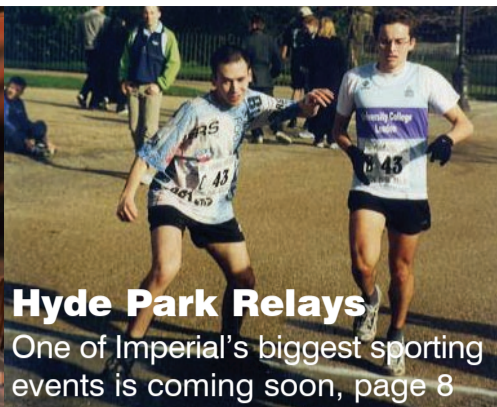




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Felix



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Babar Ahmad writes

The imprisoned ex-student and staff member writes exclusively for *Felix*.

In his article, Mr Ahmad expresses his gratitude to all those supporting him and insists: "I am not a terrorist and I have not done anything wrong or illegal."

Imperial College Union is campaigning against Mr Ahmad's extradition to the US under terror accusations.

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Tsunami appeal

Imperial College students and staff have raised over £2500 for the victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami.

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Global killer

Felix Science looks at the threat of tuberculosis and how it can be countered.

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Hip hop hits hard

Felix heads to the legendary Fabric once more.

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Sport

News of a fantastic victory for the Virgins. Plus the Disc Doctors and the City and Guilds rugby team.

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The Virgins, Imperial's women's rugby team

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Pay problems for student staff

By **Dave Edwards**
Editor

Students who work part time for Imperial College have suffered serious problems receiving their pay in recent months.

Despite opposition from the Union, weekly pay was scrapped last term, with the College imposing a monthly pay system on all student staff. Proposed compensation payments and cash advances have been slow in reaching many workers suffering financial hardship, while others have been paid incorrect amounts.

A considerable proportion of Imperial students work for the College part time, in areas such as Conferences, ICT, Southside bar and the students' union. For many, the work is an essential part of student life, without which they would be unable to fund their education.

Malcolm Aldridge, the College's Financial Controller, said that the change from weekly to monthly pay had been made for two main reasons. Firstly, he said, "in time, it will enable us to save money on payroll processing". Secondly, "quite a large proportion of the student labour force are also recipients of student bursaries", which are paid monthly, and there were problems co-ordinating these with weekly pay.

One student worker told *Felix*: "If I needed money [in the past], I could do some work and have the money in my pocket the next week. Now I may have to wait six weeks to get paid."

Mr Aldridge responded: "There are some places in central London that would pay you within days, but the overwhelming majority of employees in this country are paid on a monthly cycle."

Morten Olesen, an aeronautics student, recently quit working in the Union bar. He said: "The straw that broke

the camel's back was the pay issue. I didn't see the point in signing up for regular shifts if I couldn't expect regular pay.

"Although I do understand it is much cheaper for the College to run a monthly scheme, they run the risk of losing a lot more part time student staff as a consequence of this change."

Mr Aldridge said: "If we had serious difficulty in recruiting, we would have to look at this again... [but] large numbers of students still want to work for the College."

Another part time worker, a chemistry undergraduate, told *Felix*: "I was supposed to be paid on a Thursday, but on the Wednesday they suddenly told me I wouldn't be paid for three weeks. This job

"The College run the risk of losing part time student staff..."

is supposed to be tailored to students. The people working here have money problems, and this is making things even harder."

Many employees who worked in December will not be paid for that month until February. Mustafa Arif, President of Imperial College Union, said this was "unacceptable" and offered cash advances to his staff. Mr Aldridge said: "I agree, it is unreasonable," and went on to explain that this was due to problems with the installation of new management software.

Mr Arif outlined the Union's position: "The pay situation is causing hardship for students and headaches for managers. I think the College have now accepted that there is a problem, and I hope we can resolve it quickly."

He added: "The most galling aspect of this saga is that



Short on cash: this bar worker is just one of the hundreds of part time student staff at Imperial College who have been affected by recent payroll problems

whilst students have been moved to monthly pay, non-student casuals are still being paid weekly."

A number of student workers have already told *Felix* that they have not been paid

for several months. Others have been given the wrong amount. Some have also complained about incorrect tax deductions, a lack of communication from the College Finance department, insuffi-

cient amounts of compensation and a lack of advance notice about the transition from weekly to monthly pay.

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Felix

Issue 1311

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NEWS

Students raise thousands for tsunami appeal

By Siddharth Singh
RAG spokesperson

The City and Guilds office, having become the headquarters for Imperial students' tsunami appeal, is resonating with the sound of our brand new coin counting contraption.

As I write, RAG chair Chris Jackson has just announced the arrival of 32 more tins full of money. The students and staff at Imperial College have come out in full force to support this venture. The medics have had a bar night at the Reynolds, and all clubs and societies have taken it upon themselves to collect as much money as they can, at the same time raising their own profile.

Islamic Society has apparently raised about £700 in a single meeting, and the Sri Lanka and Tamil societies have been involved in cross-campus collections along with the Thai and Malaysian societies.

At the moment, more than a 120 tins are in circulation in and around College, in halls of residence and bars. To date, we have collected £2591.49. So if you see a tin, empty your pockets, please! This is a catastrophe that needs a sustained effort and is more than just the flavour of the season.

To all those directly involved in the collection, you are doing a worthy service and should continue your efforts.

If anyone else wants to get involved, contact RAG (rag@ic.ac.uk) or walk into the City & Guilds office, room 340 in mechanical engineering, and take a collecting tin. For those who have tins, it might be a good idea to return them any time this week.

We need volunteers to get involved and to continue raising money. More opportunities will arise in RAG Week, scheduled from 7 to 11 February. Get involved!

Make the College contribute

By Colin Smith
Imperial College Union
Welfare Campaigns Officer

The generosity from ordinary people all over Britain in response to the disastrous effects of the Asian tsunami has been remarkable, with many millions of pounds having already been donated. In stark contrast, the current government figure still only stands at the equivalent of five and a half days' spending on occupying Iraq.

There is a similar contrast within Imperial College. The response from students has

been fantastic, with the total raised currently standing at around £2500 and set to rise further. In response to this, a motion will be presented to Union Council on Tuesday 18 January, resolving to do two things.

Firstly, the paper will demand that the College, with all its money and sponsorship deals with oil and pharmaceutical companies, donates ten times the final amount raised by students. As it stands, that would be an extra £25,000.

Secondly, it will demand that our Rector, Sir Richard Sykes, gives the same proportion of his income to the appeal as the students have. The average donation from students seems to be around £2. Given that the non-means-tested loan for home students in London is £3,790 per year, and given that the 27 February 2004 issue of *Felix* reported Sir Richard accepting a pay rise to take his annual salary to £251,000, he would have to give approximately £126.

Anyone wishing to lend their support to the motion by seconding it should email me at cs602@ic.ac.uk.



One of dozens of collecting tins doing the rounds at Imperial, raising money for the appeal

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Business

business.felix@ic.ac.uk

US deficit dips further

As the US current account deficit reaches record levels, **Numaan Chaudhry** explains why it may not be such a bad thing after all

A lot of the papers seem to talk about the US current account deficit with great emotions and anxiety. But the fact is, over a quarter of that deficit is as a result of US-based companies operating in countries abroad.

True, the US seems to have an insatiable appetite for imports and currently has a particularly low savings rate. US policy-makers have considered many options to counter this, including giving tax breaks for exporters to make their products more competitive in a global marketplace, renegotiating bilateral trade agreements to suppress trade barriers, pushing for the Chinese government to let the market dictate the price of the Yuan and limiting imports, especially oil and gas, by instigating energy-saving programmes.

But the benefits of US companies operating outside of their home market are tremendous, including creating enormous values for consumers, corporations and shareholders.

Today, nearly 25% of US multinational profits come from foreign subsidiaries. This adds roughly \$2.7 trillion dollars to their market capitalisation, bringing great benefits to shareholders, the vast majority of whom are household consumers. Expanding into foreign markets and restructuring operations internationally can make multinationals more productive and more competitive, which would in turn allow corporations to offer consumers lower prices and better quality and, in the long run, add jobs at home. This last step is achieved because multinationals will have greater funds to invest in development opportunities, and for this, recruiting will be inevitable.

This trade between foreign affiliates, offshore subsidiaries of US-based corporations, and US companies and consumers will grow in the years to come as companies continue to expand their global sales, production and sourcing operations into emerging markets.

Any negative net impact on the trade balance must therefore be weighed against the economic value created from these activities. It's very simplistic to assert that the record-breaking US current account deficit is an indicator of a weak economy. Critics of the US deficit need to take a global, rather than a national,



US Federal Reserve chief Alan Greenspan has warned that the deficit in US trade cannot be sustained indefinitely, even though the current account looks set to do so

view. They should consider what is necessary for a prosperous economy rather than one that is heavily indebted.

Among these, the Fiscal deficit does need to shrink to ensure that the US continues to be a magnet for global investment and that the dollar remains a favoured currency. Tax and regulatory policies need to be better co-ordinated across nations so investment decisions are made on grounds of economic efficiency.

The US current account has been consistently in deficit since 1982. Since 1998, however, it's growth has rocketed and has reached levels unseen before, when looked at as a percentage of GDP, exceeding 5%.

One problem with the way the current account deficit is measured, however, is that it measures just the physical movement of goods either side of the market, regardless of the nationality or ownership of either party. This can cause serious mispercep-

tions as demonstrated by the next example.

When Ford produces its vehicles in Mexico, many are sold to Mexican consumers and this generates income and hence profits for the economy. But an excess of vehicles are made so that they can be shipped back to the US. See the problem? Even though they are produced by a US firm, they are counted as imports.

At the same time, foreign companies such as Toyota and BMW produce goods in the US and some of these are sent abroad to Canada and the links. These are then counted as exports and we end up with a very intricate web of global firms 'importing' and 'exporting' to the US.

In theory, a current account deficit should adjust itself through exchange rates. In this case, a deficit causes the value of the dollar to decline, stimulates exports and reduced imports. However, the US current account defi-

cit has shown no sign of correcting in the past 2 decades, even with the dollar's decline over the past two years.

In the first quarter of 2004, for example, the deficit was 20% higher than in early 2003. Many theories are conjured up as to the reason behind this tumbling deficit; but the main possible reasons include foreign government intervention, problems in US trade agreements, and the rise of multinational organisations.

Many economists agree that the US trade deficit is unsustainable and that adjustment, when it does occur, could be painful. Since the deficit has been at large for over a decade, Alan Greenspan, head of the Federal Reserve, is indeed concerned with the matter and has issued warnings himself. Although he does not predict catastrophe now or in the future, the inevitable adjustment might come in a disruptive form. One such disruption he outlines in a speech in Germany:

"Cumulative deficits, which result in a marked decline of a country's net international investment position – as is occurring in the United States – raise more complex issues."

Basically, a trade deficit needs to be supported by foreigners investing in the US. If, for example, China suddenly became reluctant to do so, the result could be either a sharp rise in interest or a fall in the dollar, which, judging by its current rate, could make its value ridiculously low.

Greenspan points to the US government to tackle the deficits in its finances as one step towards recovery. President Bush, as a result, has said he plans to halve the deficit in the government's finances. But it is evident that the government will continue borrowing. One blatant example of this is the signing in November, by President Bush, of a new law that will allow his government to borrow further \$800bn.

Latest from the Square Mile

Dismal Morrison sales

Morrison, the UK's fourth-largest supermarket chain, reported a poor 0.1% increase in like-for-like sales over the core Christmas period. Despite the £3bn acquisition of Safeway in 2003, Morrison has seen profits fall and its market share drop since then. However, no profit warnings were given and the group said it was 'on track' to meet its expectations for the year.

Store cards get beating

High interest rates and the anti-competitive behaviour of retailers was the focus of attacks by the UK Competition Commission directed at the store card market. Over 90% of this market is controlled by just four organizations: GE Consumer Finance, Creation Financial Services, HSBC and Argos. The commission is angry with the fact that store cards charge an average of ten percentage points higher than standard credit cards. The variation in APRs can reach double digits. Some of the most criticised are:

M&S	18.9%
Argos	25.9%
Habitat	29.0%
BHS	29.0%

UK gilt yields dip

As last December turned out to be the worst Christmas season for a decade, retail sales on the whole fell 0.4% year-on-year. This led two-year gilts, the securest form of bonds that mature in two years, down 0.5 basis points at 4.35%. The Bank of England's monetary policy committee will have a meeting this week regarding interest rates specifically, but there's little chance of the cost of borrowing decreasing. The current level is 4.75%.

PS2 sales dive

Yet another consequence of the poor Christmas season, Game reported a drop of almost one fifth in sales as compared to the same time last year. Sony failing to supply enough PS2s, coupled with weak UK consumer expenditure, led Game to warn that annual sales in 2004 would be lower than in 2003. Sales should be better by mid-2005.

Science

science.felix@ic.ac.uk

TB or not TB: is this a global epidemic?

Humanity's number one enemy is alive and becoming stronger. **Kathryn Loughheed** reports on the threat of tuberculosis and explains how people can go about defeating it

Ask many and they will tell you that tuberculosis (TB) has come back. The sad truth is that it never went away.

This disease has been killing us for thousands of years, with evidence of TB being found in Egyptian mummies dated from 2400BC. Thankfully, we are now a little better equipped in our fight against TB than our ancestors were, as in the last 50 years effective drugs and vaccines have been developed. The 1970s saw Britain arrogantly believe that TB was no longer a threat, but, since the 1980s, the disease has undergone a resurgence, both here and abroad. In fact, the rate of incidence in London has increased so rapidly in the last ten years that the city is now the TB capital of Europe. The TB burden of some North London boroughs, such as Hackney and Newham, is equivalent to that of Russia, China and Brazil – countries that have some of the highest rates in the world.

Around two million people die of TB each year, making it the biggest single infectious disease killer in the world. The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that every second, someone new becomes infected. The causative agent of TB is a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, spread via inhalation of droplets expelled when an individual with the active disease coughs or sneezes. Some of the symptoms that are seen in someone with an active infection are coughing, shortness of breath, fatigue, weight loss and fever.

So how is it that despite the best efforts of so many, the world is still plagued by TB?

The problem is that this bacterium is a lot smarter than it looks. As well as possessing numerous methods to avoid and subvert the host immune system, it also knows when it is not winning and can choose to go into hiding. Somehow the bacterium enters a persistent state in which it does not really do very much; it just waits patiently for its enemy, the immune system, to become compromised. Around one third of the world's population harbour a latent TB infection. This obviously represents a huge reservoir of potentially infectious bacteria and presents a major obstacle to any effort to eradicate the disease. It would be invaluable if we could develop drugs aimed at these persistent bacteria and effectively treat those with latent infections.

Deterioration of the immune

system can often trigger *M. tuberculosis* to make the transition from latent infection to active TB. This weakening can occur through ageing or, increasingly more often, upon infection with HIV.

Only 10% of those infected with TB will go on to develop the active form of the disease during their lifetime, but this percentage increases dramatically in those infected with the HIV virus. In Africa, HIV is the single most important factor in the increase in TB cases observed during the last decade. TB and HIV are a lethal combination, and we cannot hope to beat one without also attacking the other. The huge number of HIV cases in South and East Asia has led to a huge proportion of the total TB cases

"TB and HIV are a lethal combination, and we cannot hope to beat one without also attacking the other."

being found in these countries alone.

It does not help that these people are some of the poorest in the world, and the loss of income associated with TB infection can only increase poverty in these communities. Treating – and, more importantly, preventing – both of these diseases is not exactly easy for low income countries. African leaders recently called for more money for the UN's Global Fund, which fights AIDS, TB and malaria.

An additional problem with the control of TB is the huge number of displaced and needy migrants around the world. This number was estimated at 20 million during 2003 and, according to the WHO, as many as 50% of these people could have TB. These mobile populations pose a problem for the treatment of those infected. Poor living conditions, such as overcrowding, poor nutrition and poor health care, lead to the easy spread of the infectious agent. This appears to be at least part of the reason behind the recent increase in TB cases in London. Many of the identified cases are among immigrants born in countries outside the UK, leading to calls for the compulsory screening of all those planning to reside here. It is a suggestion that has been condemned as extremist, racist and unworkable by some. Screening would most probably save lives and slow the spread of TB, but whether such a policy could ever be



Tuberculosis: 1-2 billion people have the latent infection, 14 million have the active disease, and around 2 million die from it every year

successfully implemented is debatable. Perhaps voluntary screening at GP surgeries and hospitals should be made available to allow those at risk to decide for themselves.

Even when TB sufferers are identified and treated, the next barrier to the fight against this disease is the current vaccines and treatments available. The protec-

"One of the most disturbing trends associated with TB today is the gradual increase in drug resistant strains..."

tion offered by the current BCG vaccine varies greatly throughout populations, and while it is very good at preventing serious childhood TB, adults only have between 0 and 80% protection from the more common pulmonary TB. It comes as a surprise to many that, despite receiving the BCG vaccination, they are still at risk of catching TB. Better education and increased awareness would at least lead to more individuals recognising the symptoms and receiving treatment before the disease spreads and infects more.

One of the most disturbing trends associated with TB today is the gradual increase in drug resistant strains across the world, leading to the possibility that our current methods of treatment will someday become useless. Drug resistance occurs as a

result of evolution. Within a population of bacteria, there will naturally be variants that possess unusual qualities, such as resistance to antibiotics. Treatment with an antibiotic does not itself cause resistance, rather it selects bacteria that are able to tolerate the drug and a 'survival of the fittest' scenario results in resistant variants multiplying to take over the entire population. Multi-Drug Resistant strains (MDR-TB) cannot be treated by at least the two most important anti-TB drugs, Rifampicin and Isoniazid. In response to this problem, 2004 saw Latvia and the WHO jointly open Europe's first centre to fight the spread of MDR-TB.

The emergence of resistant strains is partly as a result of inadequate or incomplete treatment of the disease. It takes around nine months of chemotherapy to completely banish TB, and when many feel better after just a few months, they stop taking the antibiotics. Furthermore, in countries where anti-TB drugs are not readily available, expensive and incorrectly used, complete treatment of infected individuals does not always occur.

The aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières recently stated that drug resistant TB and HIV pose major threats, and they believe that inadequate attempts to control the disease mean it is now spiralling out of control. The charity called for massive investment in the development of new diagnostic tests and drugs.

The problem of drug resistance is not limited to TB. So called 'superbugs' have been well documented in the press, with the public becoming increasingly worried about the hospital-associated MRSA infection. Again, this problem is the result of incorrect use of antibiotics, both in human and veterinary medicine. For many years, there was a culture of taking antibiotics for every cold we became infected with. Doctors were only too happy to prescribe antibiotics, despite the fact that viral infections do not respond to antibiotic treatment and this course of action only results in the strengthening of potentially infectious bacterial populations present in the patient. Doctors have now cut down on the number of prescriptions they write; unfortunately it is too late to prevent the emergence of a number of drug resistant bacterial strains that are much harder to treat.

Treating drug resistant TB takes much longer than treatment of the non-resistant strains, and the drugs are significantly more expensive. Once the drug resistant strains have emerged, they are spread through the air as for non-resistant TB. More and more of the newly detected infections involve these new variants. Therefore, detection of drug resistance is important in the fight against TB as it allows the cocktail of drugs used to treat these infections to be varied as resistance is detected. However, in some seri-

ous MDR-TB cases, antibiotic treatment becomes intolerable and surgery presents a better alternative. The early 20th century saw removal of parts of the infected lung as the only resort for seriously ill TB patients, and it is extremely worrying that the situation today sees us desparately moving back towards this somewhat barbaric method of treatment. Rapid diagnosis of MDR-TB can prevent further people being infected by the sufferers, hopefully slowing the spread of these strains.

Prevention is better than cure when considering drug resistant TB, and worldwide TB control is important. The DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment Short course) programme, implemented by the WHO, is an internationally recognised approach to TB control. It involves government commitment to TB control, better detection of those infected, treatment with high quality drugs, recording and reporting of cases, and supervised taking of the chemotherapy for at least the first two months of treatment.

However, a recent Nature

"...the situation today sees us desparately moving back towards this somewhat barbaric method of treatment."

Medicine paper used mathematical modelling to suggest that MDR-TB will in the future become a major public health threat despite the current attempts at control. Their argument was that despite the lower fitness of many MDR-TB strains compared with the fitter non-resistant strains, the rare emergence of relatively fit MDR-TB strains would be enough to allow these bacteria to eventually out compete the less fit MDR-TB and non-resistant populations. This is obviously an extremely worrying prospect, making the development of new and more effective drugs and vaccines vital.

It appears that drug resistance, HIV and poverty have all played a role in the current TB situation. I personally am amazed by this bacterium that has survived among humans for thousands of years, but when you consider the 16 million people worldwide with active disease, and the one to two billion with a latent infection, eradication of TB cannot come too soon. For the time being, however, it appears that TB is here to stay.

Licensed sex? Human rights violation

By William Gates
Bioengineering department

Following the birth of its 1.3 billionth inhabitant on Thursday, China's birth control measures are as necessary as ever. Their policy of 'one child per family' has already produced a reduction in birth rates, causing the population of the country to be an estimated 300 million people short of what it would have been had there been no restriction. A population peak of 1.46 billion is still expected by 2035.

He stared nonchalantly at his firstborn, a girl. Great, he thought. Tick that box on my license. Then hello life of celibacy, life of chastity, life of the incapacitating vasectomy. He shuddered at the thought. It would be any minute now that the men in the white coats would burst violently into the room, demanding his submission. Because they, after all, will be the ones holding the scalpel. Accidents do happen, they will say. Play along and we might just be extra careful with you.

Did he just glimpse a shadow?

"Don't worry, honey," his wife ventured compassionately. "You could always wear a condom."

A what?

"One of those relics?" he snorted back. "They haven't been in use since the beginning of the century. Get with the times, woman!" Rage and desperation were boiling

within him. Suddenly, the 36 hours of labour she had just endured seemed to be unduly truncated. Melancholically he considered the irony of 'unduly truncated'.

He handed back his diminutive newborn, the symbol of his woes, into the welcoming arms of his wife.

OK, there was definitely a shadow loitering outside the door.

A flash of metal.

Yet this measure has had far-reaching effects. Mothers are increasingly likely to have an abortion if their child is female due to the desire for a male heir, causing a predominantly male society to develop. The restrictions also mean that no child can have brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts or uncles, causing a loss of family values in the community. Also, the reduction in the mean number of children per family will create an ageing population with fewer able-bodied people to support it.

"This is the end of my life as I know it," he pleaded to no-one in particular.

His wife misunderstood. "What, having a daughter?" she asked absurdly.

"No, never being able to procreate again" her husband retorted. "I know what they'll do. Come in here any minute; drag me off for the snip. Impotency will consume the rest of my life! One child and then that's it! Your license is revoked, no more children, no more sex life. Ever!"



A nation of only children: China's 'one child per family' policy has had far-reaching effects

His voice rose in pitch, probably in premonition of the fate that awaited him.

"They have no right! All these childbirth controls, all these limits. No wonder there are so many prostitutes! No wonder sexually transmitted diseases are rife! No wonder abortions are rampant! No wonder there are so many orphaned children, abandoned by their parents as they symbolise the true extent of the restrictions imposed upon them! Orwell had it right! The death of the orgasm!"

Yet perhaps the most damaging aspect of birth control is the infringement on human rights. Is it fair to dictate to a couple how many children they are allowed to have? And

what of the future, when the ever-increasing population needs sterner restraints. Will stricter childbirth policies be introduced?

In his controversial and emphatically prophetic novel 1984, George Orwell describes a totalitarian state whereby the Party, the force behind the 'Big Brother' slogan, creates an environment whereby sex is demonised and hated, where family values are destroyed as children are indoctrinated to become completely subservient to the Party, and love is annihilated as an emotion. The motivation for the hate campaign against these essentially human tendencies is so that everyone is entirely devoted only to the Party, and this is

where all their desire is channelled. The drive is towards a social system resembling a bee hive, where all members are only concerned with the welfare of the queen and ignore any desire of their own.

At that moment four men, two wearing white coats, two wielding batons, erupted into the room and swallowed the new father up into a sea of limbs and wood. He struggled convulsively until one of the doctors (he hoped they were doctors) injected something into his neck. Instantly he went limp. Unable to protest either physically or verbally, he was carried in triumph into an adjoining room, where the last rites of his sex life were performed.

His wife, meanwhile, drew her child closer to her. "Well," she said, "at least now I might get some decent nights' sleep."

Although I do not suggest that China is on the verge of totalitarianism, the similarities exist, and should be considered a warning, allowing us to avoid the unwitting path to subservience and dictatorship of ideals. Other birth control measures, such as through education, hormone manipulation and mechanical barriers (such as condoms) need to be introduced and, if already present, more enthusiastically enforced so as to avoid any violation of human rights. Personally I believe that it is education and responsibility that will 'solve the problem'.

News in brief

US space shuttle crew eager to return to flight

Astronauts assigned to NASA's first space shuttle mission since the 2003 Columbia disaster said they are confident mistakes and technical problems that led to that accident are in the past. The launch is set for mid-May and the crew are scheduled to spend 13 days in space on a test flight to practice inspection procedures and heat shield repair techniques developed since the Columbia accident.

German team finds new way to block HIV replication

German scientists have found a new way to prevent the HIV virus from replicating, offering hope in the face of the virus' increasing resistance to existing drugs. Joachim Hauber, a professor at the Heinrich-Pette Institute in Hamburg, and his team have identified a protein in human cells that the HIV virus uses to reproduce and have run tests on a chemical that blocks this protein's action.

Swift catches first cosmic blasts

The Swift space telescope, launched in November, has seen its first gamma-ray bursts (GRBs) - the massive cosmic explosions it was built to study. The telescope detected its first burst on 17 December, only a few days after its instruments were switched on. GRBs are the most powerful explosions in the Universe, releasing more than one hundred billion times the energy our Sun emits in a year.

Rats can tell the difference between human languages

Rats can use the rhythm of human language to tell the difference between Dutch and Japanese, researchers in Spain reported. Their study suggests that mammals evolved some of the skills underlying the use and development of language long before language itself evolved. It is the first time an animal other than a human or monkey has been shown to have this skill.

Huygens Friday and the countdown to Titan

By Darius Nikbin
Science Editor

Stop everything you are doing right now.

Launched on 14 October 1997, six years on the Huygens probe is set for its arrival on Titan's surface. With any luck, we should be seeing the first images and sounds from Titan on Friday.

The probe will arrive at Titan and dive into the atmosphere of Saturn's largest moon. ESA TV will provide extensive live coverage of this event, as detailed on the right. All transmission and satellite details are online at <http://television.esa.int>.

Coverage should begin from 8am on Friday morning when the Huygens probe is being switched on from the state of hibernation it has been in since it separated from the Cassini mothership on 24 December 2004.

At 9.06am, Huygens is scheduled to enter Titan's atmosphere at a relatively steep angle of 65 degrees and a velocity of 6km per second. The probe will then decelerate to 400 metres per second within 3 minutes before deploying a 2.6m pilot chute at about 160km altitude. After

two and a half seconds, the primary parachute will pull away and the main 8.3m diameter parachute will open to stabilise the probe. From this point on, Huygens will be collecting information on atmospheric composition and dynamics. The data will be transmitted to the Cassini mothership which should be flying over Titan at a distance of 60,000km.

The descent will last two hours 20 minutes before Huygens impacts with the surface of Titan at 6m per second. If it survives all this, Huygens will then have (at most) 130 minutes to directly characterise Titan's surface before its mission is over.

Although there is very little chance that we will have images of giant insects or sounds of little green men singing *Fly Me To The Moon* into the on-board microphones, any results will be fascinating.

Titan is bigger than the planet Mercury and slightly smaller than Mars. It has a thick hazy nitrogen-based atmosphere containing carbon-based compounds. Scientists believe that the similarities Titan bears with the Earth in terms of its

atmosphere and composition will yield some clues to help them understand how life emerges on planets.

British bookies Ladbrokes had set starting odds of 10,000/1 that the mission would find intelligent life on Titan.

Coverage on ESA TV

<http://television.esa.int>

Friday 14 January

08.00-15.30 (GMT)
Huygens Probe Arrival at Titan (four live segments of between 30 and 75 minutes' duration)

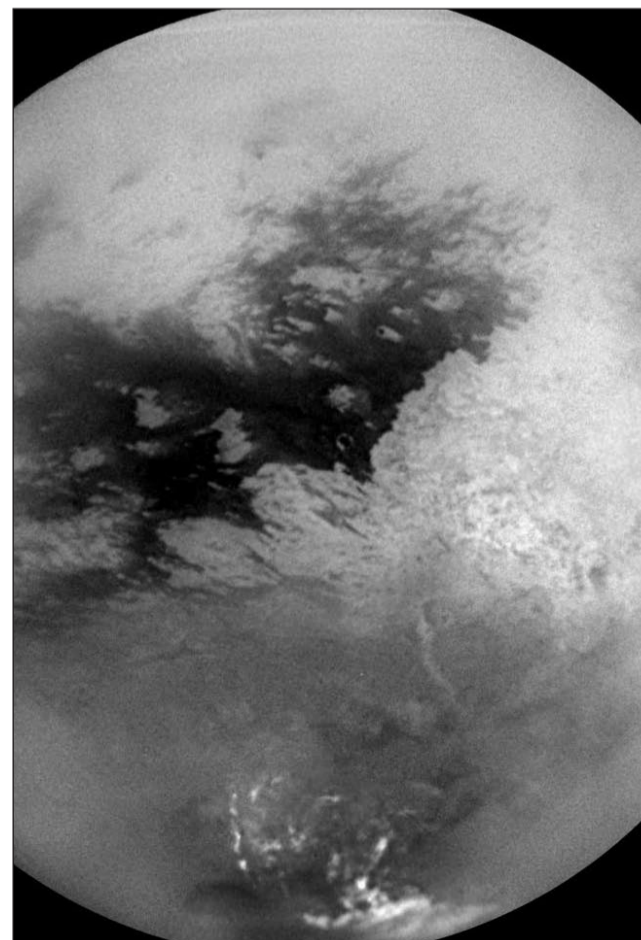
12.30-13.00
Media briefing on Huygens mission status

17.15
Media briefing on Huygens mission outcome

22.00-22.20
Review of the day: First images and sounds from Huygens (?)

Saturday 15 January

10.00-11.15
Media briefing on Huygens science data



This is Titan: a picture taken of Titan before Huygens was dispatched from its mothership, Cassini

Comment

felix@ic.ac.uk

I'm a zombie, get me out of here!

Apologies in advance if this week's column is a little random. The Editor's deadline to get copy to the printers was 12 noon on Wednesday. It is now 12.43pm and he is glaring at me. I didn't go to bed last night (for the second time this week, so far) because I was caught up with work in the office. If, for some reason, you are able to combine the qualities Sam talks about below with the sheer commitment and drive required to do this on a regular basis, then I suggest you stand for election as Union President. Nominations do open next week after all. You might want to re-read my (allegedly scary) column from this time last year to get a glimpse of what you are in for...

HMV Discounts

Here is my response to a letter in the 9 December issue of *Felix*. You'll be pleased to know that all Imperial students are indeed able to get discounts at HMV, without an NUS card. In fact, HMV give us their own discount cards every year to hand out at Freshers Fair. If you are having any problems, it's because the branch manager is simply a moron. If you email the Union's marketing manager, Penelope Parker (p.parker@ic.ac.uk) you'll find that a quick email from her to HMV head office will solve the problem. Please remember to give Penelope the details of the offending HMV branch.

STATE OF THE UNION



MUSTAFA ARIF
UNION PRESIDENT

Student staff pay problems

I believe *Felix* is covering this issue in detail on the front page. I think the College recognise the problem and it will get sorted out. My only comment is that it's disappointing that the Union was not consulted beforehand. Had we, as the representative body of students, been asked for our opinions, this could have been prevented. Instead, the College has created six months of hardship and headaches for students and managers alike.

Radical change

One of the hardest things to do in any leadership position is to

engage in a meaningful change programme. Imperial College Union should be, first and foremost, the representative body of students at Imperial. The initial results of the strategic review survey are very clear – we are failing to engage the vast majority of the membership. This is untenable and things must therefore change.

Inevitably there will be conflict – and the machinations of student politicians will spill over into the pages of *Felix*. The thing to remember, however, is that conflict demonstrates a willingness to challenge deeply entrenched interests. Just so long as everyone's aims are the same and it doesn't all get too petty...

The joy of... making a difference

Ever wanted to make a difference? It is a common human trait that we like to think we have made the world a better place, having given a worthwhile contribution to society. Some might look for a labour-saving invention, while others seek the cure to a debilitating disease. Many have wished to spread peace and happiness, while others still have hoped to inspire the world by their artistic contributions. It is a common driving force that most people want to leave their mark on the world.

Whilst few of us will probably have the opportunity to make such world-changing influences as this, there are ways in which people can make a difference to their local communities. In our community of Imperial College, one of the networks that holds many people together is Imperial College Union. The Union is the recognised voice of Imperial students, and constantly strives to improve the lot of our students and look after their educational, sporting, social, and welfare needs. In short, the Union is more than just a bar!

How about doing something that will really help you stand out from

the crowd, learning practical skills in a supportive, fun environment and helping your fellow students along the way? Have you thought about becoming a sabbatical officer?

Elections to the five sabbatical posts of the Imperial College Union will be taking place in February and this may just be the year for you to make your mark. While it is undeniably hard work, serving as a sabbatical offers a unique opportunity to develop skills and experiences that will stand you in good stead whatever you choose to do in life.

As Deputy President (Finance & Services) you would be responsible for the day-to-day running of the Union's finances and would get to manage an annual turnover of around £6 million. You also have a say in the strategic planning of the Union and are responsible for ensuring that the services and facilities that the Union provides meet the students' needs. If you don't have any previous financial knowledge, don't worry – the Union's experienced permanent staff are there to help you out and teach you all you need to know.

The Deputy President (Clubs & Societies) is responsible for the man-

UNCLE SAM



SAM RORKE
DEPUTY PRESIDENT
(EDUCATION & WELFARE)

agement of the Union's many clubs and societies, monitoring feedback from clubs and working on strategies to improve the service offered. You will take responsibility for training and student development as well as health and safety.

As Deputy President (Education & Welfare), you would be responsible for the Union's network of academic and welfare representatives, the Union's "eyes and ears on the ground". Using these representa-

tives, you would be involved in promoting important welfare issues and campaigns, as well as safe-guarding the education of Imperial College students.

As *Felix* Editor, in addition to editing the newspaper you will also be responsible for its financial management, which involves raising around £30,000 in advertising revenues over the course of the year. The day-to-day editing involves everything from trying to turn rather difficult submissions into printable content – this can be anything right the way down to sports reports written on the back of a fag packet – to image manipulation and graphic design.

If you want a varied role that presents a real challenge, you might consider standing for President. As the figurehead, you would not only have ultimate responsibility for all of the Union's activities but would also be the public face of the student body. As a College Governor, you are the only student who can be sued or prosecuted (the Union is a £6 million organisation, for which you have unlimited personal liability). You have to balance this against the breadth of the role, the celebrity status and the support from hundreds

of staff and volunteers.

Former sabbaticals say they've used their experiences at the Union in all manner of ways. From helping them start out on their chosen career path to learning essential life skills, it seems that nobody forgets their sabbatical year.

Nominations open on Tuesday, 18 January at midday and close on Tuesday 1 February at midday. For further information, or to nominate yourself, please visit www.union.ic.ac.uk/elections. Voting will be held online in mid-February – more details on this will follow.

If you're thinking of standing and would like to find out what being a sabbatical is really like, or need any more information on each of the posts, the current sabbaticals will be happy to speak to you. Please contact Rebecca Coxhead (r.coxhead@ic.ac.uk, 020 759 48060) to arrange an appointment.

On a personal note, I think standing for a sabbatical position was one of the best decisions I've taken, and I've thoroughly enjoyed my time so far. So if you'd like to make a difference to the lives of students, while gaining valuable life skills, why not stand for election?

Time to tighten the purse strings?

Well, I hope you all had a great holiday and enjoyed yourself. After all the partying and over-indulgence of Christmas, it is easy to forget about the bills that are coming your way after the festive period. Credit card bills, accommodation fees, fuel bills and tuition fees can all build up long after Santa has left your chimney.

It is often easy to bury your head in the sand and worry about these issues when they come up after the holiday, probably about now, but what happens when you get these bills and you actually cannot pay them, no matter how much you try to find the money?

One option in this situation is to

ask your bank to extend your overdraft, but what happens if the smiling bank manager says no?

When you find yourself in this situation, it is easy to forget that there are people around who can help you. One area of the College that can help is the Student Finance Office. They deal with the Access To Learning Fund, which gives students amounts of money up to £500. To find out if you are eligible for this fund, please contact the student support officer at p.worley@ic.ac.uk.

If it gets to the point where you are receiving letters from companies and they are demanding money, then come to the Information and

ADVICE SERVICE



NIGEL COOKE
STUDENT ADVISER

Advice Centre. We can act on your behalf to try to negotiate payment plans for the bills. We do this by writing a letter from the centre to the different companies that you owe money to.

We can also work out what you can actually afford to pay and negotiate with this figure to the companies.

Basically, if you can't pay, it is better to let people know than to hope that it will all go away. The Information and Advice Centre can assist you with this situation and help you to come through the other side.

The Centre can also help you if you cannot pay the College. Whether this be tuition fees or accommodation

fees, we can advocate for you and try to get the relevant people to either give you more time to pay or negotiate a payment plan.

I hope that this article has given you some idea of the support available to you if you find yourself in financial hardship. Remember: don't let your concern turn into a crisis. Make The Information and Advice Centre your one stop shop for all welfare issues.

● The Information and Advice Centre is now in the East Wing basement of Beit Quad. Open: 10am-6pm Monday-Friday. Phone: 020 7594 8066. Email: advice@ic.ac.uk

'The truth will come out one day'

Former Imperial College student and staff member **Babar Ahmad** is imprisoned under terrorism legislation, awaiting extradition to the US. Today, he writes exclusively for *Felix*

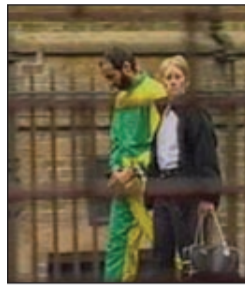
I read with interest *Felix's* coverage of my case and the dramatic meetings that were held to campaign for my justice. I would like to begin by offering my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have and are still supporting me, especially those who do not even know me personally.

Some of you raised concerns that you did not want to get involved with the campaign because it was 'too political'. On the one hand, one could argue that campaigning against student top-up fees is also political, because it does not directly concern Imperial's students of today – it concerns future generations of undergraduates. The good nature of human conscience dictates that we will always wish better for our future generations than what we had ourselves.

On the other hand, I don't really blame you for not wishing to support my campaign. I mean, who would want to support someone who could be planning to blow you to bits or someone who is, as on *The London Evening Standard's* front page of 7 October 2004, "Bin Laden's London General"?

You see, not very long ago, I was like you. When I saw dozens of Muslims (mainly North Africans and asylum seekers) being rounded up in Britain post 9/11, I myself was reluctant to campaign for them. I thought: "There is no smoke without fire. Maybe these people did have explosives and terrorist plans. The police don't just lock people up for nothing. I mean, how come it hasn't happened to me?"

And then it happened to me.



BABAR AHMAD

I saw for myself the 'fire' upon which the smoke of my arrest was based: my father's 1973 tourist brochure of the Empire State Building, a 9/11 documentary DVD that was screened on national TV, and other 'evidence'. However, none of this

should come as a surprise to anyone. After all, we live in an era where countries go to war, destroy homes, create orphans and kill thousands of people, based on reasons that turn out to be lies. Do you think that it is beyond such people to imprison a handful of individuals based on lies? They are capable of anything.

Having now spent five months in prison, I am trying to make use of my time. I don't have a guilty conscience weighing on my mind like other prisoners have, simply because I know, and God knows, that I am not a terrorist and that I have not done anything wrong or illegal. That is what matters to me more than what others think. And I will have my day, for sure, no doubt about it. There is a saying in the East that "the tongue of a lie is very

long, but its lifespan is short". The lie of the weapons of mass destruction in Iraq eventually came out, albeit a few years on. Likewise, the truth will come out one day, and the liars and the hypocrites will be exposed.

There is nothing wrong if you do not wish to support my campaign, because you are entitled to your own views. However, I would humbly request you not to prevent those who wish to campaign for my plight from doing so. After all, they could turn out to be in the right and the truth could turn out to be on their side.

British Political Prisoner Babar Ahmad MX5383
HMP Woodhill, MK4 4DA
www.freebabarahmad.com

Humanitarian crisis in Sudan

Following ethnic cleansing, millions of Sudanese people suffer from famine and disease. **Iain Taylor** explains why the West must not forget this former British colony

On 25 January 1885, General Charles G Gordon completed his final diary entry, poured his last gin and tonic and strolled across the balcony of the palace of Khartoum. Stretching out in front of him, the great city of the Nile had been overrun by Madhists. His dream of a great Saharan kingdom for Queen Victoria was in tatters: Britain was losing the Sudan. His incarceration nearly over, the general loaded his pistol and turned to face the door: "Bloody dervishes," he muttered.

It took a few years for Gordon's 'murder' to be avenged, and 14 years in total before Sudan officially became a British colony. As the cul-

mination of the scramble for Africa, the race for the Sudan became a matter of national pride, frequently occupying the front pages of the European newspapers at the time. Britain got there first, Sudan turned from white to pink on the political map, and a disgruntled France was given help colonising Morocco to stop her whingeing. A Franco-English war was only narrowly avoided, and within a few years the Entente Cordiale was signed.

Today, interest in Sudan is low. This is despite what, according to the UN, is one of "the world's greatest humanitarian disasters" happening within its borders. Perhaps

it is because its vast sands turned out to be resource poor and its current exports to the west are insignificant. The US and Europe delay intervention and sanctions while an estimated one million refugees struggle to survive famine and disease. As news of the Sudan crisis slips from the press, it appears that ethnic cleansing does not shock us as much when it happens to Africans.

A sincere-looking Jack Straw appeared on BBC News over a month ago to express his "extreme concern" at recent events in the region, but the Foreign Secretary has not done anything to improve

the situation since. Yet, the arrival of the new year must galvanise action.

On 1 January 2005, Britain took over the presidency of the G8 industrial nations for 12 months – what will be "a make or break year for development" according to the Chancellor. Britain has an opportunity to use this position to increase the foreign aid given to developing countries by the other G8 nations.

For years, Sudan has been a forgotten slab of Africa, an arbitrarily drawn shape conjured up in a European office, its straight-line international borders a sad relic of its colonial past and the General

Gordons of the 19th century.

Relatively poor in resources, Sudan serves little use to the West, and the genocide of its people apparently does not merit military intervention. The West claims that it has learnt from Rwanda, but it must not sweep Sudan under the same African carpet.

Britain's leadership of the G8 group provides a real chance to assist a continent it helped to carve up and exploit, and it should start by seriously addressing the Sudan crisis. It is our government's responsibility to make the most of this opportunity. Only then can we begin to heal this 'scar on our conscience'.

Letters to the Editor

Room bookings

Dear Editor,

I would like to bring up the sad and sorry state of the room bookings in the Union this term. Also last term. In fact, most of the time.

I am directing this year's pantomime, and with my brave band of actors I struggle through our script in various rooms across the College.

Last term, I was cramming 25-30 people into rooms in the Royal School of Mines building, because the Union could offer me nothing, even with plenty of warning. This term, I booked as soon as it is possible, to find not only that external people have the places before we, *students of the union*, can book them, but also I can be offered barely any space at all. Seminar Room 2 for 30 people? Who are trying to act?

This situation would be OK if the Union was full of bursting, in fact I would have been grateful for a

room that everyone could find easily. But what do I find on Thursday night? dB's and the UCH are both totally empty! Had I not thought of looking around the building briefly, my merry band would have been on each others laps while the two venues with lots of space and proper stages were locked and silent. Does this sound wrong to anyone?

A Disgruntled Director

Exam anguish

The two-week holiday was particularly short this year, and many representatives and ordinary students raised this with me last term. However, for various logistical reasons, the term dates are provisionally set ten years in advance by the Academic Registrar, and confirmed by Senate (the College's sovereign academic body) two years in advance. Therefore, whilst it was particularly unfortunate that this

impacted badly on those with exams or coursework deadlines, there was nothing that could be done about the length of the vacation at such short notice. However, thanks to the vigilance and persistence of fourth year Aeronautics students, the department agreed to put back the exams by two days, allowing a little extra revision time. As with all these things, the sooner a potential problem is brought to my (or one of my reps') attention, the more likely it is that we will be able to change it.

Sam Rorke
Deputy President (Education and Welfare)

Babar Ahmad

Dear Editor,

Correction: Babar was still a member of staff when he was arrested on Exhibiton Road having just left his workplace, Imperial College. It

seems that some have been reading the inaccurate reports by media outlets that follow the notion of "guilty until proven innocent" when it comes to terror arrests etc.

Yes there are several organisations that are standing by Babar in his fight for justice. However, perhaps if Babar Ahmad was your relative or close friend you would think differently and try to rally all the support you could get.

This campaign is not just about Babar, it is about gross abuse of our basic human rights and civil liberties. In the name of this War on Terror, the government is bending all the rules and demolishing the foundations of this very democracy we fought so hard to get. This is a matter that affects all the citizens of this country, students and non-students. There is life beyond IC for its students.

I suggest you first read his side of the story on www.freebabarahmad.com. Also, there is going to be a documentary about Babar's campaign

on Wednesday 26 January, 10pm, BBC2. It is important to look at both sides of every story before we judge anything.

Zara

Dear Editor,

I believe that the Union represents only the existing students of the College. There are other groups that can campaign for that person [Babar Ahmad]. People who are interested on that case can form a group and campaign on their own.

Pan

● These comments on Babar Ahmad are taken from www.felixonline.co.uk. Visit the website for more discussion and debate.

● Send your letters to felix@ic.ac.uk, and make your voice heard.

Clubs & Societies

felix@ic.ac.uk

'Imperial's biggest sporting event? I've never heard of it!'

HYDE PARK RELAYS

By Peter Dickenson

"It is with great pleasure that we announce the date of the 57th Hyde Park Relays..."

When I was elected as the 2005 Hyde Park Relays chair, I dreamt that I would be helping to organise the biggest and best road relay race yet – sad I know, but humour me, I'm a third year electrical engineering student!

Speaking to some of my mates, I found out one of them had been elected first team rugby captain; another was now president of the wakeboarding society.

"So what about you Pete, have you been elected for anything?" they asked. With a big grin on my face, I proudly told them that I was chair of the Hyde Park Relays Committee.

"Fantastic, well done," they'd say, "...er, what is it?"

I couldn't believe what I was hearing. This is, after all, Europe's largest student relay race we are talking about!

What was going on? I came to the conclusion, after much thought I might add, that either everybody I met was just taking the mickey out of me (very possible), I'd been elected to organise a race that wasn't the one I thought it was, or nobody from Imperial actually knew anything about the Hyde Park Relays.

I decided to investigate why this was and to try to remedy the situation.

As the name might suggest, this prestigious race takes place on a traditional course in the historic setting of Hyde Park, London. Fantastic! Not rocket science I know, but at least I knew which park we were talking about – the

one right next to Imperial College.

Since its inception in 1949, the race has provided the opportunity for thousands of students from across Europe to compete in a friendly yet competitive atmosphere. Last year, we welcomed teams from Poland, Holland, Germany, France and Spain as well as over 100 university teams from across the United Kingdom. In total there were around 600 competitors who ran – the men each running three miles and the women running two. Great! It was the race I thought it was!

This left me with the remaining two thoughts – either people were having a joke at my expense or Imperial students really did not know anything about the event. Thinking of how I could solve this one, I returned to my electrical engineering department for lectures.

And then it hit me: what better place to find out if I was being mocked than speak to students in my department – everybody knows that EEE students don't have a sense of humour between them, so I could be quite sure that I would get a serious answer. It soon became clear that most students had not heard of the race.

So why do so few Imperial students know about the Hyde Park Relays? Why didn't ACC teams, departments or lecturers enter?

The answer is simple – we have never asked you to take part before! The cross-country club has always promoted this event externally, but never with any real conviction, internally. Many of the world's greatest distance runners have run this race 'before they were famous', but hardly any of the greatest Imperial students have.

Well, I still intend to make this race the biggest and best yet and I am asking you Imperial students to help me to do this by agreeing to take part. The race, with its start and changeover point situated on the banks of the Serpentine in Hyde Park, is perfect for those of you who love competition or simply just want to experience racing in such a renowned and beautiful location. So, come on! Get yourselves a team together and sign up



Runners change over at the Hyde Park Relay

– departments, lecturers and halls teams already have.

To encourage you guys to put a team in, entry has been slashed to half price – £12 for a team of six men (or mixed) and £9 for a team of four women (payment by cheque only). This includes the race (obviously), some food, potential prizes if you do well (or really badly) and the exclusive after-race party, where dBs is, for once, full of men and women dancing away

until two in the morning.

The only problem is that you will have to move fast. Even though the race date is Saturday 12 February, entries officially close on 22 January.

To get an entry form, call into the Student Activities Centre in Beit Quad. For more information, please visit the official website, www.union.ic.ac.uk/hpr, or contact peter.dickenson@ic.ac.uk.

I hope to see you all there on race day!

ICSMSU St Mary's Sub-Aqua Club presents...



Does DiveMan make you want to get wet?
Feel like trying an activity that's really deep?

Why not come along to our free Try Dive?



Monday 24 January, 6:30 pm

Want to know more details?

Just bring your swimming things, a T-shirt and a towel along to the pool at St Mary's Hospital, Norfolk Place.



You can either email Ian at i.joy@imperial.ac.uk or alternatively ring him on 020 7886 1868



Already qualified divers are also welcome

Learn to dive for the summer



Be tickled Pink in support of Breast Cancer Care

PINKS

By Michelle Maloney

On Thursday 20 January, the Pinks will be holding an evening to raise money for Breast Cancer Care in dBs, including an Ann Summers party and Blind Date.

Pinks are a group of girls at Imperial who got together to form a social club. Pinks is not an official Imperial College Union club or society; it is just a group of girls who get together once a week to have a chat and meet new people.

Breast Cancer Care is the UK's leading provider of information, practical assistance and emotional support for anyone affected by breast cancer. Every year, they

reach over one million people with breast cancer or breast health concerns.

Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women – nearly one in three cancers in women occur in the breast. The lifetime risk is one in nine, with 13,000 women dying from breast cancer in the UK in 2002. Only 5-10% of breast cancers are hereditary or due to family history, meaning that increasing people's awareness of it is vital.

For these reasons, Pinks decided to hold an event at Imperial to raise money for the Breast Cancer Care charity. The partnership that they have with Ann Summers (10% of the sales are donated) seemed to provide an excellent opportunity to have an evening at Imperial solely for women. Although some peo-

ple may be offended by the nature of an Ann Summers party, it is Pinks' opinion that it will be an excellent evening and a great novelty for Imperial women.

The evening starts with a talk from a Breast Cancer Care representative at 7.00pm. This is followed by the very strictly girls-only Ann Summers party. Later on, we are auctioning off some of Imperial's finest bachelors and having our very own Blind Date, also to raise money for the charity. Throughout the evening the Pinks (easy to recognise – look for fairy wings and pink t-shirts) will be selling Breast Cancer Care pins and taking donations.

Tickets are £3 in advance and £3.50 on the door, and include entry to the raffle.

Letters to the Editor

Pay problems

Dave,

In response to your front page article 'Pay problems for student staff' in last week's Felix:

I have been working here for over two years now. The fact that it takes six weeks to get pay for some shifts is of course ridiculous, but I think the most important part of your article to highlight was what Mustafa Arif had to say about non-student casual staff still being paid weekly!

When the change happened, we were told that it was necessary for us to have our pay scheme changed in order to bring us in line with the rest of college's staff, as this would reduce costs in payroll. The fact that there are still staff being paid weekly by college payroll enforces my belief that it was not necessary to fast-track all of us student staff onto the scheme. There could have been far more time for negotiation with the Union and planning by the college to make sure that if it did eventually become truly necessary for us to be on monthly pay, it could have gone ahead without all the glitches we have experienced. These included not being paid, being paid too much, tax and NI not being deducted, emergency tax being deducted and so on ad infinitum...

Perhaps, too, if we had been warned of this change, those of us who are hard up enough to need our cash "up front" would have had a chance to make alternative arrangements before the start of term. It would have been even nicer if we had been consulted on the change, but then again, as it seems that Mustafa himself was barely consulted, that might be like asking for the moon on a stick.

Yours,
Jess Baker
IV Chemistry with Management

Security and medics

Dear Felix,

Today, Tuesday 18 January, a student had a fit in the entrance hall of the Sir Alexander Fleming Building.

Students present at the time were reported to have done nothing except continue to purchase their food from the shop while watching on. Eventually a student had the sense to ring Sheffield Security (of which there should be a fully trained medical officer at all times), after which four (allegedly) burly but medically incompetent guards appeared with no first aid equipment and proceeded to join in the staring contest.

Paramedics were eventually called and arrived within minutes and dealt with the situation accordingly. One of the students who originally aided the suffering student was rewarded by a 'Well done miss,' by one of the security officers.

Lessons to be learnt from this: Sheffield Security need to review their procedures for first aid training; medical students really don't know what they're doing even when threatened with a real life situation.

Kind regards,
Name and department supplied

More exam anguish

Dear Felix,

I'd like to write a short response to Mr Rorke's letter in issue 1311.

Can I just point out that I personally pointed out to Mr Rorke the issues several weeks before the end of the autumn term and heard nothing back from him on the subject and it was up to the students themselves within their departments to kick up a fuss to get their exam dates changed! Surely since dates are confirmed two years in advance as (Sam so courteously pointed out to the readership), the DPEWs of the last three years had plenty of time to realise the problem far earlier?

Yet another example of the union's bumbling inability to see into the future and take preventative action, leaving them shrugging their shoulders and scratching themselves; letting the students down inevitably.

Yours Sincerely,
Tim Weinert-Aplin
Aero 4

Dear Felix,

Two weeks ago I had a letter published here. Despite it being anonymous I have since received some repercussions. I would like to re-iterate the points in the article 2 weeks ago.

1) In response to a Felix headline last term I pointed out that Mech Eng was not the only department with a ridiculous Christmas period, we in ESE also had problems – fault for this in my opinion clearly lies with college who set the term dates – why we could not have started that term earlier I do not know.

2) Also in response to a Felix headline last term, examinable material (indeed an exam) was scheduled in the lunch period – clashing with some peoples humanities courses (hence why nothing should be timetabled in the lunch hour). The only option I was given was to sit it in the afternoon, which clashed with a departmental lecture. I eventually sat it then. I believe no student should be put in this position – I do not accept that Monday 3rd being a Bank Holiday as an excuse, it has been scheduled then for a long time. If exams were indeed supposed to have being scheduled for the 'first Monday' of term (10th) then there would not be a full day of departmental lectures that day. I believe blame for this lies with the department, as other departments don't seem to

have had this problem.

The point I was trying to make was that individually these problems would not have been that bad but combined between them they could cause students great distress in what is an important year of there degree.

I would also like to point out and apologise to the secretarial staff of the department, who may have misunderstood the article, I believe they are not at fault for the above problems, the job they perform, which includes being a link between students and the department is performed consistently in a faultless manner with a cheerful attitude, and all the more admirable bearing in mind the "fluid and laissez faire" nature of the department (as discussed above and in my previous letter).

Thankyou
John Sykes
MSci Geology (3rd year)
(The Still Disgruntled Rock Hunter)

Babar Ahmad

Dear Felix,

We, the family of Babar Ahmad, reject outright and condemn the decision of the Independent Police Complaint's Commission (IPCC) to formally discipline one of the several Anti-Terrorist Branch Police Officers who caused life-threatening injuries to Babar whilst in their custody on 02 December 2003. We further question the timing of this decision, more than a year after the assault, and a week prior to BBC2's documentary on Babar's case on 26th January 2005. We feel that this is a cynical ploy to create a scapegoat out of one officer to spare the superiors from blame.

Our faith in the British Justice System is such that we always expected a "cover-up" from the outset, but we did not expect the IPCC, Crown Prosecution Service and members of the medical profession to be part of it. This is the fourth time that the authorities have charged their version of events of what happened to Babar on that day. First they declared in court that Babar's injuries were old injuries. Then they said that "some" of the injuries were old. Then they said that Babar kicked, punched and violently resisted arrest. Now they are saying that the injuries were not old and some of the officers used excessive force. They have also claimed that the officers acted as such because they believed Babar to be a highly dangerous terrorist who trained in Al-Qaida camps.

This latest decision leaves a number of questions unanswered:

1) If Babar violently resisted arrest and attacked police officers, why was he not charged with assaulting police?

2) Where is the medical evidence of any injuries sustained by the police officers?

3) If only one police officer assaulted Babar, why did the others stand there and watch?

4) Why did 3 independent eye-witnesses (neighbours) inform the investigation that they did not witness any struggle?

5) Why has Babar not been charged with making false allegations against members of the police?

6) If Babar was a highly dangerous Al-Qaida terrorist, why was he released without charge in December 2003?

7) Why did the IPCC ignore the opinion of Dr Manolis Gavalas, an independent medico-legal expert who examined Babar?

We would like all of the officers concerned to be charged and prosecuted, not just disciplined with a slap on the wrist. We are considering taking further action and we seek an urgent independent public inquiry into this matter.

Family of Babar Ahmad

● *Terror Suspect's Dad*, a documentary on the 'Free Babar Ahmad' campaign, will be shown at 10pm on Wednesday 26 January on BBC2.

Fun in Felix?

It saddens me to write this. In years gone by, the pages of noble *Felix* were filled with interesting columns and funny stories. So much so in fact that my vastly inferior writing skills were never called upon. Now, however, things have changed. Very much for the worse. First we lose the format for cost reasons – fair enough. But did you have to cull all the writers as well? I mean you didn't even pay them. They had vision, skills and possibly even ideas.

The idea of a student paper is not to deliver daily news from the business world, or even daily national news. That's what actual newspapers are for. A student paper should offer information about student life – funny events, places to eat, general crude. It should be interesting. Fair enough we're all geeky enough to appreciate computers and gadgets. But maybe more reviews of games and funky stuff and less dry pieces about operating systems – which as anyone knows, aren't interesting, even to mac fanatics.

You need to have information on how the university is being run and plans for the future. You also need to have columns on how wonderful donuts are and how ignoring deadlines seriously reduces dancing ability at dB's. However, these shouldn't necessarily be vying for space in the same column.

So what needs to be done? Basically there needs to be a drive back towards fun – everyone needs a break from knowledge occasionally surely? Is there really no place for fanning about? What are we, serious scientists or students? There is so much more to life than studying. I mean really there is. No matter how much you pay to study, you're

missing out on the whole aim of university if you use it just to work. Like meeting people, having fun, maybe even putting something back into the uni and/or the community. But obviously it is not obligatory – I would not be where I am today if it weren't for my highly developed sense of apathy and a keen knowledge of how best to avoid doing stuff. Still I know that occasionally a little effort makes everything better. In this instance, it is mainly that if by some quirk of fate I manage to encourage people to write something, I will have something to read and I won't have to spend weeks deciding whether or not to write something instead of staring blankly into the Mission Failed screen of GTA 3.

Tristan Lane
Medic, 5th year

Dave Edwards, Editor, replies:

Felix is a popular newspaper this year. Almost all of our 4000 copies disappear quickly each week. I have received more compliments on the new style of Felix than I could possibly count.

Cost was only one factor behind the change of format. The new 'compact newspaper' style defines Felix as a student newspaper, rather than lying somewhere between newspaper and magazine. The new style looks more like a 'real' publication and is taken more seriously and given more respect as a result.

We didn't cull any writers – they either left College or just stopped writing, unfortunately. To imply that our current team of contributors lacks vision, skill and ideas is a cheap and ultimately pointless insult to these hard-working, talented volunteers.

Many Imperial students are interested in national and/or business news, and we are able to give a limited amount from our own perspective, so why shouldn't we do that? The operating system articles have attracted several comments and questions from readers – it's clear that people are interested in that kind of thing.

Of course there is space for 'fun' articles, but we need people to write them. Incidentally, Coffee Break already offers two pages of fun and games each week. I'm not sure that we should be offering 'general crude', whatever that is.

Any student is welcome to write for Felix. We really do want as many people as possible to get involved – it's what we're here for, and we include something like 80-90% of what we receive. I accept that there is less fun, comedy, humorous columns etc in Felix this year, but that's only because no-one seems to want to write them! If there's something you want to see in these pages, you can do something about it – either make a specific suggestion or write it yourself. Contact me at felix@ic.ac.uk.

● I am pleased to say that Tristan Lane writes for *Felix* in this week's Sport section, page 23, and in next week's Comment section

Send your letters to felix@ic.ac.uk. Make your voice heard

Letters may be edited for length, but not for spelling or grammar.
Letters are printed at the Editor's discretion.

What's on

felix@ic.ac.uk

FRIDAY 14 JANUARY

UNION EVENTS MEDICS RAG DASH

9am onwards, and throughout the weekend
Beit Quad
£3

Meet Friday at 9am in Sir Alexander Fleming Building to collect scrubs, T-shirts and collecting pots. Dash to Leeds then take coaches on to Edinburgh, collecting money for RAG on the way!

Tickets are only £70 and include a FREE BALL TICKET. Purchase from SU office at South Ken or email david.bonsall@ic.ac.uk or edward.gray@ic.ac.uk to reserve!

The person who raises the most money gets a free holiday for two to Greece!

UNION EVENTS PIMPS & PROSTITUTES

8pm-2am
Beit Quad
£3

Imperial College Union invites you to a current and chart classics party. Vodka and mixer £1 in dBs while

stocks last. Half price entry in fancy dress!
Contact: union@ic.ac.uk

MONDAY 17 JANUARY

UNION EVENTS MEDICS BSc CHALLENGE

7.30pm
Reynolds Bar, Charing Cross Hospital
The first annual BSc quiz. Which BSc group are the brains of the med school?

Contact:
alexandra.hazlerigg@ic.ac.uk

TUESDAY 18 JANUARY

UNION EVENTS STA TRAVEL QUIZ NIGHT

8-10.30pm
Beit Quad
FREE

The quiz is a bit of a tradition at the Union, with cash and beer prizes on offer. Get a team together and see how much you really know.
Contact: union@ic.ac.uk

WEDNESDAY 19 JANUARY

UNION EVENTS SPORTS NIGHT

8pm-12midnight
Beit Quad
£1 (Free before 9pm)
Carlsberg and Tetley £1 a pint all night in all bars.
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THURSDAY 20 JANUARY

VERY IMPORTANT FELIX PUBLISHED

10am onwards
Pick up the next issue of your student newspaper from your department or the Union building.
Contact: felix@ic.ac.uk

ALL WEEK

FILMS: VUE CINEMA,
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Student discount ALL WEEK
CLOSER (15)

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- the name of the event
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- the cost (if any)
- a brief description of the event
- a contact email address

Daily: 1.40pm, 4pm, 6.40pm, 9pm. Fri and Sat only: 11.40pm. Sat and Sun only: 11.20am.

TEAM AMERICA: WORLD POLICE (15)

Daily: 2.40pm, 5pm, 7.20pm, 9.40pm. Fri and Sat only: 12midnight. Sat and Sun only: 12.20am.

MILLION DOLLAR BABY (12A)

Daily: 2.30pm, 5.30pm, 8.30pm. Fri and Sat only: 11.30pm. Sat and Sun only: 11.30am.

VANITY FAIR (PG)

Daily: 2.10pm, 5.10pm, 8.10pm. Sat and Sun only: 11am.

THE AVIATOR (12A)

Daily: 1.30pm, 5.15pm, 8.45pm. Sat and Sun only: 10am.

ALEXANDER (15)

Daily: 4.15pm, 8pm. Mon to Fri: 12.40pm.

WHITE NOISE (15)

Daily: 2.20pm, 4.30pm, 6.50pm, 9.15pm. Fri and Sat only: 11.50pm. Sat and Sun only: 12noon.

THE HOUSE OF FLYING DAGGERS (12A)

Daily: 6.30pm. Mon to Fri: 1.20pm. Weds only: 9.30pm.

LEMONY SNICKET'S A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS (PG)

Daily: 4pm. Sat and Sun only: 11am, 1.30pm.

THE INCREDIBLES (U)

Daily: 3.10pm, 6pm (not Weds). Sun only: 10am, 12.30pm. Weds only: 6.30pm.

THE POLAR EXPRESS (U)

Sat and Sun only: 10.20am, 12.40pm.

NATIONAL TREASURE (PG)

Fri to Tues: 8.40pm. Fri and Sat only: 11.30pm.

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£1 per shot of Smirnoff
Vodka with draught
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The Union encourages you to drink responsibly

Nightlife

clubs.felix@ic.ac.uk

UK hip hop hits hard

CLUB REVIEW

FabricLive

Fabric, Charterhouse Street
£12

★★★★☆

Fabric is one of those places you really can't have missed. Whether you're a clubber or not, you'll no doubt have seen or been handed their stylishly designed monthly flyers in record shops, on leaving clubs, gigs or bars, and even around College.

With three rooms, each easily big enough to be a venue in its own right, and a capacity of 3000, the place attracts an astounding array of well known and very good DJs. It consistently offers a quality night out.

For many people, Fabric is where they popped their clubber's cherry. For some, it's epitomises the clubbing experience. I know people who rarely, if ever, go elsewhere. It's also a bit of a tourist attraction, and why not? I would advise anyone to go, even out of idle curiosity.

There really is a lot to love about the place, but personally it's the variety that keeps me coming back.

On any given night you'll find distinct and sometimes very different music in each of the rooms, and even more of a mixture in the crowd itself. There are first-timers alongside regulars and ageing old-school ravers, Londoners and people visiting from the provinces as well as tourists from further afield.

Normally I'd go for house nights, but tonight I'd come to check out some hip hop. Of course, since it's Fabric, there was also drum and bass in room 2 and electro in room 3. The line ups were, as ever, mouth-watering, including Craze (two sets – one hip hop, one drum and bass) Scratch Perverts, The Herbaliser, Klashnekoff, Tigerstyles, Dillinja & Lemon D, and Bones and Ramsey.

Arriving pretty early, our first port of call was room 2, where the drums and bass were already in full effect. Now, I do like drum and bass, but when confronted with a heaving mass of bodies as we found, I tend to wimp out and head for somewhere with a bit more space. At least until I've found my dancing feet, anyway. So we continued through to room 1 where we found The Herbaliser behind the decks.

These guys are the pride of Ninja

Tune, representing UK hip hop. Given this, the scene before us was something of a disappointment. The room was pretty empty, and whilst this was partly due to the early hour, the music wasn't really helping. I admit I'm not a hip hop aficionado, and I'm used to being impressed at Fabric. Maybe I'm spoiled, but this just didn't seem to be cutting the mustard. In a city where there is a lot of 'bling' around, any DJ playing R'n'B, soul or hip hop needs to stand out, or at least make the grade. I love their music, but these guys just sounded generic and bland.

And so onwards and upwards to room 3. This is the smallest of the

three, but it has its own sense of intimacy as the DJ booth is at the same level as the dancefloor, so you can check out the jock's skills whilst enjoying the sounds. Hoxton's Bones and Ramsey were pumping out some electro beats, and this was really doing the trick. After a while spent vegged out on a sofa, indulging in some people-watching, my feet were itching. A few vodka shots later, and we were all quite happily wiggling around the room, which was nicely full – enough people for an atmosphere, but not so many that you had to watch where your arms were swinging.

After an hour or so, we headed back to room 2, and this time I was a lot more impressed. Now the stage was filled with many decks and mixers, with a similar amount of DJs and MCs. We saw Desi collective Tigerstyles, and another crew that I can't name, but, to coin a phrase, this shit was heavy. There were fusing hip hop beats, double-speed drum and bass breaks and all manner of bass and scratch sounds, with a good smattering of to-the-point rhymes. Now the room was full, and bumping – just the way it should be.

Aside from Herbaliser's uninspir-



One of Tigerstyles

ing performance, there were only a couple of things wrong with this night. Sadly, Klashnekoff was a no-show, but in his place the MCs organised an impromptu beatbox competition, pulling two contestants from the audience. This was actually quite enjoyable – these guys had some serious oral dexterity. As the MC put it: "If he can beatbox like that, what's he gonna be like with the ladies...?"

The only other let-down was myself – Fridays can be a bit hectic if you're tired from a hard week. I was, and had to quit and go home at 2am, missing headliners the Scratch Perverts. I think I may finally be getting old. **Simon Clark**



Bones and Ramsey



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Arts



Post-season pantomime

Iain Heaton introduces Dramsoc's new production of *Jack and the Beanstalk*

Jack and the Beanstalk

19 - 22 January, 7.30pm
Union Concert Hall

Tickets: £4.50 students, £6 others

It might not strictly be pantomime season any more, but Dramsoc bring you a late festive treat with their performance of *Jack and the Beanstalk* next week. Normally at this point in an article, it's traditional to give a brief resumé of the plot, but frankly if you don't know what happens in *Jack and the Beanstalk* you should probably be complaining to your parents about having a neglected childhood!

However, I guess there are a few differences in this production so here is a (very) basic storyline: Jack and his mother are going to be thrown out of their house by the nasty Squire Macguire (boo hiss) as they can't pay the rent. In an

attempt to raise money, Jack takes their cow to market and swaps it with the evil Witch Whey for a bag of beans (stupid boy!)

The beans turn out to be magic, a mighty beanstalk grows and up it climb Jack, his mother, the princess Penelope, a blind royal servant called Stammers, Jack's sister Jill and her boyfriend (simple) Simon (yes there is also a pieman, and pies, many pies!)

At the top is a giant's castle, home to Mr and Mrs Giant (who aren't very

"All profits from this production will be going to the Tsunami Relief Appeal"

giant), Captain Detergiant (evil captain of the giant's guards who looks quite a bit like Squire Macguire (boo

hiss!) and his evil henchmen (or should that be man) Pungiant and Stringiant (mutants that resemble 'Two-bad' from He-Man).

The evil captain then steals the golden goose from the giants and forces it to lay golden eggs by playing with a harp. It's up to Jack to save the giants, save the goose and harp (God only knows what Detergiant might do to them, he is a very naughty man), save his house, save his loyal cow Annabelle and win the heart of the princess. Will good triumph over evil? What do you think?

Well there you go, you are probably thinking, now I don't need to come, I can guess what happens! But you do need to come, because this review wasn't very funny and the actual pantomime is! There are some great comedy moments (including some wonderful 'Imperial' jokes), some brilliant characters and people in



Two-Bad of He-Man fame, close relative of Pungiant and Stringiant, who appear in Dramsoc's panto

various animal costumes. Also, one night, the actual author of this version, an ex-Imperial student himself, is popping along, so you get to

see a man tearing out his hair as he sees what we have done to his masterpiece (at no extra cost!)

If you like saying 'It's behind you' and 'Oh no you didn't', and if you enjoy seeing men dressed up and women and women dressed up as men (and lets face it, who doesn't) then there is definitely no better way to spend an evening. In addition to this, all the profits are going to the Tsunami relief appeal, so by putting yourself through a couple of hours of mild pain you'll be helping people who are suffering far more.

Jack and the Beanstalk is on at the Union Concert Hall from Wednesday 19 to Saturday 22 January, starting at 7.30 each night. Tickets cost £4.50 for students or £6 others. Advance bookings can be made at www.dramsoc.org (book early to avoid disappointment!). Any questions can be directed at the director, Tom, whose email is thomas.cafferkey@ic.ac.uk.

Final call for William Nicholson

Prints, portraits, landscape and still life

William Nicholson: British Printmaker and Painter

Closes 23 January 2005

Royal Academy of Art, Piccadilly
Tickets: £5 students

The Royal Academy is currently hosting an exhibition of the work of the British painter and printmaker William Nicholson (1872-1949). The exhibition closes very soon, on 23 January, and so if you want to see what is actually a rather pleasant exhibition you'd better get a move on.

This is the first major review of Nicholson's work in London since 1942, when the artist was still alive. The exhibition is comprised of 68 paintings and also includes more than 50 prints as well as some of the books he provided illustrations for, including the classic by Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, the almost criminally sad children's book.



While Y is for Yokel, A is reserved for Artist, from the 1898 set of Alphabet prints

Now, while the illustrations in *The Velveteen Rabbit* are beautiful and touching, what one is most likely to recognise of the works on display are Nicholson's prints, particularly if your family or any of your friends' families had a penchant for Victoriana. The series of prints for the artist's *The Alphabet* (1898) are the source of what are possibly Nicholson's most iconic images, not to mention some rather amusing examples for words beginning with the letters of the alphabet: Y is for Yokel.

"Nicholson had a fabulous talent for capturing the moment"

The early part of Nicholson's career was spent as a printmaker and poster designer. In 1891, Nicholson enrolled at the Académie Julian in Paris, and while in Paris he was to meet fellow artist James Pryde with whom he collaborated with under the name of Beggarstaff Brothers, producing the design for a series of posters. This was during the time of the grand print revival in Europe, led by the Frenchman Toulouse Lautrec. Work from this period in the exhibition includes the Beggarstaff Brothers' poster for *Don Quixote* (1895) which is striking in the simplicity of the design.

While Nicholson may be most remembered for his prints and posters, the exhibition does focus on his paintings.

A wide range of paintings are included in the exhibition, however, his still-lives are consistently his best work. One begins to think that the description of his landscapes as 'strikingly minimalist' is something of a cover-up for some rather uninspiring works, however, the still

lives are magnificent in their use of colour and texture as well as the simplicity of their composition. Portraits are also featured in the exhibition, and from the selection given it is clear that Nicholson had a fabulous talent for capturing the moment that was only in its nascent stages as he was nearing the end of his life. His paintings at the time of World War I, though not strictly portraits in a traditional sense, are mesmerising.

The exhibition is compact, as is usual for the Sackler Wing, but highly recommended; the art is interesting, and it is a small exhibition and so one won't be horribly worn out by the culture (as you may well be by the new exhibition to be held in the Main Galleries, Turks).

Paola Smith
Arts Editor

● The Raphael exhibition at the National Gallery will be closing this Sunday. Tickets for this exhibition cost £4 for students or £9 at full price. I do suggest booking tickets in advance, unless you particularly like queuing. Booking information is available online at www.nationalgallery.org.uk.



Miss Simpson's Boots, 1919

The new Ring Cycle at the Royal Opera



PAOLA SMITH
ARTS EDITOR

After last week's rather long and mostly quite pointless ramblings, I thought that it would only be fair if I kept it shorter and to some sort of point this week. The topic is Wagner, and in particular the new Ring cycle at the Royal Opera house... but you may have already guessed that from the headline.

There have been a number of new Ring cycles around the world recently, in fact the one at the Royal Opera is in direct competition with the English National Opera's own productions, the most troubled so far being that for Bayreuth. For those that don't know, Bayreuth is the annual Wagner festival in Germany. Performances are held in a specially designed theatre, but unfortunately it is rumoured to be somewhat uncomfortable. Bayreuth, apart from being plagued by an assortment of Wagner family problems, suffered something of a set-back when their director for the planned 2006 Ring cycle quit last year. However, a replacement has just been found in the form of the German playwright Tankred Dorst.

Enough of other people's problems; back to the Royal Opera. Last

night was the final night of the first run of performances of the first part of the Ring, *Das Rheingold*, and as luck would have it disaster struck. Things were even worse than when Mutti pulled out of *La Forza del Destino* earlier on in the season. This time, Bryn Terfel lost his voice, confirmed an hour before performance. Terfel had been singing the role of Wotan, a rather central role in the opera. Fortunately the evening was rescued by the chance appearance of Sir Donald MacIntyre, a great Wotan of the past, in town. So, the show did go on, with MacIntyre singing from the pit and Terfel miming on stage. Not the ideal set-up, but this was not the least of the production's problems.

The much-awaited new production, directed by Keith Warner and designed by Stefanos Lazaridis, was something of a let down. The opening sequence where the Rhine Maidens taunt the dwarf Albrecht worked well, but that was about it. To match the sweeping music of Wagner, one would expect equally sumptuous sets, however, in the age of stylised re-thinking, we were presented with a black and white nightmare. The palace of the gods was barely approaching majestic, and Nibelheim was just unpleasant beyond words - a vile vision of a morgue with lobotomised slaves being electricuted, not to mention the ridiculous box with shiny bits on it that was meant to be the all-powerful helmet with which Albrecht was going to bring the world to submission.

All I can do is hope that the next installment, *Die Walkure*, is an improvement, and that Bryn Terfel will not lose his voice again, as I'd actually like to hear his Wotan.

Film

vue
cinemas
www.myvue.com/students

film.felix@ic.ac.uk

Film listings: see
What's On, page 10

Alexander the not so Great

Sadly, Stone's 'epic' is a waste of time and money

Alexander

Director: Oliver Stone
Starring: Colin Farrell, Jared Leto,
Angelina Jolie, Val Kilmer, Anthony
Hopkins, Jessie Kamm, Connor
Paolo, Christopher Plummer
Length: 175 minutes
Certificate: 15
★☆☆☆☆

One of the world's greatest masters of war, Alexander the Great conquered the ancient world before the age of 30. So how amazing it must be to have an epic that explains the man behind this legend with a cast list of Hollywood's best and Oscar-winning Oliver Stone as the director.

The film follows Alexander all the way through his life as his mother Olympias (Angelina Jolie) fills his head with stories of Achilles and the siege of Troy, fuelling his imagination and inspiring him later on in his life to conquer and drive his way through the east. Olympias is determined to see him achieve greatness and turn him against his father King Philip of Macedonia (Val Kilmer). After his father is assassinated, Alexander sets out to Persia in order to avenge his death.

The film has some beautiful sets, particularly for Persia – they are stunning to look at and the fight sequences, yes all two of them, are very impressive. Be warned, though – they do get quite bloody. If you weren't a fan of *Kill Bill's* usage of spurting blood and hacked off limbs then perhaps this film isn't for you. Actually, I can also give you several other reasons not to go and see it.

How can I possibly start to tell you how shockingly bad this film was? The script was terrible. There was no way for the audience to relate to or care for any of the characters. I left the cinema knowing nothing new

about this supposedly great man or any of his reasons for conquering the rest of the world. Frankly, at the end of the film, I didn't care.

The main point of the film seemed to be that Alexander liked boys. Was it really necessary to keep bringing up his bisexuality? And if it was, why was Hephaestion made out to look like a lady boy walking around in feminine robes when he was actually a skilled warrior and commander in real life?

Relationships between men in ancient Greece were very different. They went through so much together – there was an intimacy that couldn't be replicated with women, who were there for sex, and children. The film made it out to be

"Jolie, Kilmer and Leto do their best... but it's not enough"

more sordid, and the sex scene with Alexander's 'barbarian' wife didn't really help, although the growling and naked fighting may appeal to some of you. The words 'bouncing' and 'melons' come to mind.

What Stone seems to have forgotten is that Alexander had ambition that was driven by figures such as Achilles, Heracles and Dionysus. His quest for glory and his need to surpass his heroes was the reason why he emerged as one of the greatest military geniuses in history, not because he had an over-bearing mother.

The film is laughable. Jolie, Kilmer and Leto do their best with what they've got, but it's not enough. Their characters are two-dimensional and they end up playing stereotypes; the crazy snake-handling mother, the drunken tyrannical father and the effeminate lover.

And can anyone tell me why the Greek have Irish accents? Colin



One of the rare battle scenes in the disappointing *Alexander*

Farrell sounds surprisingly less Irish than the rest of the cast, apart from the random Scottish guy who wants us all to stop our belly-aching. Confused? So am I.

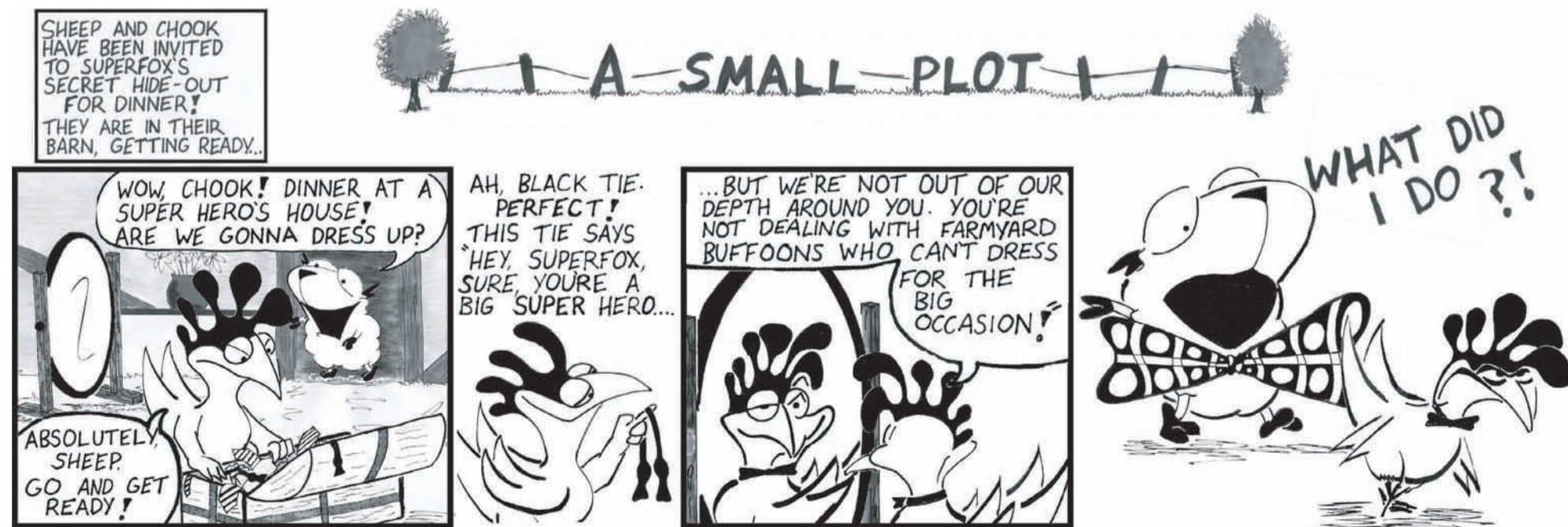
Another area this film lets you down in is the lack of battle scenes. We never find out why Alexander is still remembered today for his strategic tactics. Important historical battles and major events in his

life, such as the trek back to Persia through the desert, have been left out. What makes this film even worse is that Farrell doesn't have the right charisma (or acting skills) to portray this icon – he makes him out to be some sort of crazed wimp. I'm not even going to go into the brainless *Matrix*-like fight scene between a horse and an elephant – how moronic can you get? The

Saving Private Ryan style battle at the end is equally terrible.

This film is so ridiculous that it will have you laughing all the way through, but something tells me that wasn't what Stone intended. Don't go and see this film. It's a waste of your time and money. Even the comedy factor won't help you endure three hours of this self-indulgent movie.

Haj Alttahir



Coffee Break

coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk

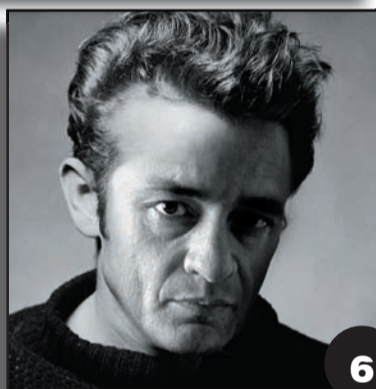
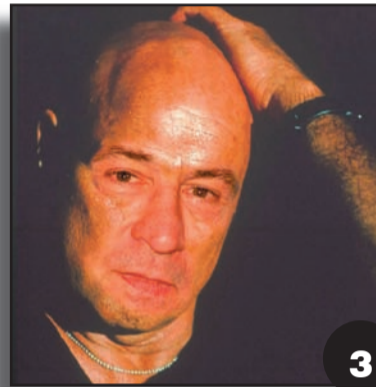
Well we're back again. Another few months of irreverant tomfoolery is in store. That's the plan anyway. More likely, it'll be some mildly amusing pointless quizzes. There are prizes at the end of the year, so answers to **coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk** if you please

Double Vision

So we kick off the year with a picture quiz, for a change.

It's pretty straightforward: we've mixed up (badly) two famous (or not-so-famous) faces, and you just have to tell us who's who. Just to give you a little helping hand, there are nine actors, three musicians, two 'leaders', a director and a model.

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Movie Quote Quiz

A quiz for all the movie buffs out there. It's as straightforward as they come, this one: match the quote with the film it's from, or with the actor / actress who said it.

Which films are these quotes from?

- "Please, sir, I want some more."
- "I am 42 years old; in less than a year I will be dead. Of course I don't know that yet, and in a way, I am dead already."
- "Nobody puts Baby in the corner."
- "I'm afraid. I'm afraid, Dave. Dave, my mind is going. I can feel it. I can feel it. My mind is going. There is no question about it. I can feel it. I can feel it. I can feel it. I'm a... afraid."
- "You're a hell of an instinctive pilot. Maybe too good. I'd like to bust your butt but I can't."
- "You could be happy here, I could take care of you. I wouldn't let anybody hurt you."
- "This is worse than the time when I fell asleep and you put your dick in my mouth and took a picture."
- "Mr President, I'm not saying we wouldn't get our hair mussed. But I do say no more than ten to twenty million killed, tops. Uh, depending on the breaks."

Who said this?

- "When I got to another ocean, I figured, since I'd gone this far, I might as well just turn back, keep right on going."
- "In a thousand years, there will be no men and women, just wankers, and that's fine by me."
- "Take care. Go to mum's. Kill Phil, grab Liz, go to the Winchester, have a nice cold pint, and wait for all of this to blow over."
- "Hang on lads, I've got a great idea."
- "When the opponent expands, I contract. When he contracts, I expand. And when the opportunity presents itself, I do not hit. It hits all by itself."
- "I do believe Marsellus Wallace, my husband, your boss, told you to take me out and do whatever I wanted. Now I wanna dance, I wanna win."
- "I am a star. I'm a star, I'm a star, I'm a star. I am a big, bright, shining star."
- "I never did it with baked goods, but you know your uncle Mort, he pets the one-eyed snake 5-6 times a day."

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FUCWIT League

At the end of year we'll be giving away prizes to the best performing FUCWIT (Felix Ultimate Coffee break Weekly Issued Tournament) teams, so send us your answers – there's loads of time to catch up.

Double Vision: One point for each individual. 16 points in total. Easy.

Movie Quote Quiz: One point for each correct answer.

FUCWIT LEAGUE 2004-5

Smith & Wesson	170 points
Management Slackers	127 points
Team Willy J	93 points
Araldite Sniffers	91 points
The Illegitimate Bionic Progeny of Jeremy Beadle	69 points
Schoolboy Error	59 points
Team Robin	52 points
Team Bulwer	42 points
Oliver Carson	29 points
The Schist ones	21 points
KPN ²	11 points
Natasha Kundi	10 points

Send in your entries to
coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk

SPORT

sport.felix@ic.ac.uk

Disc Doctors back in action

ULTIMATE FRISBEE

London Winter League
Matchday 3

By Ian Ballantyne

Christmas is a great time for festivities... but not for Ultimate. Two weeks of frisbee-less turkey and Christmas pudding eating had slowed Imperial's Disc Doctors down to a crawl.

Disc Doctors 13
Curve 7
Unsurprisingly, the first game

against Curve was a little on the slow side. Everything was in Imperial's favour. There was no wind, and the Curve guys had even chosen to play into the sun! Still, the Disc Doctors (DD) went 2-0 down, due to a couple of overhead hucks.

No sooner had the Disc Doctors put an end to the overheads, the score began to turn in their favour. A quick comeback left the final score at 13-7.

Dr PAF 9
Disc Doctors 5

Due to a last minute pull-out in Division 3, a new pickup team, 'Dr PAF', was formed from PAF players, a few very eager Americans, and our very own Nathan and MadK.

Dr PAF fought harder than shoppers at the January sales, sending a couple of quick upfield passes. They had great organisation on pitch, especially for a team who don't usually play together. MadK scored a couple against DD, almost losing his 'Committee Status' in the process (only kidding!)

DD had the opportuni-

ties, but, quite frustratingly, dropped a number of end-zone passes. There was one very long point that seemed to drag on for an eternity, wearing everyone down. Not even some fantastic hucks from Jay and Stylish could save DD.

It finished 9-5 to the PAF folks, but the free massages from the Dr PAF players made DD's efforts worthwhile!

Discuits 2 10
Disc Doctors 9
This game was likely to be the toughest. Discuits 2 were

formidable opponents, jam-packed full of experience and, dare I say it, tall players!

They came straight at DD with a zone, catching the guys unaware. They blocked a hammer to score the first point, then two consecutive points after that. A brilliant flow of passes from Magic to Kev to Stylish to Stas got DD back in the game. With Doctors' discs flowing like raging rivers, Discuits resorted back to man marking to put a plug in DD's scoring spree. When Discuits were 8-5 up, they began to throw away a

number of discs, but as the horn went at 10-8 to Discuits, it was clear they had won. In the true style of Ultimate, the final point was played out with just as much intensity, even though the outcome of the game had already been decided. DD won the point and the game finished 10-9.

The day ended with a sing-song from Discuits, a game of Kabaddi and a trip to the pub. At this point, Nathan reminded me that he actually won all of his games, since he played for Dr PAF for the last two. Cheeky hucker!

Glamour and the City

RUGBY

City & Guilds Men 1st 26
HAC Men's 1st 5

By Andrew Towers

Cast in the phallus-like shadow of the city's erotic gherkin, the mighty City and Guilds rugby team played their final match of the autumn term. The opposition: the Honourable Artillery Company.

Severely depleted through injury, apathy and alcohol, the C&G squad consisted of 14 men, two of whom had been called out of retirement

to boost numbers. However, upon arrival at arguably the world's most valuable rugby pitch, it became apparent that the HAC were also struggling, with only 13 men to avenge their 66-29 defeat at the hands of a rampant C&G team last year. Rugby league style, the flankers were dropped to accommodate these numbers. Their lack of front row also meant unopposed scrums.

The result of this was an unusually open game, with the HAC exposing gaps around the fringes, and the C&G backs exposing the space out wide. With the

ageing Adrian "pretty fat for a fast man" Lewis stepping in at 10, Mike "I love Imperial too much to bother graduating" Hicks deputising for our entire back row, and Will "I had to cycle from Croydon to get here" Green kindly substituting for us, an otherwise young and sprightly C&G dominated much of the first half with some flowing moves and direct running, coming close to opening the scoring on a number of occasions. Although both teams managed to cross the opponents' line, the first half ended a disappointing 0-0.

The good humour and fair play disappeared quickly, as the second half turned into a scrappy, somewhat ill-tempered affair. Late tackles, sliding tackles, stamping and even trash-talk crept into the game. The referee only exacerbated things by allowing much of the dangerous play to continue throughout the half.

However, the superior fitness and skill of C&G started to make the difference, resulting in a dubious try for the prolific Matt Taylor after some Zidane-like footballing skills from the backs. The powerful Mike Hicks

waltzed through the goal-line defence to add to the C&G lead, before fresher and ladies' favourite Luke Taylor snatched his first try for the club.

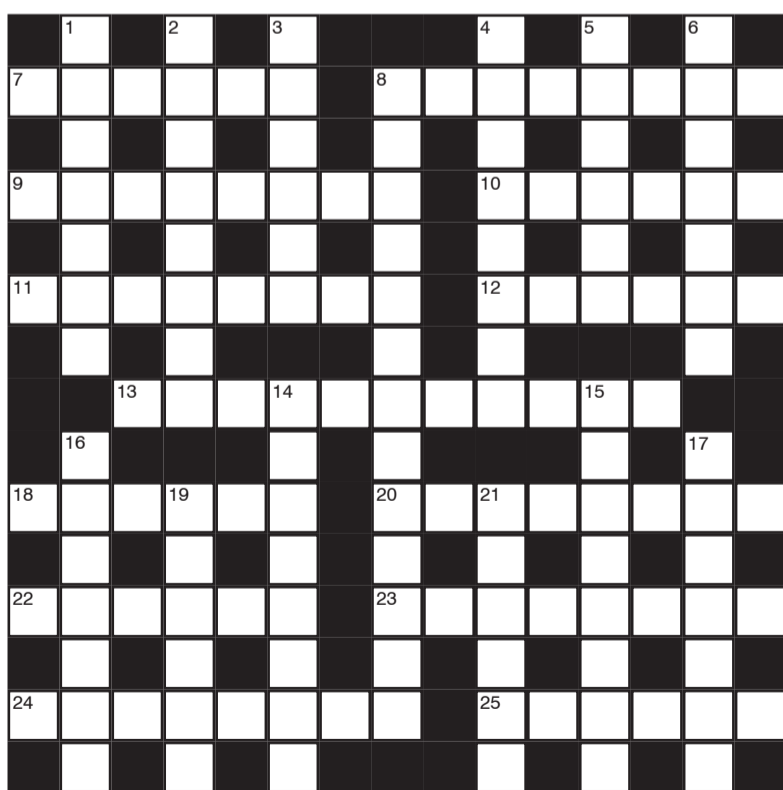
The C&G scoring was wrapped up by an incisive finish from the tenacious Matt Bangor after some hard work from Nathan Alliston. The HAC managed a try during this spell of scoring, but never threatened to take control of the game. With Lewis contributing a respectable three out of four conversions, the game ended 26-5 in favour of the Guildsmen. Other notable performances

include that of debutant Neil Turkington, whose "aggressive" tackling kept much of the HAC back line very quiet for the duration of the match.

This provided a satisfying end to an enjoyable year which leaves the most glamorous team in Imperial unbeaten, and reigning Sevens Champions (many thanks to the Numanator, and particularly to Alex "he's behind you" O'Rourke, for all their help and hard work). Plans for 2005 include mini-tours to Oxford, Cambridge and hopefully Dublin!

Felix Crossword 1311

by Jabberwock



Across

- Thin sheet of recycled manila (6)
- Star topless in *A Preference for Danger* (8)
- When not at home, remove clothing and leave behind (8)
- Former students redraft 7, amending first-class grade (6)
- Oriental drink can generate excitement (5,3)
- Say goodbye to military intelligence Japanese unit? (6)
- Diana, once, in disaster where 6 originated (6,5)
- Behead all French who attempt to offer a higher price (6)
- Hero's love: first love that's evergreen (8)
- Wonderful and mostly luxurious cloth (6)
- Write up memoir entitled *The Trade Centre* (8)
- Larkin, as published, also damaged by 6 (3,5)
- US president nearly assassinated about a gun, we hear (6)

Down

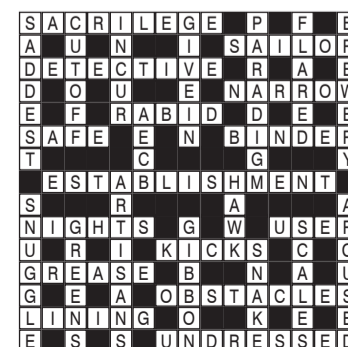
- Now is the time jaguar has a change of heart (at the start of Yuletide?) (7)
- Physicist celebrated this year: German, one close to Gertrude perhaps (8)
- Repeat standard nonsense (6)
- Legendary island sunk by 6, perhaps, almost a century later may resurface here (8)
- Some leprous typist wrote *A la recherche du temps perdu* (6)
- It destroyed Tunis in the morning possibly (7)
- Verses I omitted: "Open, Galahad! I am the beginning and the end" (5,3,5)
- Such a proposal may be made in December (second half of Advent) (8)
- Rating Bellini opera long and unusual (8)
- Badly damaged by 6, a re-edition of the *Kama Sutra* without the covers (7)
- Jellyfish assumed to have dispersed (7)
- Exposed heartless landlady? Hardly! (6)
- Austro-Hungary's marks, when deflated a hundred times, become invalid (6)

Greetings, cruciverbovoracists!

We introduce some cross-referencing in clues this week (eg 10 across, 13 across, etc). The idea is that whenever a number appears in a clue, it references the answer obtained by solving the clue to be found at the corresponding number (of course, only if such a clue exists).

However, I am afraid some clues came out more difficult than intended, so some tenacity will be necessary. I have used Chambers (1998). Good luck!
Jabberwock

Issue 1310 solution



Last week's winner is Chris Hughes, Mech Eng I. Well done! Send your answers to coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk or bring this page down to the Felix office in the West Wing of Beit Quad. Each week, we'll choose a winner and print their name, thus providing them with almost unlimited kudos and self-satisfaction. Everyone who provides us with a correct solution will get an entry into our prize draw at the end of the year



sport.felix@ic.ac.uk

Virgins on top of ULU

RUGBY

GKT Women's 1st 5
Imperial Women's 1st 25

By Scotch

We beat GKT!

For those of you who do not follow women's rugby, let me put this in context for you. GKT have been finalists in the ULU Cup for the last five years, are the reigning league and cup champions, and last year hammered us 98-0. We don't like them very much.

As always with the Virgins (Imperial's women's rugby team), there was much fun to be had before we even got to the ground. We shall spare the blushes of everyone who was in the van on the way to the match, as we all revealed

rather too much about ourselves. Suffice to say that sex therapist DangerMouse has a new project to work on. She has decided to pass up the challenging case of Spandex, who asked if "To be a serial monogamist, does that mean you have to be faithful?" Perhaps we should have made her keep her old bar name, Whore!

So, to the game itself. We quickly rucked and mauled our way up to their try line, and from 5m out Gump took the penalty to crash over for a try. And then we did the same again; this time prop Wonkey was screaming "give me the ball!" Try!

From a line out on their 22m, several phases of play found Wonkey on the wing, who selflessly passed the ball to DangerMouse in the dead

ball area, and thus came our token backs' try of the game.

The final few minutes before half time were hair-raising to day the least. A succession of penalties were given against us for not retreating 10m, and pretty soon we were 30m back. GKT found their winger, beat our guard and then raced off down the touchline. A brilliant tackle by Tumbles saved us, forcing the winger into touch as she touched down.

At the start of the second half, good hands from the backs let DangerMouse loose on the wing, who made up half the pitch for us. This passage of play finished with Flipper nearly scoring, only to have the ball knocked out of her hands as she crossed the line.

GKT opted to run the pen-

alty at the restart, but Gump ripped the ball in the ensuing maul, popped out the other side and just kept on running.

Thanks to Joss' fine territorial kicking, we gained a penalty on their line. One of theirs feigned injury, meanwhile the ref gave Gump the nod to take the quick tap and score her third of the afternoon, causing us to briefly consider the headline 'How Gump Gubbed GKT'.

In the final ten minutes, things started to get rather heated. Tempers flaired - we'd had enough of their pinching in the rucks, thank you very much - and the ref seemed determined to even things up a bit. Wonkey was sin binned (she was already on a warning) for body-barging their tiny winger into



Imperial's youngest fan

touch and was off for the rest of the game. We were back on our line, scrambling defensively to cope with self-inflicted bunching of defend-

ers and a seven-man scrum. The referee erroneously awarded a penalty try to GKT for coming through the ruck.

Honourable mentions must also go to twirly Easy, Beater for playing musical forwards throughout the game, Flipper for coping particularly well under pressure, and loadsa trademark Spandex penalties - she even managed to pass the ball once, which really confused them!

A dishonourable mention goes to the ref, for being the most sexist buffoon I've encountered in five years of playing. The awards went to Killer and Gump (what a surprise) for back and forward of the match respectively. Felix is the happiest captain Imperial has ever seen, as we are now top of ULU.

Celebrations continued with a nice game of '19 plus three'.

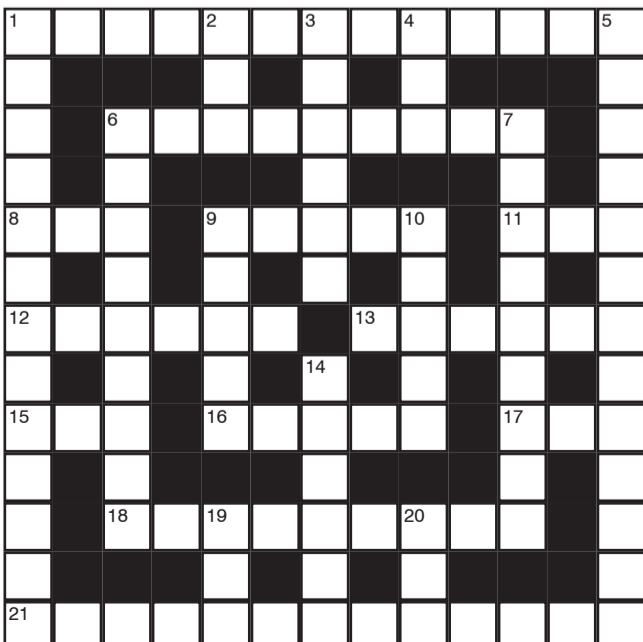
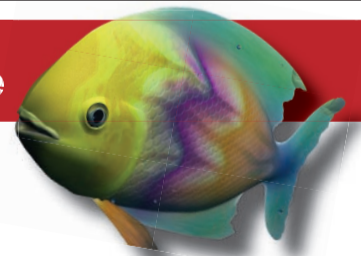
Finally, most importantly, congratulations to Coach Dave on the birth of Baby Holly Poynter (above). Bless!



Six of the victorious Imperial Virgins women's rugby team in the 'legendary' communal bath at GKT

Quick Crossword

by Fishface

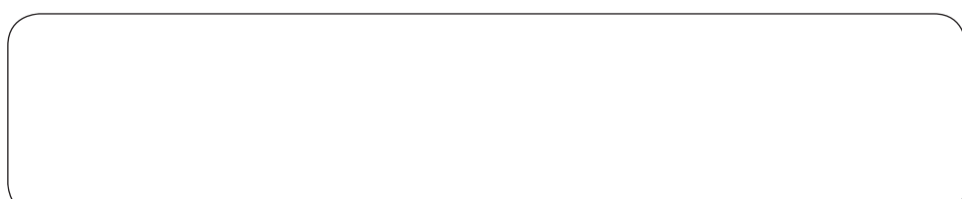


Across

1. County in southern England (13)
6. Pile of waste (9)
8. Vase (3)
9. Grievance (5)
11. Rowing implement (3)
12. Continent (6)
13. Fleet (6)
15. Unit of resistance (3)
16. Young dog (5)
17. Charged particle (3)
18. An officer who keeps records and takes minutes (9)
21. The most popular song in a particular week (3,2,3,5)

Down

1. Belgian detective (7,6)
2. Hair (3)
3. Type of popular musician (6)
4. View (3)
5. Fun (13)
6. Ailments (9)
7. Swear word (9)
9. Appear suddenly (3-2)
10. Ahead of time (5)
14. Talking (6)
19. International standard country code for Central African Republic (3)
20. Curved line (3)



Kudos to Chris Hemmens, Maths II, for completing last week's Quick Crossword and bringing his solution to us!

Send your answers to coffee.felix@ic.ac.uk or bring this page to the *Felix* office in the West Wing of Beit Quad

Issue 1310 solution

