sports building. It has been voiced repeatedly by the students union in this forum and others (the scheduling and review committee) that the re-introduction of Wednesday afternoons would allow a specific time for the pursuit of sporting excellence and this too would free up peak times in the arena currently being used by the student clubs. Dare I say it, but many people have asked of the possibility of a return the old facility in the PESS building as it was free time being provided by the University, which placed less pressure to raise additional money now needed in fees to pay for the Arena.

Rumours regading the Old Sports Building

Unfortunately rumours abound that the old building is to be "handed over" to the Physical Education and Sports Science Department and that should this occur the building would close at 6.00pm! If this rumour is true then the future of many sports look to be in jeopardy namely the outdoor pursuits use of the climbing wall (which they want to develop), the archery club and the sub-aqua club. Incidentally the rumour mill also talks of filling in the old pool to allow for the development of classrooms! Yet we believe that the height of the class rooms should this happen would be too low not to mention the old pool and diving pit (which the Sub Aqua club use) operate from the same plant. This would effectively sound the death knell for that club, as the arena pool is too shallow for diving

(assuming they would be allowed to dive) and then obviously incur an expense they currently don't have.

Other controversial issues include:

An alleged fund believed to be in the region of £34,000 accruing from the whole Student Centre complex (scholarships, stables and all other retail outlets in this area) which we were led to believe by former sabbaticals would be possible to be accessed to offset clubs and society expenses. This then seemed to translate to a fund for 'Student Specific Projects.' Yet it amassed to almost double that before Mick Phelan was told (despite persistent questioning) that this money was not available because it had apparently all been transferred to the Dromroe Village Hall in the belief that this would be conducive to student groups i.e. the Drama Society. However, it has emerged that despite the UL Drama Society hosting the Irish Student Drama Awards in March, in association with Mary Immaculate it would appear that of 3 possible venues including the Dromroe venture none are available to the student society. Why? **Well it appears Dromroe Village Hall is in effect a rehearsal space for the likes of Daghdha Dance and the Irish Chamber Orchestra both external groups.** Therefore in order for this to be utilised by the Drama Society or any other student group very expensive covering would have to be installed to protect the dance floor. It would seem that this cost would be very prohibitive for the student groups as the expense will run to several thousand pounds! I won't even get started on the assurances that the Jonathon Swift would be upgraded as a dedicated student venue for the performing arts.

The Students Union and Clubs and Societies will pursue this chain of events further in your absence to establish all the facts. Hopefully a more detailed update will be provided for the next edition of An Focal. These are real issues that affect your clubs and societies which is why your liaison officers need to be dedicated to the council forum to get the best results for all students attempting to pursue and further Clubs and Society activities.

Well that's me off the soap box and winding down for the Christmas break the outcome of these events is uncertain and only through your active participation can we seriously work to resolve these issues. Funny isn't it, UL were the main architects in developing a national student policy on alcohol yet when it comes to resources and support for providing alternatives to alcohol for students on campus..... well I think you get the idea.

Best luck with your upcoming projects FYPS and exams! Wishing you and yours a safe and happy Christmas.

The demise of the nations only political satirical programme is Bull!

One would seem to think or as we students learn at college if one has a successful product or even a great entrepreneurial idea then go with it. It will bring you success. Not so with RTE.

Despite having many financial troubles the station seems intent on implementing its policy of not renewing contracts for some of its most successful shows ever. Following the somewhat controversial axing, ahem sorry, suspension of Bull Island this past week one cannot but raise a well-arched eyebrow at such a policy.



Is it just me or do the thinking caps at Montrose seem to be a little loosely screwed on? When the ratings for Glenroe drooped dismally RTE did the sensible thing and dropped it from its schedule. Well done even if it did take them a few years to see the light. Autumn 2001 sees the launch of a new Irish soap 'Bachelors Walk' which would be considered among many to be one of the better Irish soaps to flicker on our humble television screens. Well done again RTE, but just as the Irish nation began to tune into this drama it was gone. Gone, I hear you exclaim. Yes indeed as it had proved successful, it had returned good ratings for the station and therefore was deemed to be 'suspended'.



One would think that RTE would have ensured the continuation of 'Bachelors Walk' if not for our enjoyment but for their ratings. That would be the sensible approach but I digress.....

Being prone to making the wrong decision at the wrong time, RTE heralded a mammoth amount of criticism this week for the similar 'suspension' of Bull Island. Bull Island attracts a wide audience and has become

one of RTE's top rated shows. The decision to suspend our favourite, our only, programme of political satire remains controversial. According to Ann Coughlan of RTE;

'the show has not been axed but merely suspended, it was commissioned to run to the 30th December 2001 ending with a Christmas special'.

When asked if we, the viewers, can expect to see a continuation of the show in the New Year, Ms. Coughlan replied that such a decision will be decided in the Spring of 2002.

With the advent of a general election and the nation about to be tumulted into political fever, Bull Island was suspended. It promised to be a time when Bull Island would really shine and begs the question was it for reasons in relation to the upcoming election that caused the powers to be to suspend it?

Perhaps its following a pattern.

When Charles Haughey was in power 'Scrap Saturday' another great programme of satire was also dumped on the Donnybrook heap.

Perhaps Celia preferred the Alan Shortt version of Bertie?

Perhaps the 'real' weather people were jealous of 'Bul

Islands' segment?

Perhaps it was too much of a 'dose of reality', so to speak, for Charlie Mc Creevy?



One could wax lyrical all day with such theories but for those of you not given to such conspiracy theories it does remain rather puzzling as to why RTE continues to drive itself into the dank, dismal, dungeons of failure.

Instead of promoting its one and only satirical programme in the hope to rejuvenate the station it decided to dump 'Bull Island' on the ever-escalating Donnybrook rubbish heap.



Diary of a First Year

Diary of a First Year

Let me start by saying that I didn't volunteer to write this article. My first mistake was letting myself get roped into it by one of my housemates. So I said I'd do what most people would and copy all the previous diaries written. That was my second mistake.

I'm supposed to write about first experiences venturing out on my own, FREEDOM---bol*ocks!!! At least at home I got a hot dinner. From the other diaries I have read, everyone says that their housemates are great and they are enjoying their courses, now while I would like to say this I feel I'd probably be talking through my arse. My course is impossible (I should start going to lectures) and my housemates are the weirdest bunch of people that you're likely to find in any one place outside a lunatic asylum.

I think I'm supposed to be telling you my thoughts and deepest feelings on my experiences in the University of Limerick so far - but believe me that would bore me to write more than it would for you lot to read it. Instead I'll try to offend as many people as possible. So you arrive in September expect-

ing the worst. Then you meet your housemates and you see that all your fears were entirely justified. Take two of my housemates for example - Aran and John. Now their bedroom has seen some action although what two grown men get up to in the privacy of their own room is none of my business (thank God). As for the rest of my housemates lets just say that I lock my bedroom door at night!! This is the part where I say that I'm adjusting to life here and am finding out where all the buildings are --- I don't even know where the fecking library is and I don't want to know either!!

If you think this article looks like it was thrown together at the last minute - then you're right. I just watched Arsenal-Juve in the Champions League and I'd rather be in the pub than writing this. Right so I better say some of the things I'm expected to say if this article has a hope of being

printed. YES U.L is great. I mean we have the best facilities in Ireland (Do we? Well where the feck are they!! I suppose I have to get outta bed to see them). But then again I suppose we can all console ourselves with the fact that we are not in Dublin.

J.P

By John Pyke



Business Final Year Project: Results of Survey

A survey taken by the Marketing Centre for Small Business on behalf of the SU, has backed up claims by the Union that the Fourth Year Project is an important and beneficial element of a graduate's overall degree. The survey was completed resulting from a decision by the College of Business to adapt the compulsory FYP, instead retaining it as a minor option. This is the only college in the university that has taken this decision. According to Tom O'Donovan, ULEducation Officer, this decision will undermine opportunities for future ULbusiness graduates.

The aim of the survey was to highlight the popular opinion that the FYP is worthwhile. It was executed in July of this year. Questionnaires were distributed by class reps and 240 third and fourth years were questioned through personal interviews. 130 members of the ULAlumni were also surveyed. The wide range of respondents, surveyed by an independent company, was impartial and even-handed.

The views of fourth years were regarded as particularly relevant as they had just completed the FYP. The most frequent comments made by fourth years were that the FYP encouraged them to take an interest in topics outside of

their set course. They also viewed the FYP as a valuable asset to their overall degree. The response from third years was similar- according to them, the FYP enhanced their degree. They also highlighted the issue that the FYP allowed them to acquire experience in the preparation of reports. Over half of those surveyed agreed with the motion to keep the FYP as a compulsory requirement of the undergraduate programme.

The Alumni members were of the opinion that the FYP introduced them to research and exposure to report writing. One fifth of Alumni respondents were pursuing postgraduate courses, indicating what had previously been suggested by the ULSU- that the FYP influences graduates to pursue further studies. Over half of respondents agreed that they received a competitive edge over other college graduates as a result of their FYP.

Probably the most significant of those surveyed were the employers. This was a particularly interesting approach, as it is these employers who will eventually be evaluating your degree and overall competence. These employers recruit many ULgraduates. Therefore, most are well aware

of the FYP- in fact 73.2% indicated they were knowledgeable with the FYP. Reacting to the FYPs being optional, 38% of employers surveyed agreed that it would have a negative effect on the quality of the degree. When asked if they agreed that with the FYPs being compulsory, 18% strongly agreed and 46% agreed. This suggests that employers find the FYP to be advantageous to the overall quality of the degree.

Despite the disapproval of the ULSU, the College of Business want to continue with their proposal for minor option of the FYP. With the option being made available to business students, it is likely that most will disregard the FYP and concentrate on other project work. However this could prove to be unfavourable, as the survey seems to point out.

The FYP is individual to ULgraduates and consequently our degree is distinctive compared to other colleges. With this in mind, the ULSU has decided to continue with their campaign of promoting the FYP. Tom O'Donovan has said he will persist, on the students' behalf, until the College of Business reconsider their decision.

By Edel Fitzgerald.

Adviser System Revised

by Marianne Blackwell

Problems with my course again! Where do I turn? Who can help? Is there anyone? Will I be forced to drop out?

These are questions that are posed by almost every student at at least one point in their college career. So much could be done to alleviate student problems but there is an astonishing number of students who don't realise this. An astonishing number who feel forced to drop out. An astonishing number who should never have been forced to worry!! But help is on the way!!!

An overhaul of the Student Adviser system is currently underway on UL campus thanks to an initiative taken by the recently established Student Affairs Committee. The move to revise the system was spurred by the low profile of this faculty-student method of communication. It was felt by members of the new committee that the facility was not being used to its full potential and that it wasn't considered to play an important role in college life. Hence, the S.A.C. set about organising a sub-committee to tackle the problem of the weakening link between first years/Erasmus students and the advisers allocated to them.

Problems with the adviser system arose when it was discovered that many of the initial Adviser/Advisee meetings had not taken place. Following a review of the situation, the Student Affairs Committee, chaired by Fionuala Sheehan (Deputy Registrar) realised that the system was peppered with similar difficulties. Advisers from one department were being allocated to students from a different department, thus establishing differences in the student/lecturer relationship, which could easily be avoided. This oversight also ensured that advisers would rarely see their advisees outside of an arranged meeting. The sub-committee dedicated to the Adviser System, under Tony Kay (Senior Adviser for the Dept. of Aeronautical and Mechanical Engineering), concluded that it was primarily the mechanics of the system that was failing and not in fact the advisers themselves.

It was decided therefore that the problems should be addressed immediately and in a manner that would make the system more student friendly. The changes have also been designed to raise the profile of this vital facility, which has been available to ULstudents ever since the university was a much smaller entity. The project has been underway since Orientation Week of this Academic Year. All Orientation Guides were instructed to stress the importance of the system to their orientation groups whilst the president, Dr. Roger Downer took it upon himself to address first years in relation to the matter in his welcoming speech. All advisers are also required to keep a notice on the door of their office informing advisees of any upcoming meetings while simultaneously e-mailing advisees with regard to same. It is up to Senior Advisers to

maintain contact with advisers in their department and the Adviser system is now an item for review in all department meetings.

In an interview with Mr. Tom O'Donovan, S.U. Education Officer, he stressed the absolute importance of the maintenance of a good relationship between advisers and their advisees. Stated Tom; "A class rep. and an adviser are the two most important people that a student will have contact with during their time in college, especially when things go wrong." Mr. O'Donovan was reflecting exactly the sentiments of Tony Kay who also expressed the importance of advisers; "Although the Adviser System, which has been in existence since the foundation of the college, has for many been less effective than it should, it is important to state that over the years, it has helped students through the most difficult of circumstances." Tom O'Donovan claimed that the S.U. can aid students in every area excepting that of the area of the grading process, in which case an adviser ONLY can represent a student before the Discretion Band or in a Student Status meeting. If the advisee has kept up a good rapport with his/her adviser throughout the semester, the adviser is likely to be perfectly willing to plead the case of a student who is genuinely in trouble with grades. Tom recalls a student in first who mistakenly went to an afternoon exam instead of the scheduled morning slot. The student went to his adviser who subsequently managed to persuade the course leader to revise the grade.

However outside of grades and faculty-student relations, it is vital to remember the importance of a listening ear among the thousands, which don't listen. Friendly advice offered by the advisers who have years of experience with students and the "façon de vivre" of U.L. has long been underestimated and it should be noted by all advisees that advisers are in their role because they want to be there and that they are more than willing to help with everything from loneliness to fears of competition and failure to dealing with problems at home.

All students therefore who have not yet contacted their advisers should do so as quickly as possible, even just to let them know that you exist. Remember that a problem shared is a problem halved and that this relationship is in the best interests of the student. Show your face as a sincere face and you'll be rewarded with a helping hand the day that things go wrong! Memo to all first years/Erasmus students: you'll be glad you did it!! The help is there. Avail of it!!

Mary Immaculate College to Change it's name

In a recent publication of Mary I student paper An Sos, there is an article expressing a desire to change the name of the college. This wish seems to be based on the unfounded notion that Mary Immaculate College has the authority to confer degrees. However the college's degrees must be awarded by ULand so this argument is already groundless. Perhaps there is the underlying desire to get rid of the name because of the connotations it throws up. In the same paper, there is an article that mentions an admirable attempt by first years on a class party in Cork to get rid of the Mary Dry image. If the real wish of the student body is to change the name for purely cosmetic, and in this sense I mean the drinking ability, reasons, then it is doubtful that it can be achieved. Mary I is different to other colleges. Students who undertake the B.Ed have a vocation to teach small children, not to waste 3 years in a drink fuelled haze. If that was their real wish then I doubt the local parents council would really like them to continue in their post. I know I've had that teacher.

College is about more than a name, granted if you attend the Ballybogbackwards school of Massey Ferguson Appreciation, then you should be worried. But the experience should not be rattled by how cool you think your college's name is and what others think of it, you should be there because you want to be. On reading the article in An Sos, one gets the distinct impression that it is concern for cred and image that are driving this argument and not the reasons that should have precedence. The name should reflect accurately the role of Mary I and the ethos of the college.

by Jennifer O'Brien

HURLER OFF THE DITCH



by Ger Downes

Less than a month after this column despaired at the Irish residency laws which allow the country's mega-rich to avoid paying any tax on their incomes, the Green Party announced that they will seek the repeal of such laws should they come to power as part of another Rainbow Coalition. Ah, the influence, the power, the tungsten-tight grip that the words emanating from the annals of 'An Focal' have on the nation's policy planners! This column must therefore tread warily, knowing that the advocating of any strategy will immediately be seized upon by any number of political parties and become official party policy overnight. To be burdened by the responsibility is an onerous assignment but one that will be borne with the dignity, erudition, solemnity and clear-headedness that have become synonymous with the modest outpourings of this column. But back to a time when the world was marginally younger.



The recent pronouncements by the Progressive Democrats leader Mary Harney to the Irish-American Chamber of Commerce underline the crass simplicity with which much of the opinion formers in the country (a status to which 'Hurler Off the Ditch' has unwittingly aspired) approach anything akin to protest at the actions of the political world's last remaining empire. Harney, possessing as she does the chameleon touch that distinguishes political animals from honest mortals, addressed her audience with what it wanted to hear. 'There is a latent anti-Americanism within the country', she stated. This supposed 'anti-Americanism' is apparently being 'led by political commentators jealous at America's success.' Is it possible that Harney could believe such vacuous, thought-

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opportunism and crowd-pleasing? Or has the right to criticise the actions of a particular government—in this case the bombing of Afghanistan by Britain and the United States—rendered the protester as an immediate enemy

of that government's state?

One such rabid crew who are aggrieved but could never be construed as being an 'enemy of the state' are the Young Fine Gaelers, who, in a knee-jerk gesture of alacrity that would make Harney seem snail-like, recently took to the streets to protest at Micheál Martin's new Health Strategy. Looking suitably blue, could Young Fine Gael be chastened by the prospect that their hoped for, pre-election winter of discontent may instead be made into glorious summer by this son of Cork? Surely it is unwise for that party to even mention the two-tier health service. This after all is the party whose current leader's tenure as Health Minister was tainted with the heinous act of threatening a woman poisoned by the state with legal action as she lay on her deathbed. That nadir in the state's history is the pre-eminent reason why so many people will not vote for the party on election day and why the current government will be excused much of its own incompetence.

The timing of the election itself will doubtless be aligned to the beginning of the World Cup in an attempt by Bertie Ahern to be perceived as being synonymous with sporting success. A word of caution here: in 1970 the British prime minister Harold Wilson called a general election timed to coincide with the latter stages of that year's World Cup in Mexico. As England were one of the tournament favourites it was a strategy that made impeccable sense until, to Wilson's horror, the national team threw away a 2-0 lead in the quarter final and lost in extra time to West Germany. Wilson, in the eye of the electorate, became umbilically linked with the English team's failure and the Ted Heath-led Tories capitalised to record a narrow election victory. It was a triumph that would resonate far beyond Westminster—as the current Saville Inquiry into Bloody Sunday can attest to. Were Bertie to look at the videos detailing the defensive incapacities of Gary Breen and Ian Harte

Heath, of course, went on to write a self-justificatory autobiography in which every decision he took was for the ultimate benefit of Britain and beyond. Bertie's literary exploits have, as yet, not extended beyond the writing of an infinite

'The recent pronouncements by the Progressive Democrats leader Mary Harney to the Irish-American Chamber of Commerce underline the crass simplicity with which much of the opinion formers in the country'

number of blank cheques while he was Fianna Fáil party treasurer. His party have long sought to portray its leader as a man of intellect. Apparently unbeknownst even to Ahern himself, last week there appeared a biography of the cunning, ruthless one telling us that he was a graduate of both UCD and the London School of Economics! Curiously, all previous biographies of the Taoiseach failed to include these salutary facts. Such economy with the truth may however prove popular with the electorate, particularly with those who may have, on occasion, tampered with the veracity of a curriculum vitae!

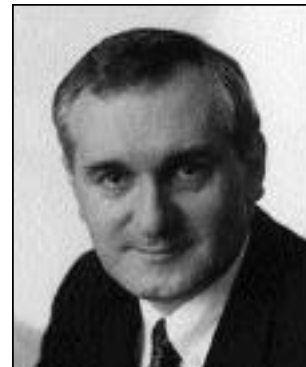
Our Taoiseach will, in time, seek to claim his place in history. Negotiating the Good Friday Agreement would be an ample legacy for most but Bertie wants to be remembered as a leviathan who led the Celtic Tiger to low inflation, a negligible public sector borrowing requirement, the

Partnership approach and a favourable balance sheet at the end of his tenure. Inspiring stuff! Instead, Bertie is likely to be recalled in much the same manner as the former American president Warren Harding, a man who also lacked vision and sought to be liked by all. Harding was, according to Harold Evans: 'An orator, whose bloviations were an army of pompous phrases moving across the landscape in search of an idea'.

LSE London School of Economics and Political Science

'Heath, of course, went on to write a self-justificatory autobiography in which every decision he took was for the ultimate benefit of Britain and beyond'

he would probably conclude that a pre-World Cup election date is preferable to going to the country and trying to explain away a possible defeat to Cameroon.



I am Jack's last minute deadline Heart Attack

Tis the season to be jolly, fa la la ... shite, what comes next? Ah feck it, Happy Xmas! The celebration of coca-cola, Budweiser and turkey, wrestling with a tree two feet too tall for the living room, scavenging decorations from every corner, and dodgy oul' geezers in fur coats and thigh-high leather riding boots breaking into your children's bedrooms. Capitalism is full swing, the token baby Jesus gathering dust on your mantelpiece, the floor littered with cranberry sauce, vomit, and broken action figures, year after year after year.*sings* Isn't it woonderful? Bad Jack! Don't be cynical! No blowjobs for you!

Well, Yeletide cynicism and lamenting about capitalism would be better handled by his Highness Niall Stokes, so I'll leave him to it. Instead, I want to ramble an about Mystical Celticism.

You know what I'm talking about – W.B Yeats, Enya, CuChulainn riding thought the foggy glen, Diarmuid and Grainne riding through the foggy glen, elves and fairies throwing a hooly in the foggy glen, Gerald Fleming up to his arse in leprechauns in the foggy glen (we had lots of fog back in them days, the Vikings brought the pissing rain with them from Scandinavia much later). Most of the time, we hat this stuff with a vengeance, yet at Christmas it suddenly becomes tolerable. Why?

Well, the simple answer is that Christmas is a time for sentimentality, the perfect opportunity for Enya to escape her castle in Donegal and run amok around the country, spreading joy and happiness and “fol lol the dol” all over. I, however, have to deliver 700 words on this topic, or PK will fricassee my nuts and feed them to me. I have come up with a different theory.

“Mystical Celt” – Type stuff became fashionable among artists and poets around the start of this century, co-inciding with the 1916 rebellion and the War of Independence. W.B Yeats is known for his expertise in the field of foggy glenning, and he was active at this time, along with his army of imitators, admirers and followers.

Now “rebellion” was very much the order of the day in them days. You rebelled against the banner and the crown, you rebelled against the Pope, you rebelled against what you ate for breakfast and your stomach rebelled against the three pints, five vodka blues and multiple Aftershocks you drank for your friends 18th on Saturday night (HAPPY BIRTHDAY CATZ!!!)



Why not rebel against modern times? Why not rebel against Catholicism and modern thinking? And hell, if you're gonna do that, what better time to do it than Christmas?

And so, for years and years, those who were too pacifist to pick up a gun picked up a book of WB's poetry, and raged against the machine by communing with their inner Celt in the suitably mystical and foggy surroundings of Killarney or Innishfree. There's nothing wrong with that when the mood takes me, there's nothing this little black duck enjoys more than getting down with his bad self-using a stack of Clannad albums and Jim Fitzpatrick paintings.

My only problem with it al is this: the Celts weren't tree-hugging, fog-loving, glen-dwelling hippies. They were a savage tribe who cut a bloody swathe across Eurasia, from

Indo-Europe to Germany to France to Britain and Ireland. They were one of the few peoples to consider living on the Island at the Edge of the World, either because they didn't give a shit or because they were too thick to stay away. Pliny referred to them as “uncouth barbarians, with rough, shouting voices”. What does this remind you of, children? That's right, Mrs Plonk from No.33, who wouldn't give your football back when it landed in her yard, or called the guards when her dog started barking at you, or told you that “children should be seen and not heard”.

Nowadays, the world has been overrun by self-appointed Mrs Plonks, and where are all the Celts? They're out dancing in the foggy glen when they should be copping on to what's happening in the world today. I'm thinking... Dick Gaughan and Eminem write the lyrics, and Enya performs them? It could work, I tells ya.

Jack Fennell



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-Patrica Moriarty

Bourn Vincent Lunchtime Talks

On Friday last, as part of a lunchtime series of talks (1:15pm-2:00pm) at the Bourn Vincent Gallery in UCH, the painter Gavin Hogg recounted some of his working methods and processes. Gavin's show in the Bourn Vincent has just ended. A new show of recent paintings has opened at the Hunt Museum in Limerick City and will run until December 8th, 2001.

It is always quite intimate yet informative to hear a working artist in any realm talk so openly. It has the feel of a masterclass. He talked about how painters such as Jackson Pollock, Frank Stella have influenced him and how he primarily likes to work in an abstract, non-representational style.

As a student at Limerick College of Art & Design 15 years ago, he began working with constructions of found items (cars, wood, poles, string) and 'worked back from 3D to

the flat surface' of paper/board/canvas. The slides showed his initial interests in structure, composition and colour. Even today, he will work from collage'd, chance happenings but always within his 'obsessional interest in pattern'. With few non-representational clues, Hogg's work has explored space and movement in a painterly way using colour and the sensuousness of the skin of paint on a 2D surface.

The maze motif which he has been exploring recently interests him as an abstract pattern with multiple references and overtones: a visual screen to view other space or can block a view; a metaphor for life with all its labyrinthine qualities. However, Hogg states that as a painter, the conversation is not finished until the work is on show in a gallery and the viewer completes it.

As part of its contribution to Greek Week the Arts Office brought the Spotlight Theatre Company production of Christian O'Reilly's play "It Just Came Out" to the

Jonathan Swift Theatre. Greek Week coincided with the National Anti-Racism in the Workplace Awareness campaign, which gave an extra level of relevance to the performance, and on the opening night there was a lively and provocative post performance discussion. Chaired by the Labour representative for Limerick, Deputy Jan O'Sullivan, who is also the party's spokesperson on racism, there were stimulating contributions from Michéal Ó Suilleabhain, Bishop Willie Walsh, Christian O'Reilly, the author, and the Donat Mabana. The audience, which included representatives from the Environmental Society, Debating Union, Amnesty International, Doras, faculty members and students, enjoyed strong performances from the cast and actively participated in the discussion. Although the audience numbers were somewhat disappointing those who attended found the play funny and thought provoking.

Red Bull- What you should know!

The Red Bull energy drink has been surrounded by much speculation as to what it contains and the potential side-effects of its ingredients. Despite various Food and Safety Authorities, such as the North West Food Alliance and the British Food Standards Agency, stating that it is "as safe as any other drinks for adults to consume in moderation", the latter agency did however recommend that the energy drink carry a warning label regarding its high caffeine content for those who may be sensitive to caffeine. Red Bull contains approximately 80 milligrams of caffeine per 250 ml can, which is more than Coca-Cola (46 mg), but less than most coffee drinks (about 100 mg in 6 ounces of regular coffee or a small cup of espresso).

When Red Bull first arrived on the market, it was touted as the perfect solution for clubbers who wanted to stay awake until the lights came on at the end of the night (but didn't want to indulge in anything illegal and/or life threatening). Its main appeal was its ability to replenish energy reserves and avoid the need for sleep, thus making it ideal for long journeys or for people with busy schedules. It was also the student's saviour when it came to cramming for exams. However, that is exactly where it is at its most dangerous to the unwary consumer, as even small doses of caffeine can have significant effects on the human body.

Studies carried out by the Australia New Zealand Food Authority into the pharmacological effects of caffeine concluded that low dosages generally improved alertness, reduced fatigue and improved performance concentration on simple tasks, but there was a noted rise in negative mood swings and irritability following withdrawal of even short doses of caffeine. Higher levels of intake have been associated with anxiety. Withdrawal symptoms generally include, tiredness, weakness, headaches, nausea and flu-like feelings. Caffeine has also been proved to increase blood pressure, but there is no conclusive proof linking it to cardiovascular disease.

The other main ingredient in Red Bull is Taurine. Taurine is essentially an amino acid, and as it is the basic energy unit possesses certain cardio-vascular properties. It is suspected to have certain detoxifying effects on the body, and as it is excreted easily through the sweat glands it has a minimal effect on body weight. Taurine is also used as a caffeine alternative that spares you the jitters and side effects of its caffeine counterpart. However, in Red Bull it consists of about 56% of the contents, and exists in a 12.5 to 1 ratio to caffeine.

The other ingredients are various vitamins and sugar derivatives such as glucose and sucrose, fuel for the body to burn when exercising. However, the presence of caffeine partly negates overuse of Red Bull before exercise. The International Olympic Committee specifically advise against it, specifying a urine content limit of 12mg per litre, but as strenuous exercise burns up bodily fluids, athletes who pass the limit before exercise may find themselves breaking it afterwards.

Stefan Pogacar on Yomag.net's Sports Advice Centre warns against Red Bull and other energy drinks for people exercising as it dehydrates many light exercisers who tend to feel very thirsty or throw up on empty stomachs. Isotonic drinks avoid such dehydratory effects, and as for power-lifters trying to develop muscles, bananas are still the best option. "An Energy drink is nothing more than a coffee with far too much sugar".

Apart from its properties as an energy drink, its appeal as a companion to vodka is also dangerous. As research regarding the long-term effects of mixing many of the constituent chemicals with alcohol or other substances are still unknown, it is clear that there are still a vast range of side-effects as yet undetermined. Studies are still ongoing and it may be many years before the real extent of intermixing substances is known.

Alcohol is a depressant, and mixing a stimulant with a depressant can cause a number of medical problems, according to Gregory Stewart, MD, co-medical director of the Tulane Institute of Sports Medicine in New Orleans. "Alcohol tends to knock you out, and that is good in that it can prevent alcohol poisoning. But if you are taking something that will keep you going, you could raise blood alcohol to toxic levels". As much of the dangers relate to underlying medical conditions that even your GP may not spot, mixing a stimulant with a depressant "could be a prescription for disaster."

On the question-and-answer page on its Web site, the com-

NEW BOOK - A MUST BUY FOR CHRISTMAS

Beyond Polditch Gates by Henry Hudson

"A great read... I laughed out loud... very lively" stated Niall McMenagie reviewing *Beyond Polditch Gates* on RTE's Rattlebag on Friday 23 November 2001.

Already a winner of PJ O'Connor Awards for radio plays and best full-length play at Listowel, this new novel by Henry Hudson shows his excellent ear for Dublin wit and dialogue. Some of the graphic scenes in men's working environment, pub etc. are wonderful. Set against the backdrop of a tender love story, there are dark undertones of 1983 and abandonment, however.

Beyond Polditch Gates



Henry Hudson

pany gives that practice a whole-hearted endorsement: "Can you mix Red Bull with alcohol? Yes!" However, the official line from Red Bull is that "Red Bull does not actively market itself as a mixer for alcohol drinks".

Gearoid Holland

TV for Christmas

You've settled down after Christmas dinner, eaten your turkey, roast potatoes and your fourteen mince pies (Yes Emma that is you). Next on the agenda is, no, not the big clean up, but.....the t.v. Yes, it's that time again, the bi-annual quandary; what film to watch? Every year, even if you're limited to our wonderful public service broadcasting channels BOG 1-4 there's a veritable cornucopia of Hollywood (and closer to home) offerings to choose from. These candidates for Christmas afternoon viewing can generally be divided into a number of categories.

Firstly we've got the Santy category, for all those young, or not so young at heart. These generally follow the story line of a child/adults disbelief in the myth of Saint Nick/general wonderfulness of Christmas. That person then journeys, guided usually by a well-meaning relative or friend towards enlightenment where they discover that yes there is a Santa, he does love you, doesn't care whether you're bad or good and that the world is still a wonderful place. And if they happen to reunite their estranged parents/bring about world peace/save a dog from the streets/improve their relationship with their children along the way then, hey, that's a bonus. Members of this category are The Santa Clause, Miracle on 34th Street and The Night Before Christmas. This year sees an addition to this category in the form of an animated reworking of Dickens classic A Christmas Carol, featuring Kate Winslet's voice and yes, you've guessed it that wonderful song. For those of you who thought the song was written for her, nope, it's all about the film (so her publicist says).

In the next group its more mindless entertainment of the goodwill kind; the films that were on t.v. when you believed in Santa and are still being rehashed by RTE in an effort to gain ratings. Yup, it's the films that you scoff at but find yourself watching anyway with the excuse that you've nothing else to do (that big pile of dirty dishes in the sink isn't your problem). Contenders here are Mighty Ducks 1,2 and this year to the joy of all 3; All Dogs Go To Heaven, The Lion King, the Look Who's Talking trilogy and this year the mighty Shrek, hailed by some as the best film of all time, perhaps not but definitely one most families will know off by heart by the end of this years yuletide season.

Next up it's the epics, Gone With The Wind, Ben-Hur, Cleopatra (for whom tomorrow was not another day) and Titanic, any or all of which will undoubtedly be shown on various stations and will go a long way towards sapping any energy you have left after the Christmas feast. These 3-4 hour long yarns are generally shown on Christmas day and presumably are meant by the broadcasters to fill that annoying interval between the big lunch/dinner and the inevitable turkey/ham sandwiches that follow. In this category I have also placed (admittedly with slightly more enthusiasm) the patriotic

films. Personal favourites of mine, (I'm a sucker for the her-dying-in-the-end scenes, bring on the Kleenex) Braveheart, Michael Collins, The Patriot, Gladiator and to a lesser extent Last of the Mohicans all draw me to the telly like Kenny (of Southpark fame) to a death-like-experience.

Last, but not least it's the good old-fashioned weepies. Guaranteed to draw a tear to even the most cynical eye, these restore your faith in humanity, bring hope to your world-weary soul, make your cup runneth over and do perform other general heart-



tugging actions. Forerunner in this is the brilliant It's A Wonderful Life starring the brilliant Jimmy Stewart as the man who feels that due to the imminent bankruptcy hanging over his business and the size of his life insurance pay-out he would be better off dead than alive. He is taken on a journey by his guardian angel who shows him the dire straits the town would be in without him; ruled over by his nemesis and full of gloomy, depressed citizens. The film is a reminder of the spirit of Christmas, also of the idea that every person has a purpose and I have to say at Christmas or any other time of the year is brilliant and right up there on my list of favourite films. Continuing in this fashion, An Affair To Remember, and the more modern Shawshank Redemption and Green Mile are also sure to be features of the Christmas schedule. Another modern, animated addition to this category is The Grinch. Starring the voice of the hilarious Jim Carrey as the villain this is a reworking of another classic tale this time by Dr. Seuss. In it the green monster of the title is a characterisation of all the things wrong with society; greed, selfishness and hard-heartedness. The Grinch despises the citizens who live beside him in their celebratory fashion and plans to ruin Christmas. Yet he experiences a change of heart and becomes a generous "person" who discovers he is loved in spite of his failings. Another Christmas repeat is Steven Spielberg's brilliant E.T. The memorable story may seem a bit dated now but the classic "How can you explain school to a higher intelligence?" line still draws a few giggles. Maybe not in the same hope restoring spirit as the others but still a tearjerker especially the phone home scene.

There are a number of films I have failed to mention in this article. There's the musicals; Singing In The Rain, High Society, The Wizard of Oz, My Fair Lady and Oliver to name but a few. The comedies Ace Ventura, Dumb and Dumber and Wayne's World. The action packed

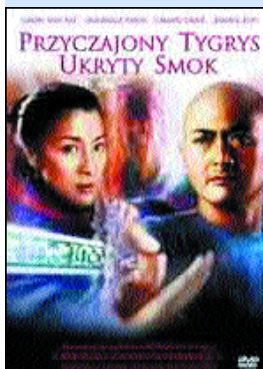


Bond films, Steven Segall-type adventures and any of the Lethal Weapon series. The sci-fi flicks; the Star Wars series which friends have assured me it is entirely possible to watch in one sitting (yes all 8 hours non-stop, not even a KitKat break). The gangster flicks; The Godfather series, Goodfellas and Pulp fiction. The list goes on and on and on and on and on just like the washing machine ad, so I won't bore you (once again like the ad) by mentioning them all suffice to say all of these are sure to merit a showing whether as a friendly matinee or a late night filler for the last few.

For those of you not satisfied with the selection on offer there's always the video/DVD shop. Bridget Jones's Diary is top of my list, with Gladiator a close second (okay I mentioned it already but tis brilliant), Cats and Dogs, Dr. Dolittle 2, Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon, Traffic and Charlie's Angels; all full of stunts, swords, guns, humour, action, romance, animated figures and talking animals. Whatever floats your boat.

Whether it's an Aesop's fable or chocolate for the brain your looking for this Christmas there's something there for everyone. So when your sick of the siblings or even the parents playing with the gadgets they've been given for Christmas, put your foot down, grab the telly, the leftovers from the box of Roses that no-one wanted and retire to your room. Or as an alternative to this completely antisocial situation gather round the roaring fire and in a scene straight from Seventh Heaven proceed to enjoy the offering of the little black or even large, flat, grey, plasma, wide screen. Whichever of the proposed scenarios you prefer, enjoy it, and whichever film you decide to watch, talk through it and annoy the hell out of everyone!! Merry Christmas.

by Aisling O'Connor



Humbug- Christmas Commercialism

by Aisling O' Connor

It's the year 2025, its Christmas, its June. Yes people that is correct I did say June. That's where we're headed if we continue in the direction we're headed and hopefully for all the corporate giants out there, cos hey they're gleefully sitting at home on their piles of money rubbing their hands together at the thought of Christmas and the new house in the Hamptons they can now buy to add to their collection in 15 other locations. Yup, its that time of year again, the time of joy, happiness and giving a present to everyone you've ever met in your entire life, cos Hey that's what the spirit of Christmas is all about, the big competition, who can buy the most presents and get most into debt before the end of December. Doesn't the fact that Christmas

starts at Halloween annoy anyone else?? That Christmas lights get switched on in a big ceremony at the start of December, 3 weeks before Christmas?? That every time you walk into a big department store Fairytale of New York is blaring over the sound system?? Well it annoys the hell out of me I have to say and the worse thing is its not like you can forge a note from your parents, there is no escape, you cant get away from it, its plastered everywhere, walls, tv screens, radio, newspapers, magazines, the back of toilet doors, any medium that advertisers can think of. Its like they're trying to say, in case you're an alien from another planet guess what, its Christmas. You walk into a shop and you're a gonner, colours, nauseatingly cheerful decorations, SELL, SELL, SELL, BUY, BUY, BUY

What is Christmas about??? Can anyone tell me??? I asked a friend of my younger sisters the other day what did she reply??? Its about Santy coming and getting loadsa presents, and yes undoubtedly for many people that is what its about. Forget peace on earth and goodwill to men, these days Christmas is more about securing the latest Pokemon/Digimon game. If Christmas is about goodwill and generosity how much do the charities who campaign every Christmas in an effort to remind us of those less well off take in? Ill bet not as much as the Toys'R' Us store chain do. Remember a few years ago when they had that great idea of giving a gift certificate for the charity of your choice to the value of £10 or £20?? No?? Well, not surprising, the idea didn't really catch on. I guess a piece of paper that doesn't make a noise, do flips or move by remote control isn't really fun like the rest of them are. You go shopping and on your way pass collectors for St. Vincent de Paul and say sorry I've no change, I have to spend it all on my fourth cousins aunts uncles nephew, cos I met him for five minutes last Christmas, he's going to be at the family gathering this year and therefore he deserves a present.



Read the letters to Santa that your



local paper conveniently prints. Children don't ask for world peace, an end to famine nope, they all want the latest Harry Potter game/figurine/book set/Lego set. I decided this year that as a student, I just didn't have the money to buy presents for everyone I knew, so the only people getting presents were my parents and my siblings. Then I suddenly felt guilty; surely I could not eat for a week and buy all my friends something small, like a 10p mix? There's no such thing as 12 days of Christmas anymore now it's the 60 days of Christmas. Day after day, until you're afraid to go near a city/town or shopping centre for fear of being accosted by one of the fifteen Santies holding the parents of the town to ransom with their offers of "come get a photo with Santa, only £10" Hmmph, it was only £5 when I was small, ah well, inflation, cost of living, interest rates yadda yadda even Santa's got overheads I guess. Then there's the new phenomenon of Christmas villages. The place to be this year is seemingly the incredibly realistic Santa's village in Goffs. 85,000 tickets for this wonder world with real reindeer, elves and Santa's workshop (supposedly) sold out in 2 days, Good God, Slane where are ya the biggest draw is Santa and Rudolph!!

But then you've got to think of the other side of things, the positive (an unusual occurrence for me cynic that I am). Christmas may be the time that the world spends daily what it would cost to fund the Federal Centres for Disease Control yearly and spend more money from the end of November the end of December than we do at any other time but it is also the time

that we think of other people the most. We think about what presents to buy for people sure, but we also think of friends and relatives that won't be with us, we think of how much we love our families and friends, and how much they mean to us. Would we do this if it weren't for Christmas, time of commercialism, spendaholics anonymous courses and enormous credit card debt and overdrafts that will take til next Christmas to pay off when you'll just go and do it all again?? Also the commercialism does provide a non-secular version of the holiday season. It provides a time throughout which the whole world universally can celebrate regardless of religion.

So we've got the good, the bad and I'm sure if you looked hard enough you could find the ugly. Christmas and commercialism the two kinda go together now, like well stuff that goes together. Don't get me wrong I like getting pressies under the tree too but the holiday season should be about more than stocking fillers and wrapping paper. It should be about getting in touchy with that friend you haven't spoken too in a while, and hey with the new Eircom rates that can even be done on a student budget!! It should be about patching up the argument you had with your parents/friends/hi-fi. It's a time to put all our differences behind us and be happy, at least until after Christmas dinner. It's a time for making memories that you'll still cherish when

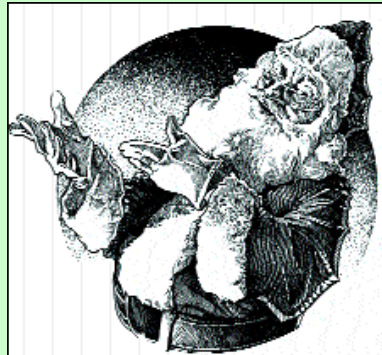
you're 55 and running up your own credit card bills. Memories that you'll cherish like that first time you went to midnight mass with the grown-up people or waited up to see if Santa really did come and fell asleep eventually only to wake up and discover that Santa had come in the 15 minutes you'd been asleep and then proceeded to go wake up the 'rents cos they have to come play too (and then you can't understand why they're so grouchy). Or the expression on a younger brother or sister's face when they get their Christmas gifts, the look of expectation and then delight.



All in all which is Christmas commercialism of the good or of the bad?? Well having completely transformed my own opinion for the better while writing the last paragraph of this article I leave it up to you to decide, and leave you with two greetings, choose whichever you prefer.

Bah Humbug to all or Merry Christmas to all

Children don't ask for world peace, an end to famine nope, they all want the latest Harry Potter game/figurine/book set/Lego set



European Director Visits Tae Kwon-Do Club

On the 15th of November UL's Tae Kwon-Do club was paid a visit by Master John Darcy. Master Darcy resides in Ireland but is the European Director of the World AIMAA Association. He is also the Chief Examiner of all of Ireland.

On Thursday he drove all the way down from Dublin free of charge to instruct our class in particular sparring techniques. The class was very informative to all involved, and the session lasted roughly two and a half hours. The following are profiles on Master Darcy and our own Mr. Fox.

Master John Darcy

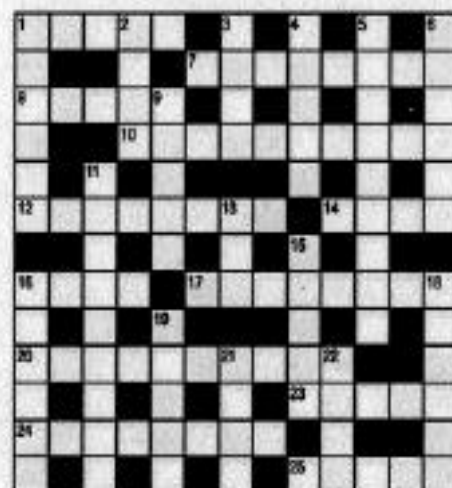
- 6th Degree Black Belt
- European AIMAA Director
- Certified R. A. P. E. Defence Instructor
- Chief Instructor - Cho's Taekwondo Centre Dublin
- Winner of several National & International Championships
- International Seminar Instructor
- Certified Self Defence Instructor
- Certified International Referee
- Chief Examiner of All Ireland
- Attended courses in Los Angeles, Pittsburg, New Mexico, and Silver City under Grandmaster Cho

Mr Philip Fox

- 3rd Degree Black Belt
- Over 15 Years Experience
- AIMAA Instructor
- Chief Instructor - Cho's Taekwondo UL
- Certified R. A. P. E. Defence Instructor
- International Referee
- Winner of several National & International Championships
- Member of the Irish display team for the Grand opening of AIMAA HQ in Albuquerque 1998.
- Captain of Irish Team 1999 & 2000
- Captain of AIMAA Ireland winning team in First AIMAA Open World Championship continuous sparring
- Winner of First AIMAA Open World Championship heavyweight black belt point sparring
- Attended courses in Ireland, England, Pittsburg and New Mexico under Grandmaster Cho, Master Amoris and Master Darcy



Submit Correct answers to the the SUREception for the attention of the Editor of An Focal. The first correct answer out of the hat will receive the CD of The Week Courtesy of Limerick Live 95FM.



No. 82

ACROSS

1. The Run (5)
7. Dependable (8)
8. Inflexible (5)
10. Slave-driver (10)
12. Vessel for pouring off (8)
14. Large town (4)
16. Man's name (Whicker) (4)
17. Nest (10) (9)
20. Divorce (10)
23. Score board (5)
24. — to the dozen (excessively) (8)
25. Seashore (5)

DOWN

1. Fearful (6)
2. Send out (4)
3. Pack of cards (4)
4. Rolled tobacco leaf (5)
5. Didn't vote (9)
6. Frequency of anniversary, perhaps? (6)
9. "O — Boy..!" (5)
11. Abolishing (9)
13. Complex (3)
15. Buzzy musical instrument (5)
16. Acquiescence (6)
18. Trounce (6)
19. Talk foolishly (5)
21. Foot digits (4)
22. Attack with electric weapon (sl.) (4)

Last weeks solution

ACROSS:- 3. Unlashed. 8. Apex. 9. Turpin. 10. Ensign. 11. Usher. 14. Redtop. 15. Med. 16. Seaford. 17. Andie. 21. Baring. 22. Reveille. 23. Dean. 24. Devoured.
DOWN:- 1. Warehouse. 2. Moturnal. 4. Rotted. 5. Banded. 6. So-so. 7. Four. 11. Backbit. 12. Jet engine. 14. Rod. 15. Novella. 18. Ombre. 19. Niece. 20. Zen.

If you got these and gave me the answers you could have won yourself a CD, why didn't you?

If anyone is interested in joining the training sessions, come to the arena on Monday night 8pm to 9pm and Wednesday and Thursday 9pm to 10:30pm. All are welcome.

University of Limerick Chess Club

"The gold one's are Galeons", he explained. "Seventeen silver Sickles to a Galleon and twenty-nine Knuts to a sickle, it's easy enough."

Like millions of children across the world, I have been having nightmares about the antics at Hogwart's School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. These nocturnal excursions haven't been centred around the Forbidden Forest however, but rather on the life-size chess game that Ron won against the forces of evil. With the exception of Declan Fish Vs. Mary Gilmartin (Limerick Open 2000), it was the scariest chess game I have ever experienced.

This bizarre blockbuster has not only publicized the underlying violent nature of chess, but given a new dimension to chess nights in the canteen when I look across at Tom and think "Yes, your friend is a much better player than I am". That's enough of Tom's twin Harry Potter, though, what's been happening on the chess front?

Our team captain just said that he is proud of the performance put in by the team in the game against Milford. The game was played in the canteen. The players on the day were Tom Cooper, Sean Molloy, Declan Fish, Mary Gilmartin and Diarmuid Mulvey. The action is our last home game before heading to Cork, for a bit of a blitz next Sunday. We will be taking on at least two more teams of the Munster League there, throughout what should be a very long and exciting day.

This weekend saw the purchase of numerous chess clocks, realising the much-needed reality of a chess clock per chessboard at our meetings on Wednesday nights (the Canteen, 7pm). As regards practicing for competitive games we are truly sorted, as are those of you who are of a not-so-nervous disposition- with the joys of thirty-second chess games and the like.

There are new pictures up on the website now, so go have

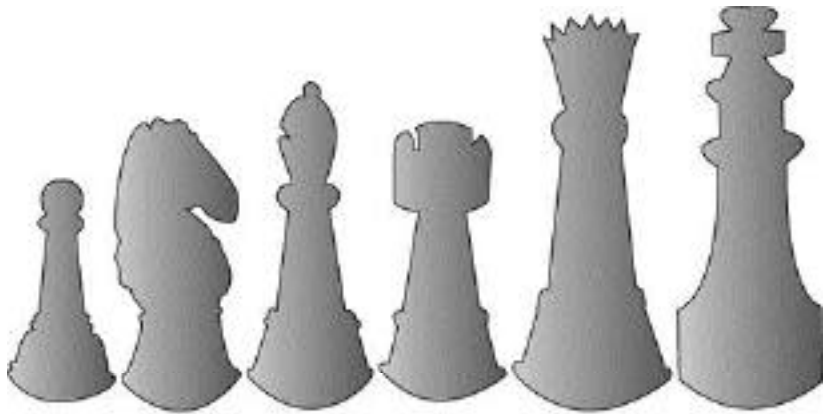
a look: www.csn.ul.ie/~chess

Soon our students are heading home for the hol's, and thick snow will make the roads back to Limerick impassable for the duration of our Christmas break. As we sit back in our own sitting rooms with chicken soup/hot chocolate competing with the heat of the open fireplace as the wind howls unceasingly outside, it is important that we acknowledge a few home truths about the semester that has gone by:

Compared to this time last year, the club has come a long way in both equipment and participation. Active membership has risen dramatically; we are playing as many competitive games as we can fit in to our academic schedule; despite our limited means, the whole club has participated in raising money to make all of these things possible. From the Student's Union's Lottery to our Greek Week event, the interest has been overwhelming. On the committee development front, there are interested new people appearing

every week. There are a number of outside parties however that we have to thank for a successful semester:

Firstly, we must say a thank you to our clubs and societies development officer Paul Lee. He does work hard, believe it or not, and it mustn't be easy listening to our whining week after week. We must thank The Stables for the use of the courtyard again during Greek Week and for providing us with facilities to host a table quiz, as well as the Outreach Society for their collaboration on the former event. Above all though, we would like to thank the Scholar's Club for sponsoring us, providing much-needed means to help us to further the development of the club. An Focal deserves a mention too I think. They pay for this ink and we never even mention them. Look for the credits in this issue and apply thanks to all those names as well. That's it for this semester. Have a Christmassy Christmas and a Novel New Year. (And go see Harry Potter- if only for the chess). T.J.



UL Rowing Club performs well at Bitter Head

ULRowing Club had a very successful weekend of competition at St. Michael's Head of the River, which was held on the River Shannon at O'Brien's Bridge, Co. Clare on Saturday the 1st of December. This was home ground for the club with most members knowing this fine stretch of rowing water like the back of their hand. Nearly all active members of the club competed to some level in this event and we came away at the end of the day with two pendants. Our proud Novice Women won the 4+ to add to their recent victory at Tribesman Head in Galway in October. Our very own Super Coxswain, Mad Mary Barry, coxed them to triumph. Our newly acquired Aylings AXII four, "Tecnomen", got its second taste of competitive water at this event and was fundamental in allowing our fours crews compete effectively. Marie O'Neill stroked the boat with Edel Sheahan in bow and Kerry Crowley and Caitriona Joyce adding power to the middle.

The men of the club had a strong presence at the event sending out a total of 7 crews out on the water. The heavy weight Inter Men brought home the Inter 4+ pendant. Daire Cronin, Conor McNamara, Eoghan Meskill and Ray Moran powered this boat against a very competitive line up. As well as the fours, the Inter Men's squad put out three 8+'s, finishing second to NUIG by two seconds in the C eight and 5th and 13th in the respective A and B boats. The

male scullers showed strong potential by the performances of Brian O'Connor, our young sculler from Castleconnell, who came second in the Junior 18's category as well as by Ronan Egan, who competed in the inter and senior men's 1x.

The new novice members of the club got their first taste of competitive rowing and have either been hooked for life or scared away to something a little less challenging. This crew promises to be something to watch in the future, as they powered their way past five other crews, in their first race. Kitted out in their new crew tops they had a perfect day for rowing apart from a few wintry showers. This was in sharp contrast to last year's competition, which was cancelled due to a storm. The day ran smoothly apart from an accident involving a Carlow Junior women's crew who lost their boat over the weir in Castleconnell pointing out the necessity for vigilance and concentration when commanding a vulnerable rowing boat. Thankfully Limerick Search and Rescue were on hand to help them to safety.

The dedicated drinkers of the club toasted the day in fine style that evening as the one piece was flung off as Mad MB and her followers hit the town. The result was a coxswain who lost her voice and a certain rower learning a few tricks of American Style rowing, off the water! All in all, a successful day by most standards...

Cork Weekend Away...let the madness begin

The training gathered from our weekend away in Cork the previous weekend, where UCC Boat Club kindly hosted us, helped the weekend of competition. The novice men improved on technique work as they battled their way against the River Lee. The second annual boat race in the pub was declared a dead heat even though UCC would like to claim otherwise. Fast Eddies will never be the same and

the unconventional methods of a few club members in their efforts to not have to queue up to get their coats (ahem, being "escorted out") is a technique that the club is NOT endorsing. A few 'diplomatic' moves were made to secure good relations between UCC and UL in the future, and a few unnamed rowers perpetuated team incest. It is hoped that ULRC will be able to return the favour of the Cork rowers some time in the near future by hosting them here on campus. It would bring us great pride to be able to host clubs from around the country by providing a boathouse to row out of to add to the fantastic land training facilities that the University can boast of. We, as a club, are still working on this ever-pressing issue and hope that it will prove fruitful some time in the near future.

Rowing wisdom of the week-

"I will offer my advice on the last twenty strokes. I have noticed that I get somewhere around 10 meters to each stroke, so this is about 200 meters. At this point of the piece I just hold my breath hoping that I will pass out. It is very impressive to pass out after a piece, and the coaches seem to think that I am pulling real hard when this happens. This also works for races too." - some insane male rower

John Normoyle, Rosamund Healy

in association
with



UL Volleyball Report

UL Volleyball Club Shines at the Intervarsities

Nov 21st - It's a Wednesday evening at the bus stop on the Dublin Road, a collection of seventeen eager looking students are waiting, weighed down with heavy bags, for the bus to Dublin. They are off to represent UL in the Intervarsities of the second most popular sport in the World (oooooh). Despite the extreme pressure which must surely go along with such a task, the crew are surprisingly light hearted and smiling. But someone is missing!! Its Ger Conway, the plonker, staying late at work again. This might not seem so strange had Ger not been the one to email us 8 times and remind us another 5 times in person that "the bus leaves at 6:30 and to be there or else!!!" (at 5ft 4, from Clare and weighing in at just under 55kg you can see that this was quite a threat). Anyway, all's well that ends well and Ger joined us in a Dublin pub, just around the corner from our five-star hostel. Later, it was back to the hostel, where in the lads room after some general perverted chat by the Irish lads (with the foreigners listening in, wondering what we were on about) we fell asleep dreaming about success in the cup and parading the Cup around the Hotel in Borris-in-Ossory. This year's Volleyball Intervarsities became unique for UL many weeks before even catching the bus to Dublin. And one word described how unique these would be: "Trials". Do you mean to tell me UL are having trials for the Volleyball team for the Intervarsities? It was hard to comprehend, but it was true and it was needed. There were loads of players turning up for training and the squad needed to be cut down. The reason this year is different than previous ones is that the Varsities were to be on in November and not during January in the 3 weeks off. This date had caused problems for UL before as we rely on a certain amount of foreign players to make up the numbers and during the 3 weeks off these players are generally not available, hence there being no need for trials. But this year was different and the male and female squads were cut down to about 8-10 players. And it was these 10 lads and 8 ladies who woke on Thursday at the unsafe hour of 7:30am to make their way to O' Connell street to catch the bus to DCU.

The ladies were up first and they put in a very good opening display against UCG, winning 2-0. Next up was Carlow IT, and aided on by the stunning vocal encouragement of the lads team, UL romped to another 2-0 victory. The girl's final game of the day was to be their toughest, against a very good UCD team. UCD took a 2-0 victory despite a good second set comeback by UL. Thanks, however, to their two earlier wins, the girls were into the Cup part of the competition the next day. Next up were the lads, watching volleyball all morning, they were keen to get on court themselves. UL men played Queens of Belfast in their first game and lost the first set but rallied to take the second set and tie the match 1-1. In their next game they also played an Ulster team, Coleraine. Coleraine had two strong Greek players but UL played some excellent Volleyball to win the first set. Unfortunately they let Coleraine back into it in the second set and once again drew the match 1-1. Next up for the men was the Royal College of Surgeons. Surgeons had a Ricky Martin lookalike playing for them, unfortunately for UL this guy was an amazing volleyball player also. He helped his team to a 2-0 win against our lads. This mix of results left the men into the Plate competition. The end of Volleyball for the day, it was back to the hostel for food. "Dude, where's my turkey?", Brian, our sole American on the squad sat down at Thanksgiving Dinner in the hostel facing a plate of pasta, sauce and mince. Back home his family were tucking into the feast of the year. Ah well, a Thanksgiving I'm sure he won't forget. Maybe Ger was feeling sorry for him as he went out and bought 2 chocolate cakes for desert. That night it was off to the Life Bar to schmooze with some of the other teams. A good night was had and Feargal was beginning to forge strong links between UL and UCG, go on "Timmy".

Day two of play brought the men up against UCC in the men's Plate. After dominating the first set UL let it slip in the second set and lost by 3 points. Yet another 1-1 draw. The next game against Tallaght brought our first clear victory as we won 2-0, thanks to some excellent play by some of the subs. This meant that we were into the Plate

semi Final at 9:30 on Saturday morning, oh yet another 7:30am start! The girls team were in a very difficult cup group with Trinity and Surgeons. Surgeons proved too strong in the first game but UL were unlucky not to take a set off Trinity in the second match which they also lost 2-0. Sadly, this was to put the ladies out of the competition. But their great play did not go unnoticed as Amy and Andrea were asked to play for the representative team, which is made up of the best players at the tournament, and which goes towards making a combined Irish team to play in England against similar teams from England, Scotland, Wales etc. Friday night was an excellent and eventful night at the Mercantile on Dame St. Returning to the hostel, a few of the squad came to the assistance of a man who had been thrown off a horse & cart and hit his head on the edge of the path. Well done to those who helped tend to his serious head wound and call the ambulance etc (Iris, Brian, Shane).

The final day and unfortunately UL were not to make it to either final. We lost the first set of the semi final to Coleraine and we should have won the second to send it to a third set. But we failed to score the necessary point and allowed Coleraine to take the win. I was very p!\$S-d off after that loss but the rest of the day was still very enjoyable as we watched the semis and finals in the womens and mens cup. Luca also went missing for quite a while, about 3 hours to be exact, he was eventually found sound asleep on Court 3. UCD won both the womens and mens Cup competitions. That evening everyone returned to Limerick, tired but after a great few days. One of our setters summed it up best when asked to describe the tournament in one word, "great craic" he replied. Oh and speaking of Jonathon, if anyone would like to donate to the worthy cause: "Give Jonathon his voice back" you can bring all cheques and cash to training on Thursday evening at 5pm. Poor Jonathon put serious trauma on his vocal cords in Dublin and has not yet recovered. In conclusion, well done to all on a great tournament.

The Men: Ger Conway, Brian "Dude" Gannon, Olivier "Froggy" Durez, Feargal "Timmy" Lyons, Ben "La Canouche" Girard, Luca Di Bello, Alex "De Fonz" Ecamot, Jonathon Collins, Shane O Sullivan & Mike Hanlon.
The Ladies: Helen Wynne, Stephanie Bourquard, Paula "multicolour socks" McArthy, Monica Natale, Norah "midget" Nelson, Iris "Nurse" Regelsberger, Andrea Suchankova & Amy O Shea

UL Volleyball stay on winning track

Nov 4th - Another afternoon in the UL Arena, another strong group of cheering supporters, and another National League victory for the UL Men's Volleyball team. The opposition this time was Newbridge and they are well-experienced campaigners. Not only that, this team had foreign guys, with Eastern European type names. I'll let you in on a little volleyball secret here, foreign guys are usually good, and eastern Europeans are more often than not feckin excellent. To put it another way, the Eastern Europeans are to Volleyball, what Kilkenny are to hurling, can't really give them a better compliment than that can I? Anyway, back to the game. Now you can understand the fear taking hold of us as we watched these guys slamming the ball down onto our side of the court during the warm-up. But, as our coach reminded us before the game, volleyball is about more than hitting the perfect set at 200 miles/hr in the warm-up, its about concentration, reading the game, enjoying the game and wanting to win. If you can have all this then the hits will come, and so they did!!

The starting six was slightly changed from the last day, with Jiri Vevoda (our own Czech) playing his first game for the team this season. And what a game it was for him, and the rest of the players. The first set was a close affair with UL holding the advantage with some excellent setting and hitting. There were never more than a few points between the teams and UL kept making the important points to keep the lead and take the first set 25-21. If the first set was tight, then the second set had one nail-biting incident after another, climaxing with Newbridge serving at 24-22 to try and tie the game at one set each. This was such a critical part of the game. UL kept their heads to win the next point, but it was still set point. The guys, dived, jumped, blocked, passed and hit, everything to win that one point, and they got it. Edge of the seat stuff here. Two more

excellent points later and UL took the set 26-24. It was now 2-0, cruisin'.

The third set saw UL keep the momentum going and they eventually claimed victory at 25-20. Three sets to zero, a very enjoyable victory. That win put UL in the top portion of the league with 2 wins from 3 games.

League SQUAD: Gerard Conway, Donncha Daly, Jonathon Collins, Linx Govender, Shane O' Sullivan, Michael Hanlon, Mike Carey, Niklas Karlsson, Jiri Vevoda, Fergal Lyons.

Anyone interested in playing volleyball at UL, both male and female, should come along to training and you can sign up as a new member. Players of all standards are welcome. Training times: Tuesday 9:15pm-11:00pm (Team Practice before Intervarsities)

Thursday 5pm-7pm

(Courts 3&4 The Arena)

Looking for information on training or match times then email Mike at 9850805@student.ul.ie

UL Volleyball take Sweetest of League victories

Nov 11th - They cheered, they shouted, they hugged, feck it, they half lost their minds they were so happy. The 8 UL players and coach Cormac Burns couldn't stop smiling as they congratulated each other at the end of the match. Over at the officials table, the score sheet told the whole story. Two little number 2's indicating that both teams had won 2 sets and then in big clear numbers 13, on the Portmarnock side, and 15 on the UL side. They had done it, they had come from 2 sets down, from 7 points down in the fourth set and from 4 points down in the 5th set to take the 'sweetest of victories'. The lads played out of their skins to make it three wins from three home games this season. And this victory was all the more enjoyable coming against last years division 1 winners: Portmarnock.

The first set started well for UL, it was to be the only set we would start well in. Portmarnock rested two of their stronger players on the bench for the opening points and UL opened up a 4 point lead. Points were traded over and back and Portmarnock were beginning to find their rhythm. However, strong hitting from UL left them with set point at 24-23. Watching from the sideline, the miraculous way in which Portmarnock won the next point still amazes me. It seemed like at least twice, the law of gravity failed us, as the ball hovered inches from the floor on the Portmarnock side of the net, giving them the chance to pass it upwards and over the net. Miracles or not, Portmarnock tied the score at 24-24 and then took the next two points to take a one set to zero lead. Whether this got to UL in the second set or not, we never quite made enough good plays, making too many errors. Portmarnock then took the second set 25-17. Time was running out, we knew we were good enough to win the game, but if we let another set slip by then we wouldn't get a chance to prove it. In an effort to get us back into the match the coach made a key change by bringing Jiri in to set. The next two sets were great, we were still making some mistakes but we were making some great moves as well. We didn't dominate the sets, but this made them all the better to win, and scores of 25-23 and 25-22 in favour of UL show just how close they were. So now, here we were, final set, time to turn our hard work into league points by winning the match. Needless to say, Portmarnock were not going to let us away that easy and they proceeded to open up an early four-point lead. A few good points later and we were swapping sides on the court, trailing 8-7. The next few points were very tense and very exciting and I remember little about them, until the score lay at 14-13 in our favour. We were on the verge, but anything could still happen, the ball was set high to our wing position and Lynx screamed that he wanted it. We all watched as he leapt high above the net for the ball, swung his right arm back and then connected, the ball flew, bullet-like, and hit the floor on the Portmarnock side of the net. 'Oh yeah!!!' Crazyiness ensued as we madly celebrated. The feeling was good, something to be hopefully repeated after our next two games away before Christmas:

@Naas Dec 9th

@Cork Dec 16th

League SQUAD: Gerard Conway, Donncha Daly, Jonathon Collins, Linx Govender, Shane O' Sullivan, Michael Hanlon, Niklas Karlsson, Jiri Vevoda, Fergal Lyons.

Surf and white water Kayak Club

Well this is the final article of 2001; Christmas is fast approaching, along with the long awaited exams. This weekend sees the kayak club heading for the northwest corner of the country, Iasky Co. Sligo. A great weekend of surf kayaking and white water is expected. It is a chance to take our minds off the study for a while before the hard slog over the holidays. The bus will be leaving from the back of the foundation building around 5. The advice is, bring warm clothes, a towel and a sleeping bag, the rest is supplied. Over the holidays the kayak club are meeting up for new years in the famous county of Kerry. If you are doing nothing else and want to join a few friends to ring in the New Year and also get a nice bit of paddling done, talk to one of the committee members like Deccie, Ross, Eamon or me! And we'll give you the details etc. Have a great Christmas everyone, ho, ho, ho. ULKC.



Outdoor Pursuits Club Semester Report

Orientation week

The clubs stand was up in the Scholars courtyard for 3 days. A few members went climbing during the week-end in the Burren and ended up herding cattle in Galway.

Week 1

Beginner's night on Monday with a talk which gave new members an introduction to climbing and the club. Trip to Doolin at the weekend where we went caving, rock climbing, hillwalking,

Week 2

Another year. Another AGM. A whole new bunch of fools to try and make it all fit.

Week 3

Brandon trip. An exciting trek up Ireland's ninth highest mountain. With a mushroom fuelled trip report appearing in the An Focal the following week.

Week 4

Killarney trip. A deadly two-day adventure: - With Carrauntoohill, Beenkeragh, Caher. (Ireland's three highest mountains) and an unwholesome amount of sweat and tears, all on the first day. Followed by a wee spot of rock climbing on the Sunday with a climb on the curiously named "Purple Mountain" (I assure you that it's quite green) and some yoghurt theft.

Week 5

Halloween night hike on Keeper Hill. While the rest of Limerick town was trick 'r treating in fancy dress the OPC went and climbed Keeper Hill. If that wasn't enough we did it in the dark. And to top it off we left our torches behind.

Week 7

Galtees trip. At the ungodly hour of 9am, the bus left to go to the Galtees on a day long walking trip.

Week 9

Comeraghs trip. A small sixteen-person trek up the Comeragh Mountains. We went straight up and then took a left to dodge the nasty 1000ft drop at Coomsingaun.

Week 10

Trip to Carrauntoohill. A group walked along the Beenkeragh ridge (Ireland's second highest peak) while no less than three other groups attacked Howling ridge (the coldest, hardest and stupidest way to get to the top)

Week 12

Christmas trip to Doolin. The club's annual Christmas trip to Doolin will take place on Saturday & Sunday (15-16 December) at the end of Week 12, so even if you have projects they'll all be out of the way by then. There's climbing, hillwalking and caving planned. The weather is guaranteed to be unpredictable so do like the scouts and be prepared.

Details and the signup sheet on the club notice-board in the canteen.

2 out of 3 ain't bad-UL Men's Hockey Club

On the Sunday before our intervarsities we made the trip to Cork to face Belvedere and try to kick start our week. We knew this match would be tough as Belvedere are a smart outfit especially at home. As we anticipated Belvedere were strong and extremely well organized. Although not under severe pressure, UL attacks were few and far between but our defence was holding up strong against Belvedere's consistent attacks. However with just ten minutes to go in the first half, a free was hit into the UL goalmouth and a Belvedere player managed to get a stick to the ball and deflect it into the goal. With a rallying team talk at half time UL came out and showed great strength of character to take the game to the opposition. Our attacks were beginning to pay diffident with numerous short corners being won.

From one of these corners after a save from the Belvedere keeper, Alan Horgan picked up the rebound and his resulting strike was illegally cleared off the line by a defender resulting in a penalty stroke. Holger Goertz, giving the keeper no chance, brilliantly converted the stroke. Now

UL's heads were up and we went in search of a winner. That winner came from the most unlikely of sources Cormac Enright. UL were defending a short corner, which was saved and cleared as far as Frank Wall. Frankie under pressure in his own half looked up field only to see Cormac all alone in the

Belvedere half. With only slight hesitation Frank delivered an inch perfect pass. Cormac turned and bore down on goal like an out of control locomotive. From the top of the D he guided the ball between the legs of the out rushing keeper, and the UL players thought the ball would never reach the net, but Enright paced it well. UL with renewed confidence, played out the last five minutes with no mistake for a truly amazing victory. On the Sunday following our intervarsities we made the long and tiresome trip to challenge the league pace setters Bandon. Our starting eleven was somewhat depleted due to injuries and the week that had gone. Yet again UL made a typically slow start and gave away a soft goal within the first ten minutes. However this new fighting spirit that the team has found came through again with Alan Swanton taking on and beating players and finishing coolly for a brilliant solo goal. The rest off the half was played on our back foot but we managed to frustrate Bandon till half time and then we knew it was anyone's game. Unfortunately we again went behind to a scrappy goal just five minutes into the half but we stormed back up the pitch for Holger to score a brilliantly worked short corner with a direct strike low to the keepers left. However the game ended in some controversy with Bandon scoring what we all believed to be an illegitimate goal but the umpires ruled different. So we had to make the long trip home pleased with our performance but disappointed not to take points from the game. On Sunday 26th ULMHC had a tough assignment at home against our old enemies Ashton. The match was made even tougher due to our rising injury list; we were now missing five regular first team players so there were a lot of personnel and positional changes. As was expected Ashton immediately came at us with everything they had but the makeshift defence of Horgan, Ahearne, Swanton and Enright held firm and

worked well as a unit under the guidance off Keith Pigott in goal. We knew Ashton would be clinical from short corners but we also knew that if we held strong it would frustrate them and we could play our way into the game. As it turned out that was exactly how the game unfolded. It was all Ashton for the first half with UL having limited chances but as the half wore on Ashton were becoming increasingly frustrated and began arguing amongst themselves. At the change off ends we realised we had them rattled and after a few inspirational words from our wounded captain John Lennon we started the second half with only one thing in mind, three points. Ashton were clearly rattled and as UL kept the calm we started attacking more and more with Seamus Walsh and Frank Wall in particular leading the way from midfield. Then half way through the second half after good work from Conor Bradbury and the tireless Peter Harribourne a free was won on the edge of to rifle the ball past the keeper to the delight of the team and the spectators. After this Ashton cracked and had a man sent off. We made great use of the extra man with Alan "Surly" Horgan showing his uncle Mick "Testy" Horgan a thing or two about hockey. To make the day even sweeter we added a second goal, which came after good work from our French flyer Sebastian down the left, and yet again it was Kev who supplied the finish from all of two yards out.

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CELTIC VS JUVENTUS

Celtic Supporters club visit Glasgow for historic game

By J.P. O'Connor

Weds. 31st October 2001

We hit Parkhead in around seven. It was 45 minutes before kick off and the cold air was pinching our cheeks red. The bite of the winter night was further compounded by an underlying sense of tension. Its presence was palpable amongst the army of green and white hooped supporters who were nervously pouring through the stadium's turnstiles. D-Day had arrived. Progression to the next round of the Champion's League required another giant slaying act on the part of Celtic. The opponents this time were Italy's legendary Juventus. Four weeks had transpired since these 2 teams had last met and the intervening period had not allowed amnesia to seep in to the collective mindset of the Celtic fans. On that particular night Juventus, in league with an appalling referee, had robbed Celtic of a hard fought draw in Turin by virtue of a wrongfully awarded penalty in the last minute of injury time. Divine intervention was also required in the group's other match to allow lacklustre Rosenborg to lay siege to and eventually overcome the infidel of F.C. Porto on their home ground citadel in Portugal. Everyone knew what was at stake. Especially the Celtic team.

As kick off approached the die-hard contingent of Juventus fans who had made the trip for the match began to make their presence felt in the tier next to us. Their noisy banter was soon drowned out as "The Fields of Athenry" echoed around the ground. Both teams walked out on to the pitch greeted by this wall of sound. Anxiety crackled and bounced liked electricity through the crowd. This was it. It was time to avenge Turin and restore lost Glaswegian pride.

Just as Celtic began to wade in to the Pan-Latin mercenar-

ies who made up the Juventus team, disaster struck. Del Piero scored from a free kick for the visitors and cheering ruptured from the away fans section. Their near love making like celebrations were met by a salvo of insults from my verbal trigger happy friend, Martin Power. This seemed to instantly rally the crowd who taking the initiative from Martin's example, treated our visitors to some warm Glaswegian hospitality and welcomes.

As the roar of the crowd reverberated around us, Celtic began to fight their way back in to the match. Their tenacity and determination were rewarded when on the 23rd minute; Joos Valgaeren equalised for the Bhoys. My buddy Martin grabbed me in a friendly headlock as the crowd rose as one to celebrate. Our Italian neighbours looked on in silence.

With half time approaching Celtic's relentless assault on Juve's goal was justly rewarded when big Chris Sutton fired the home side ahead with a thundering header. Everyone was breathless. The interval offered us some respite from the relentless action as those of us who were afflicted with weak bladders could now scurry off to the toilets with a sound piece of mind to calm us somewhat.

As the second half resumed Juventus threatened once more to ruin the party. The curtain was no sooner up when substitute David Trezeguet equalised for the visitors. Wild celebrations once more broke out amongst the away fans to our immediate left. Several of them lost their taste for jubilation as Martin, with vitriol coursing through his veins and salivating from his mouth, shot them 'The Stare'. Their enthusiasm seemed to whither beneath his 'mad dog' gaze. The religious amongst us now began to pray to almighty Ghod to deliver us from this potential disaster.

Ghod, (or Henrik Larson as he is known in the green and white part of Glasgow), eventually did answer the prayers of the fateful by walloping home a penalty for the home side. A screamer followed this several minutes later by man of the match Chris Sutton, who obliterated the ball past the hapless Juve players with a nuclear powered volley. As the ball smashed against the back of the Juventus net, a deafening roaring cacophony of cheering erupted from the massive 57,000 capacity crowd, (Juventus fans excluded). The unimaginable seemed to be taking shape before us. Celtic were now 4-2 ahead with 15 minutes to go. This defeat of the legendary Juventus was threatening to turn in to a rout for O'Neill's bhoys.

Down but definitely not out, the Italian outfit retaliated with Trezeguet firing home a third

one for the visitors. It was his second of the night and he was thirsty for more. Juventus began to push forward for one last assault on the beleaguered Celtic goal. The bhoys regrouped and prepared themselves for the oncoming Italian

advance in to their half of the pitch. The night's frosty nip no longer bothered me as my pulse was racing. I looked at Martin. He was sweating like a priest at an altar boy's convention. I looked at the Juve fans. They were screaming for Scottish blood. We braced ourselves for impact. Suddenly the referee blew his final whistle. It was all over. Parkhead erupted in an explosion of singing. "The Fields of Athenry" blared out from every green and white corner of the floodlit ground. Celtic had done it. Hadn't they?

News soon flashed through from the group's other match. Rosenborg's crusade against F.C. Porto had come to nothing. The infidels had sneaked the match 1-0 and had progressed to the next group stage of the Champion's League. The battered and vanquished remains of the Juventus team also followed them through. Justice had not been served. Celtic were now condemned to play out a sentence in the 3rd round of the U.E.F.A Cup. Relegation from Europe's premier competition to the shadowy realms of its sluggish poor relation was small consolation for a team that had played out of their skins on the night.

We left Parkhead with a lingering feeling of anti climax. The night had been encapsulated by a breathless tangible sense of exhilaration that had swept along the crowd as the match's flow brought each and every one of us to new emotional planes.

With the crowds pouring out on to London road the general mood was of subdued triumph. I felt shattered. Celtic had fought as warriors. They had won as heroes. Lost as champions. The future seemed very bright.

- Hail! Hail!



Outreach Update

As you know the Outreach Society is coming along really well this year. We have plenty of new enthusiastic members and all the projects are doing great. The kids clubs are a great success. A lot of members are travelling to South hill community school today for a Christmas party. Santa is also making a guest appearance. Plenty of fun and games are in store for the kids. This project is helping many kids who are struggling with their reading and writing abilities. Then, of course we have the Enable Ireland project. Thanks to all who are being a great help to Derek accompanying him to and from lectures and providing a bit of company for him. Today we are having a Flag day in aid of the meningitis association of Ireland so please give generously as this is a disease

that could affect anyone especially students. The Ronan O'Keeffe fund has increased to an enormous amount. Between Bungee jumps, Docs and Soul Clinic as well as generous donations from friends, fellow students, clubs, societies and lecturers Ronan's family will be receiving a nice Christmas present this year. This will be very helpful in trying to accommodate his needs. Thanks to everyone who contributed.

Greek week certainly won't be forgotten. The week was a huge success and all the money raised went to various charities. There was a Flag Day for the blind as well as bungee jumps, which went towards another charity. The parade was great fun for all

involved, as was the carnival. I'm sure the students of UL will be remembered for the time they devoted to raising money for charity during this week.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everybody involved in Outreach for all the hard work they put in during the semester. A great sense of achievement should be felt by all. Also good luck to everyone going on co-op next semester and bon voyage to those of you on Erasmus. Bonne chance to all doing exams. Just remember all that hard slog-ging and all-nighters will pay off in the end.

Cheers!!



Thank God for chips

As many of us found out the stable diet of a Fianna Failer was chips until the climax of the Ogra Fianna Fail annual conference in Kinsale, a Saturday banquet after which minister for health, Michael Martin gave a rousing speech. The conference proved to be an extraordinary success with Sarah Devitt, the chairperson of the U.L. Cumann elected as a third level representative for Munster.

So on Friday the 23rd of November a mini bus pulled up to the stables courtyard at 4 o'clock to bring the Con Colbert Cumann of U.L. to Kinsale Co.Cork. Yes, we could smoke on the bus we were informed. No, there was no heating on the bus. So, after a journey of about 2 hours in what proved to be much of a glorified hi-ace, (but let me add that the bus

driver was one of the soundest bus drivers we had ever met) we reached Dempseys hostel in Kinsale. After being allocated our rooms, we set off for Kinsale to check out the nightlife. After one quick half minute of checking we set off for the hotel where the different delegates were giving their speeches for election. This was followed by a disco which was enjoyed by all lovers of Mark McCabe and Maniac 2000. As can be guessed the majority of the Cumann staged a successful protest as the next night we were treated to much more of a 'Doc's' collection.

The next morning the elections for Ogra Fianna Fail positions around the country took place. After much of a nail biting finish Sarah Devitt was elected as a Munster repre-

sentative. We all returned to the hostel to put on our shirts, ties and aftershave? Some of the lads seemed to think they would score at a party political conference? Did any of them? That is still to be debated and after much of a hectic night we finally returned to our hostel at a time approaching 06.30 in the morning. A great time was had by all.

Tricon proves a great success

Tricon kicked off on Friday the 30th of November and over the weekend there was an attendance of over 100 people from such far flung places as Maynooth, UCD and Cork, as well as Limerick.

There were a variety of things on during Tricon; from movie showings to roleplaying games but the Sci-Fi Weakest Link was one of the most attention-grabbing events of the convention. Due to the luck of the draw, 4 out of the 5 contestants were from UCD, but keeping up the end for UL was ex-Tenforward president, Niall McGlade. Niall was the strongest link in the first two rounds, but he was soon voted off for the simple reason he wasn't from UCD! The man called Jibus walked away with the prizes in the end, picking up a Tricon t-shirt and two sets of Star Wars light guns. The Tricon cake was not won, much to the dismay of the Tricon organisers (hehehe).

The most popular things screened over the weekend were the new episodes of Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Enterprise, Dragon Half and the Manga Entertainment films Blood the Last Vampire, End of Evangelion and Akira.

G-Soc's roleplaying games proved to be quite interesting, especially the Star Wars game, "A Disturbance in the Force" and AD&D. The LAN party, which was held in the Students Union, also went well and Fragnet also organised a great night out in the Scholars function room on the Saturday.

Retro video gaming ran throughout the convention, with machines ranging from the SNES to the Binatone Games Master Mark IV, a machine made in 1978 whose only game is 2 player Pong because AI hadn't been invented yet. There was also massive interest in the Dreamcast tournament, where the prize was the Dreamcast itself (donated by Big Ben Interactive) with games Virtua Tennis 2 and Marvel vs. Capcom. The very easy to pick up and play Virtua Tennis 2 was the tournament game of choice, and after much cursing and victory dancing, it was won in the end by UL student Brian Fitzgerald. Tenforward president and regular An Focal contributor (don't forget to read this paper's excellent problem page!) Barry Cronin was valiantly defeated in the second round, which of course was a complete fluke.



tion was excellent and the general consensus was that pretty much everybody who went had a good time. There were stands there from Manga Entertainment and our lovely regular sponsors, Hollywood Empire. While the convention was overshadowed slightly by the robbery (which you can read about elsewhere in the paper), that's not what it should be remembered for.

The Tricon organisers would like to thank our sponsors Hollywood Empire, The Scholars Bar, The Plaza Café and Manga Entertainment. We would also like to thank everyone who helped organise and run the event, give yourselves a pat on the back!



The overall atmosphere of people at the conven-

The Irish Peace Society

On Wednesday of Week 10, the Irish Peace Society held a seminar on the experiences of an Irish army officer as a UN Peacekeeping officer. This coincided with the withdrawal of Irish troops from the Lebanon. The seminar was presented by Commdt. Edward Horgan, a retired Irish army officer with twenty-two years experience. He outlined his experiences as a peacekeeping officer, first on duty with the Irish army, and then after retirement as a civilian UN peacekeeper.

He spoke of the successes and failures of peacekeeping missions that ranged from the Middle East to Chechnya and East Timor. The danger that Irish officers face when on missions was clearly described when spoke of the death of a fellow officer after his jeep drove over a bomb killing all aboard. He himself had a similar experience, only luckily the bomb failed to detonate. Overall the seminar provided for an interesting evening for all who attended.

The United Nations Peacekeeping forces have received international acclaim for their services in war torn regions but Mr. Horgan also pointed out that at times their performance has not been as good as it should be. He cited the

example of Srebrenica where the international community under the auspices of the United Nations allowed bloody massacre to take place. In doing so the UN failed to live up to its commitment of peacekeeping. This view concurs with the views of Tom Hyland of the Ireland East Timor Action group. He gave the UN activities in East Timor a pass grade for their presence in East Timor but also pointed out that the UN are the only show in town.

The Irish Peace Society in the near future will hold lectures on the conflict in Palestine with the PLO representative to Ireland Mr. Yuseef A'lan speaking; and also a seminar on the human rights activities of the EU, with Mr. John Cushmanan FG MEP speaking. These will occur early next semester. The Irish Peace Society is also planning a trip to the Former Yugoslavia from the 21st to the 28th of January 2002. A seminar will be held on return to share our experiences and thoughts on the expedition.



MEP John Cushmanan

"WAR AGAINST TERRORISM"

UL LABOUR YOUTH – NOT IN OUR NAME...



By Katherine Harford

To put this in context for you all in UL—it was the end of week 10 that for many of us saw the confirmation of our fears, anger and frustration as well as unity and dedication.

Contrary to seemingly popular belief the "war against terrorism" is far from over. Do we honestly think that talks in Bonn will see an immediate, final solution? That a broad based Government for Afghanistan could be agreed upon not just in theory around the table but into practice for the every day life of Afghan citizens? A government that would not include the barbaric oppressive force of the Taliban, but would include the barbaric oppressive force of the Northern Alliance. Indeed this was the week that saw the walk out of the talks of one regional representative. How many more will fall by the way side as Western and Northern Alliance components seek the balance of power.

This was the week that experienced the most careless, blundering action of the war so far, which took place in **Mazer-e-Sharif**. Up to 600 Taliban Prisoners from various countries held in the Qala-I-Jhangi castle were brutally and unrelentlessly penetrated to death. "We are certain that they are dead. But we will explode a few more rockets to be sure." These were the words of Commander Din Mohammad as the killing of the final two prisoners came to a shameful conclusion. Shameful in that the massacre appears to have been provoked by the CIA, participated by the Northern Alliance and US and British forces overhead.

In response to the incident **Michael D Higgins T.D.** appealed to the Dail to suspend the order of business so that the legislation regarding the International Criminal Court be brought forward. When faced with a brick wall, and deemed out of order, Higgins replied "what is out of order is taking of shoes and gold teeth fillings from prisoners who are being slaughtered." – details of which came to light as the persistence of brave journalists in giving a clearer picture in an otherwise highly propagated and one-sided account of the war. Higgins was subsequently



suspended from the Dail. –It seems opposition voices are not welcome, nor respected in our "democratic" institutions.

His was certainly not the only Irish voice to express such condemnation this week: **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights**, Mary Robinson called for a full inquiry, not least because of the breach of the Geneva Convention and the violent and impunitive culture that persists in Afghanistan. Again the response was a brick wall: Jack Straw, the British Foreign Secretary suggested that an inquiry into such a complex situation was in conceivable!

This week indications were given by the Bush administration as looking to Iraq as its next target. A place where 5,000 children die every week, with over ten years of sanctions already enforced. Will all this defiance and penetration eradicate international terrorism? Will the already dwindling support of citizens and states continue, as Bin Laden remains out of reach and even Spain refusing to hand over its terrorist suspects.

Moreover, back down to us and you: **Labour Youth** have been involved consistently and coherently in the Irish Anti-War Movement, from the beginning of Western combined action up to this week and will continue to do so until the aggression stops.

For us action started when we took part in the first peace vigil at **Shannon Airport**, organised by the Shannon Peace Alliance. Not only was there expression of Anti War sentiment but also to the use of Irish air space and airports by US warplanes, which in turn compromises Irish neutrality, security and commitment to peace, which around the world is held in high regard.

In conjunction L.Y. ran a petition condoning both the attacks in America and the subsequent military action in Afghanistan. Pointing to the need of the Afghan people of "aid not bombs" the petition was sent to Bertie Ahern and was signed by 20% of the student population. Although receiving acknowledgment by the secretary's office, the Taoiseach has yet to read the demands. Perhaps he

will wait until he realises the election potential like that of the **MOX** facility at Sellafield!

Delegates then joined the Environmental Society in first supporting the people of Derry who are trying to rid the town of **Raytheon**, the third largest arms manufacturer in the world, and who are currently supplying tomahawk missiles in the current war. Then we joined forces with many groups, and organised by Scottish CND and the Faslayne Peace camp to blockade the **Trident Nuclear Submarine Base** at Faslayne, Scotland. This was a colourful and united protest bringing together people from all walks of life adding to the success of the blockade.

During **Labour Youth** Conference, the UL branch helped to ensure those motions for neutrality and the use of International Court of Justice were upheld, while motions for re-evaluation of neutrality and America's right to respond to terrorism in this manner, were rejected. But at the end of week 10, on Saturday 1st December, as 200 civilians in an Afghan village were killed, two Labour Youth delegates joined the **Irish Anti-War Movement** for an afternoon of protest in Dublin city centre. Again this



was a noisy, colourful and vibrant occasion with approximately 2000 people from all over the country taking part. Traffic was stopped the length of O'Connell Street, as marching, singing, drumming, dancing and speaking took place. Speakers such as Patricia McKenna MEP addressed the crowd, as did many non-political representatives, creating a perfect balance. Many highlighted the need to an immediate end to war and the implications of hasty anti terrorist legislation sweeping across Europe, which in some cases has taken form of conviction without trial – a serious breach of fundamental human rights. It was encouraging to see at the end of a sad and frustrating week points of which have been here highlighted, the coming together of people, friends we have previously met at Shannon, at Conference,



Derry and Faslayne. Showing that as a commitment this war by US and British Forces continue so too is the commitment by others to end it.

Labour Youth would like to wish you all a happy, safe and peaceful Christmas and New Year. If you would like to join us this continuous campaign or any other including, tenancy rights and trade union membership please contact us at

Labour_ul@hotmail.com

The photographs are images of the various protests and delegates.

The following are other useful websites and addresses of contacts we have made along the way.

Labour Party
www.labour.ie

Irish Anti-War Movement
www.irishantiwar.org

Campaign to end Iraq Sanctions, Ireland
www.endiraqsanction.net

NGO Peace Alliance
ngopa@eircom.net

UL environmental Society
evirn@csn.ul.ie



UL Students Attend Protest in Sellafield

Irish Concern voiced at Sellafield
Claire Shaughnessy

As our bus closed to Dun Laoghaire one could feel an intense sensation of gathering momentum. It was never going to be a mundane journey; last minute phone calls triggered spontaneous reaction from friends and colleagues as they dropped everything and raced to the Dublin port to join us. As the last few tagalongs spilled onto the bus, red faced and puffing, the crowd erupted into an almighty cheer, we were ready to go!

On route to an anti-nuclear and more precisely anti-MOX protest at the controversial Sellafield Nuclear reprocessing plant combined interest drew these individuals to the fifty-four-seater focus of Irish concern.

I had earlier, naively presumed that I would be accompanying a group consisting exclusively of herbalised eco-warriors on this my first international assignment for my university newspaper. However while some did adhere to the stereotype appearance I couldn't help feeling that my preconceived notions had cheated me.

The diversity on the bus could tell me that... a collaboration of dedicated environmentalists, detached journalists, a prominent politician and individuals from all walks of life representing the nearest thing to a cross section of Irish society that you can think of, certainly not the bunch of crusties I had imagined.

Sleep and Walkman were soon left redundant as stories flowed. I found myself instantly absorbed by the colourful spectrum of characters. Ranging from peaceful protestor to aspiring anarchist each had their own interests and stories. I became intrigued by their diverse experiences, morals and mindsets... arrests in Scotland, traumatised memories of the blitz on the Media Centre in Genoa, why would anyone want to immerse themselves in such volatile situations? "It's all about publicity and raising awareness, if we ignore problems that concern us they can never go away" said Edel a UL student and active member of the university's environmental society.

Though psyched by such reason extremists in the group soon undermined my personal enthusiasm, debating conspiracy theory and calling for "direct action" I realised this is why more Irish people don't get involved in environmental protest. The stigma attached is often justified by the detrimental actions of a minority. Instead of acting against something bad for a common good they have to fuck things up by getting political.

After a midnight check in with customs and a wrong turn somewhere along the way we were two hours behind schedule, but with the all clear at Hollyhead and navigational problems reconciled we were soon back on track. As the sun rose over the majestic Cumbrian horizon it was hard to believe I was approaching Sellafield. The rolling hills and green pastures made the land-

scape difficult to comprehend. It made me feel ill, I think it was more disturbing to see the sinister monstrosity of Sellafields smoking towers in the midst of such beauty than if we had come across the most barren of radioactive wastelands.

It wasn't long before we were at the gates, the all singing, sign waving, slogan shouting, drum banging protesters, clad in green t-shirts and boiler suits for the occasion let workers know the Irish had arrived in a colourful protest outside the East Gate of the factory. Good-humoured police officials then escorted us the two-mile trek to the Main Gate of the plant. Seemingly content with their duty for the day the officers chatted openly and honestly with the protestors and the media along the way. Many commented that although they could not voice their concern while in uniform they are aware of the problems that exist in Sellafield. Others explained that they had always lived in the region and don't know anything different "Sellafield is just another place to live, BNFL provide jobs and local investment, the plant never bothered me". Wondering what the police thought of protests at Sellafield Sergeant Brian Gorman gave a sympathetic opinion "as people become more aware of issues that concern them they want and have a right to protest".

The singing and dancing continued at the main gate where local radio and TV stations were eager to interview Trevor Sargeant, leader of the Green party who accompanied the protestors. In the interviews Mr Sargeant reiterated the fact that the group is "not against the workers, but for the kind of future that will benefit us all". With over 10,000 people directly employed by BNFL at the plant many workers were less than receptive of the view.

However while talking to an ex-employee of the plant it appears that not all of the workers are satisfied with BNFL's approach. When I asked what he thought of the opening of the new MOX reprocessing development the retired man quickly retorted, "They can't look after what they've got!!" The project, which has received a huge amount of press in Ireland over recent months, has not received the same coverage in local or British media the man revealed.

I was also curious about how the locals and BNFL officials perceived the threat of a terrorist attack since the events of September 11th. "We just get on with our lives, what else can we do", it appears that little is being done to avert the threat, although an anti-terrorist law was passed by the British Government last week preventing the publication of aerial photographs of potential targets such as Sellafield there are no physical back-up plans evident. When asked what measures should be taken a local MP said that he believed the French government "overreacted" by placing military weapons around their nuclear reprocessing and power plants, and yet hypocritically this politician refuses to live in the vicinity of Sellafield.

The protests passed peacefully and as morning turned to afternoon we travelled to a picturesque

hotel where we met local campaigner Janine Allis-Smith of CORE (Combrians Oppose to Radioactive Environment). She told of her love affair with Combria, which brought her to live here in the 1960's. It was when her son Lee became ill with Leukaemia at the age of twelve that she first started campaigning against Sellafield. Listening to her heartache it was evident that frustration had tired this lady. With cancer levels in the region ten times the national average it is impossible to understand why it is so difficult for her to gain support. Why do the majority of Combrians prefer to stay blind to reality while their health is being jeopardised?

Wanting to take that very question to the streets of Whitehaven, the local town, we were informed that we might not be well received by the locals. With Friday drinking bouts common in the town and habitants anti anything anti-sellafield at the best of times it was advised that we should visit the town under police escort.

Having picked the subtlest of signs for a delicate situation "HELP US SHUT DOWN SELLAFIELD" the group converged in the town centre for a candle lit vigil. The poignant protest set to Irish music provoked much hostility from the towns' residents. Detached from the group I mingled through the crowd in an effort to extract local opinion. With explicit in abundance the prominent sentiment went something like "fuckin paddies, wanting to turn this place into a ghost town. Go home ye Irish fuckers!"

When Trevor Sargeant approached one such aggressor to clarify that the Irish want to help the people of Combria to find an alternative means it emerged ironically that the man was head of the AEEU trade union at Sellafield. He had also just received a promotion, heading a new BNFL environmental impact committee at the plant. Unaware of whom he was talking to the man proceeded to voice his opinion in a hostile manner. The candle bearing Mr Sargeant listened attentively to what the man had to say before congratulating him on his new promotion. Biding his time he then coolly introduced himself "Trevor Sargeant, Minister of Parliament in Ireland, MEP and leader of the Irish Green party, I look forward to working

with you in the near future" With a shocked look on his face the man retreated from lion to pussy cat in a matter of seconds as a smug Mr Sargeant warmly received the gentleman's adapted approach to the issues.

With adrenaline high and plans to come back in December we returned to where we began, the forty-four-seater focus of concern passed once again over the sea it wishes to conserve. With no such thing as a starfish left off the East coast of Ireland how can anyone defend the pollution of the Irish Sea by BNFL's toxic waste? If it can turn a starfish into a blob fish, imagine what it will do to us...



Campus News

PHOTO AT XMAS PARTY DEEMED A SUCCESS *

A photograph of Johnno, Anne-Marie, Barry, & Majella taken at a pre-Xmas Daze house party in 46379 Dromroe Village came out magnificently last Monday, with some even going so far as to describe it as "amazing".

The sleek, 4x6 photograph is widely regarded as the finest on the entire 24-shot roll.

The photograph was developed in the newly opened University Pharmacy, where the laboratory assistant was instantaneously impressed.

"When I initially saw the photo I was gobsmacked!", said the laboratory assistant. "We expect a lot of party photos here, especially at Christmas, but this one is truly something special."

While the subjects have promised, even pinky-sworn, to make copies of the photograph for a growing number of their friends and acquaintances, several observers are sceptical.

"When a photograph comes out successfully, doubles are often promised," said Cici Mc Kodak, director of the University of Limerick Institute for Photographic and Picturesque Studies. "Extremely rarely, nonetheless, are these copies actually delivered."

When "An Focal" questioned Anne-Marie whether she would follow through on her promise she replied, "Most definitely!"

For all the tributes that the photograph has brought Johnno, Anne-Marie, Barry, & Majella, the four are not resting on their laurels: Should the opportunity arise again over the Christmas/New Year period, they said they would not hesitate to pose together again.

EQUINE SCIENCE STUDENTS QUESTION EXISTENCE OF SANTA *

A group of Equine Science students are currently undertaking numerous tests to determine the truth behind well-

known Christmas carol "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer." The students of horse science have previously expanded their equine studies and questioned the existence of Black Beauty, The Lone Ranger's Silver, and more controversially, to determine the breed of Goofy.

This experiment is more hazardous though, as the happiness of millions of children depend on it.

A rowdy mob of children from local primary schools has been witnessed outside the main gates of the University. When questioned by "An Focal" they exclaimed that they were "so mad I could scream" that somebody was trying to prove that Santa Claus could not exist without the help of his reindeers.

One 7-year-old child, named Timmy, goes on to say, "I wish it could be Christmas every day but if these stoopid ass UL students try to tell us that Santa isn't real just because reindeer can't fly and he'd need about 3 years to get to all the kids in the world I'll.....I'll tell my Mom!"

Though this is an extremely controversial issue, especially with Christmas approaching, the students are determined to establish the truth behind this Christmas myth. The question playing mostly on their minds is that if Santa Claus does not deliver all those Christmas presents every year, where do they come from?

STRAY E-MAILS REHOUSED FOR CHRISTMAS *

Stray e-mails could shortly have new homes just in time for the Festive period when a cyber-version of a dog pound is launched by the ITD here in the University of Limerick.

It is unfortunately believed that countless e-mail messages go to unused or redundant addresses in the college each year.

"People who don't get many messages will be able to view the stray messages, choose a really adorable one and give it a new home and lots of love just in time for Christmas" said Phil Bates, ITD project manager of the new scheme.

The stray e-mails will be available for viewing in the Fishtank from the beginning of Week 12.

The idea has caught on in the U.K. also, well-known and widely loved all round good guy, Rolf Harris is allegedly

in negotiations to host a spin-off television series "E-mail Hospital" in which stray messages with broken links or missing attachments are nursed better. It is expected that the Christmas special will obtain around 2 million viewers.

ENGLISH DEPARTMENT EXPECT FIRST YEAR ESSAY BEFORE CHRISTMAS *

A wave of expectation has swept through the University's English Department in anticipation of the arrival of the debut essay from an unnamed student. Following the granting of extensions the essay examining Yeats's poetry will be handed into a pigeonhole at the end of the week with exhilaration among the academic community approaching "fever pitch".

"When the student first missed the deadline I knew that we were looking at something unique", said an English professor. "The student e-mailed me to say that he was so caught up in his research he'd failed to remember when the essay was due", explained the professor. "I could ascertain that he was close to a major breakthrough".

After granting the extension, the professor began counting down the days until the essay would arrive. The professor would prove to be disappointed. "I hurried to my pigeonhole at 5.01 pm, but it was empty. I was crushed".

Another extension was granted but the professor exclaimed that if he didn't receive the essay before Christmas he didn't think he could bear waiting until New Year to read it.

Although the student could not be contacted when attempted by "An Focal", sources claim that his notes at present read: "Yeats, Irish poet."

* report may be slightly embellished.



Nite-Link Buses

New late hours

Stables: 7.00pm / 7.30pm / 8.00pm / 8.30pm / 9.00pm / 9.30pm / 10.00pm / 10.30pm

Library: 11.00pm / 11.30pm / 12.00am / 12.30am

Free Service

Got Problems? - Barry and Karen can help!

Hi Barry and Karen.

From meeting you I got the impression you were genuinely nice people so maybe you can help me with my problem. I got involved in a relationship with a girl @ the start of the semester while she's a lovely person I'm not actually attracted to her. It's the first relationship either of us has had. She's very plain and a bit fat. I know exactly how superficial and cruel I am and it doesn't really concern me. However she's a nice unchallenging person and so am I. If I don't break up with her there's a real danger this could turn into a "long term relationship" and I'm not even attracted to her. She's going on Co-op next semester and I'm not. What would be least damaging to her?

- 1 Break up with her right now telling the complete truth
- 2 Break up with her as she goes on Co-op saying I can't be alone for 6+ months
- 3 Let her come back from Co-op to find I have a girlfriend
- 4 Same as above except tell her "I'm sorry, it's over" as soon as I get into another relationship
- 5 Any suggestions?

Oh and what do I do if she doesn't get Co-op?

Signed
Selfish Bastard
who knows he is
and doesn't care

Barry: These kinds of questions are always tough to answer. If you want to break up with her, I would have to go with option 1, but there's no need to be blunt or mean about it e.g. don't say to her "I am breaking up with you because you are plain and a bit fat". I think if you are going to end a relationship, you should always be honest with the other person as to why you are doing it. If you don't they will cop it and they'll be tormenting themselves for ages trying to figure out the reasons for breaking up.

Karen: I think there is a big difference between cruelty and honesty. Sometimes people get into relationships and realise that they should have just remained friends. It sounds like this could be your situation. Barry's right, go with option 1, but be sensitive to her feelings. Neither of you have done any-

thing wrong in being who you are, you're just not compatible together and therefore you should do the right thing by both of you and end it (gently).



Dear Barry and Karen,
I have been with my boyfriend for about six months now and we have a very healthy relationship. Sexually, we couldn't be more compatible and have tried experimenting in loads of different ways! Leather, sex toys, vegetables; you name it. The other day, however, he has asked me for a menage-a-trois with my sister. I'm not completely sure what this means, but I don't think I want to involve my sister in my sex life. It feels wrong (even though I've always had a bit of a thing for his dad...) and I'm not sure what to do. Please help?
Mary I.

Barry: If your sister is ugly, don't do it. Nobody wants to have sex with ugly people. Hahahahaha! By the way, I am not ugly.

Karen: Only agree, if he agrees to one with his dad. Fair is fair after all.

Dear Karen and Barry,
I am 19 years old, female, and have a few but not loads of friends. I am very close to another girl in my year, and we hang out nearly every weekend. One Saturday, we went on a cycling trip into the country just the two of us, and had a picnic in a secluded valley. We were playing a game of chase, when she (my friend) slipped and I fell on her. Shortly after, we found ourselves practically naked entwined together. We had lesbian sex...
I feel really guilty now and don't

know what to do, but we remain close friends too but feel it's all bottled up.

Please tell me will I be arrested or in trouble? Is it okay to experiment with people you love? I am so worried.

Barry: Yes indeed, lesbianism is illegal. If you need a place to experiment further, you are always welcome to hide in my bedroom. Just drop your name and number into the SU and I'll be sure to sort you out.

Karen: Is entwining painful? Now that you've fuelled Barry's fantasies for the next five minutes, you might like to listen to the voice of reason. If it feels right, go with it. As long as you are both consenting adults and not hurting each other (don't bite unless you're asked to!), then continue, if either of you are uncomfortable then talk about it. You may want to check out the movie "Bound".



If you've got a problem, no matter how big or small you can contact the A-Team, sorry I mean Barry and Karen at adviceanfocal@hotmail.com

An Focal

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Happy Christmas To everyone from ULSU!



An Focal
will return in 2002

How's the form [ODEI5] ?

We all have the right to be free from discrimination when accessing goods services facilities accommodation and education. The Equal Status Act 2000 gives you the right to seek redress from discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation including gays,lesbian,bisexual,transsexual and heterosexual people. Other grounds protected included gender and transgender, age, race, religion, disability, membership of the Traveller Community and marital and family status.

All claims of discrimination will be heard free of charge by the Office of the Director of Equality Investigations (ODEI). You can represent yourself or get a friend or community organisation to assist.

In order to make a valid claim you must first fill out form ODEI5. The form can be downloaded from the website www.odei.ie.

The Equality Authority has produced a video designed to assist people fill out Form ODEI 5 correctly. The Video is available free of charge from The Equality Authority.

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Breakfasts 9am to 11.30am
Lunches 12 noon to 4pm
Evening Meals 5pm to 7pm

**The Scholars Club
would like to wish
everyone a Very
Happy Christmas
and New Year!**

**Thanks to everyone
who helped raise
£3000 for Charity
over the 2 day
experience that was
Christmas Daze**

Champions League Listings etc. on
www.scholarsclub.ie



**DOLAN'S
WAREHOUSE**

Thur. Dec. 13th

KILA

doors: 9pm tickets: £8 Students: £7

Fri. Dec. 14th

ASLAN

doors: 9pm tickets: £12

Wed. Dec. 19th

RELISH

doors: 9pm tickets: £9.50 Students: £8

Thur. Dec. 20th

WOODSTAR

doors: 9pm tickets: £6

Fri. Dec. 21st

THE UNDERTONES

doors: 9pm tickets: £13

Tuesday nights: Students Only

Live Band followed by club

doors: 9pm students: £3

Thursday nights: Soul Clinic doors: 12am tickets: £7 students: £6

Friday 28th Dec.: Audio featuring Kerri Chandler doors: 12am tickets: £12.50

Coming in December: The Undertones 21st, Escapade 26th, Catch a Fire 29th, The Hitchers 30th and many more.....

Tickets available in advance from: Dolan's Pub, 3/4 Dock Rd, Limerick
061-314483 / info@dolanspub.com / www.dolanspub.com