



Rhifyn 1195

Issue 1195

A Note from
the Editor
Nodyn gan y
Golygydd

The Importance of Informing People

Hello All,

This edition of the newspaper looks a little different to what you're used to – I'm trying out a new format for the online editions we've got this year. Any feedback would be greatly appreciated so send us a message on Instagram if you have any suggestions. Within this edition we've got some amazing articles from a few of our sections. I wanted to talk about the theme we tried to weave throughout this edition and that is "The Importance of Informing People".

Newspapers were at the heart of how people consume media for many years but with the rise of online media our role has shrunk. That doesn't mean we're going anywhere anytime soon as Gair Rhydd will always be committed to the student media experience at Cardiff. However, that means we have to adapt to reach more and more people – whether that is online, social media or new things within the paper like the crossword.

The people behind the articles are always important as you are reading the essence of their perception of the news. Having students as the journalists is such a key part of any student media experience. You are gaining a perspective from someone who lives and studies at the same place as you. Although you might not know them, these are underlying factors that bind you to the writing. Being informed by them on issues you both view as important only galvanises the student body more and unifies us around issues we all care about.

If you have something you want to share with your fellow students, reach out to me and I can point you in the right direction. We all come from unique places and have stories and views that can help inspire and enrich a debate. I would love for this paper, alongside the other sectors of student media, to be that place you can go to.

I wish you all a happy holidays wherever you will be celebrating and enjoy the rest before the new semester.

Edward Sutton

Editor-in-Chief

The background consists of several overlapping, organic, blob-like shapes in various shades of pink and purple. The colors range from light, pastel pinks to deep, saturated magentas and purples. The shapes are layered, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall aesthetic is modern and artistic.

Spotlight

The Perfect Way to Spend your Evening at Winter Wonderland

Belle Lee – Spotlight Editor

Cardiff's Winter Wonderland is back, full of festive joy and a myriad of activities that will keep you occupied throughout the winter months. It is truly the perfect way to spend an evening in the December cold. Wrap up warm as there is a lot to see and do over two prestigious locations in the city.

Among the multitude of fairground rides and games, Winter Wonderland has Ice Skating, a famous Ice Bar, where temperatures reach -10 degrees, a Ferris Wheel and so much more. We aim to tell you the perfect way to spend time at Winter Wonderland this winter. Firstly, we recommend you go on a Wednesday. Thanks to the generosity of Orchard Media, Spotlight was allowed some of the first looks of Winter Wonderland on one of their 'Student Nights' - held every Wednesday until 5 pm. They host a 'Sip and Skate' targeted directly towards students where, for £15, you can enjoy ice skating under the beautiful Cardiff Castle and then indulge in a drink afterwards to warm yourself up. This budget-friendly activity is the perfect way to spend a night out, with friends or your partner.

After you have indulged in some ice skating and a drink, we recommend you head over to the other location of Winter Wonderland - City Hall Lawns. While the Big Wheel dominates the skyline, there are a host of other things to do while you're there. The Ice Bar is truly worth the cold for the amazing atmosphere, drinks and photos; however, it usually gets booked up far in advance so if you are thinking about your perfect evening at Winter Wonderland, plan accordingly!

We suggest getting some food before you explore the beautifully decorated City Lawn. Among the myriad of fairground rides and games, you will find many culinary offerings. Whether you are in the mood for something sweet or savoury, Winter Wonderland offers crepes, turkey and even the opportunity to toast your marshmallows on some open contained fires. We recommend the Turkey and Cranberry Yorkshire Pudding wrap as it was filling, full of the festive trimmings you expect and was an amazing treat after falling over on the ice.

Once you are well-fed, we suggest you go on the Big Wheel as the perfect way to end your evening. Look over at the night skyline where you can see Principality Stadium, the Castle where you've just been ice skating and all of the illuminated Winter Wonderland below. End your evening on top of the world in the fresh December air, with all of your friends. Sounds like the best way to spend an evening with them.

There She Rows!

Eleanor Reynolds – Contributor

Former student, Ellie Reynolds who graduated in 2020/2021, is about to head off on the challenge of a lifetime: a 3000-mile row across the Atlantic Ocean. She is one of *There She Rows*, a team of four women rowing from La Gomera to Antigua, hoping to inspire girls and women to take part in sport. Ellie was a very active member of Cardiff University Triathlon Club and says she credits the experiences she had there for a lot of her success. "I came to university as a shy and unhappy teenager with an eating disorder; I left happy and healthy with several podium races, a slot in the Ironman World Championship, and a bunch of lifelong friends. I have so much gratitude for the people I crossed paths with there - I truly believe that club-shaped me into who I am."

But Ellie believes the importance of sport is more than just the physical and mental health benefits. "It goes far beyond the obvious. You can't underestimate how much employers value the skills you develop through sport, whether that's teamwork, resilience, confidence, or the diverse experiences of being on a club committee."

The four team members will be rowing in shifts of 2 hours on 2 hours off, living on dehydrated meals and desalinated seawater, facing sleep deprivation, and ocean wildlife, and navigating all the storms the Atlantic might throw at them. They leave land on 12th December and are hoping to finish in less than 40 days. Having never rowed before joining the team, Ellie says it's been a "monumental commitment and a steep learning curve"!

She hopes their journey will encourage others to take on their challenges and reap the opportunities that sport brings. "Don't be afraid to try things that scare you... who knows where you might end up!" You can follow the team on Instagram @theresherows.

Is the Bute Christmas Light Trail Worth it?

Lily Morey – Contributor

The award-winning light trail returns to the magnificent Bute Park this November 2023. With its new and extended route, you can be sure to enjoy the immersive visuals and jaw-dropping illuminations. There are original audio compositions and dynamic choreography to enjoy with intelligent designs throughout the trail.

If you are in the mood for some Christmas spirit paired with the many exciting and illuminative designs, you'll be sure to be entertained. With the new map being announced on their website, you can expect to see many stops named: Christmas Comos, Flights of Fancy, Unicorn Disco, Ice Fall, Twilight Garden and much more.

I went to the Bute Christmas Lights last December, with two of my friends. We wrapped up nice and warm and walked through the wonderful trail. We were in awe of all the beautiful lights and festive celebrations. My favourite spot was the lit up Lily pads in the pond, with beautiful and calming colours; everything was very pretty. I even enjoyed a tasty hot chocolate at one of the stalls, provided by the trail, which I highly recommend!

WalesOnline states 'The light trail was just phenomenal; it was all simply amazing. Bravo, Cardiff!' I can confirm you do leave the trail in awe of how much work the team has put into it. Lights are a happy, festive, and cosy tradition used at Christmas and I think Bute Park does a great job at this. Additionally, the food stalls at the end provide delicious snacks and warm beverages after your walk.

The trail is 1 mile long and can take approximately up to 60 minutes to walk around. It is great for families, including young children to keep them entertained and also elderly people as they allow for camping chairs to be brought in if you need to sit down during the trail for a small rest.

Although it can be on the pricey side for students, I do believe it was worth the hype, especially if you want to be outdoors and get in the festive spirit, accessible to anyone.

Act One Society: Shrek – The Panto!

Belle Lee – Spotlight Editor

Act One Drama Society is the largest Drama society in Cardiff, putting on several productions a year of all genres.

Gair Rhydds' Spotlight team was graciously invited to 'Shrek - The Panto's' opening night at Pulse Nightclub. This will be Act One's first performance this academic year.

After a tough upbringing as an orphan, Shrek chooses a quiet life by himself. His world turns upside down when people start turning up and living on his farm due to the evil, power-hungry councillor, Farquhard, who kicked the people out of Newport. Farquhard promises that if Shrek and his new friend collect his new wife, Fanny, he will remove everyone from his bog. Unfortunately, the sexual tension between Shrek and Fanny cannot be ignored before Farquhard's big wedding...

The cast of "Shrek - The Panto" delivered outstanding performances, bringing to life a cast of unique characters the audience loved and rooted for. Special mention must go to Joshua Salisbury, who played Farquhard as embodying the true pantomime villain with impeccable comedic timing and improv ability. Everyone who performed exhibited such high showmanship and should all be incredibly proud of themselves.

Contemporary humour with references to Tinder, Elf Bars and Newport made the evening engaging for the entire audience and filled the room with laughter. Audience participation was rife throughout the evening and the actor's ability to take that and turn it into a comedic opportunity should be commended.

Ben Lewis, the director, did a fabulous job of bringing the play to life and creating a script that combined traditional pantomime elements and incorporating banterous moments that captured the spirit of the Act One Society.

All profits raised will be split and donated to Make A Smile and UCAN Productions to support their incredible work nationwide.

Thanks to the Act One Society for the gracious invite and for putting on a spectacular performance.

I'm Really into Voguing Right Now: Welsh LGBTQ Ballroom Dancing

Henry Moxon – Contributor

Gair Rhydd's Spotlight Team was graciously invited to the Chapter's Art Centre to witness a spectacular evening of Welsh LGBTQ+ Ballroom Dancing, hosted by Nosweitha Vogue Community.

The feeling of community and togetherness within the ballroom scene is unparalleled. From the refreshing confidence of the competitors and their ability to dip, duck-walk and vogue, to the stunning looks they serve, and the impassioned reactions from the audience, Belle and I conclude there's nothing else quite like it. We were practically entranced, and though our hands might hurt now from clapping and clicking, the pain was certainly worth it. Being in the audience for a ballroom event is something everyone must experience in their lifetime.

However, while we wholeheartedly recommend it, it's imperative that those in attendance, especially those who wish to take part, first educate themselves regarding the Ballroom's poignant history. While realistically anyone can attend and compete, to truly become immersed in the experience you must first understand where it comes from, how it came about, and why its history is so sacred to queer people, especially queer people of colour.

As an art form, Ballroom culture originated and was made popular in New York during the 1980s. Formed in opposition to the racism found in drag pageant culture, it allowed LGBTQ+ black and Latino individuals to express their gender and sexuality without the influence of heteronormativity. As time went on, the ballroom scene became one of the most diverse environments in the world, encouraging everyone under the queer umbrella to take part. In your standard competition, competitors "walk" various categories, ranging from 'Best Dressed' to 'Body & Sex,' as they attempt to win "Grand Prize" as part of their Houses.

Since its creation, Houses have been a key part in upholding ballroom culture. Most often a group of queer people, houses can function as a person's 'chosen family. Run by a 'parent,' houses are created to provide safe havens for gay and trans youth without support systems. However, no house is identical, and some houses simply function as a competitive group.

Two fabulous shows demonstrating Ballroom Culture are 'Pose' and 'Legendary,' with the former representing the origins of ballroom culture, and the latter highlighting how it has developed since then. Both introduce you to the conventions of Ballroom, but also show how important the movement is in queer history.

Consistently a place that celebrates the fluidity of gender, sexuality and expression, Ballroom culture's importance today cannot be understated. In an environment where binaries are constantly enforced, Ballroom challenges those that see things in black and white, instead creating a space of colour and radiance.



Taf-Od

S4C yn diswyddo Siân Doyle

Llŷr Eirug - Golygydd Taf-Od

Ddydd Gwener (24ain o Dachwedd) daeth y newyddion fod Prif Weithredwr S4C, Siân Doyle, wedi cael ei ddiswyddo. Daeth Awdurdod S4C i'r penderfyniad yn dilyn tystiolaeth adroddiad cwmni cyfreithiol Capital Law. Yn ôl S4C roedd diswyddo Sian Doyle yn 'penderfyniad anodd ond unfrydol'.

Yn dilyn penderfyniad S4C i ddiswyddo Siân Doyle, cyhoeddod y cyn-brif weithredwr ddatganiad ei hun. Yn ôl Siân Doyle: 'Cefais wybod am y penderfyniad mewn llythyr, a hynny heb rybudd a heb weld copi o ymchwiliad Capital Law na unrhyw dystiolaeth, heb gael cyfle i ymateb a heb reswm dilys y tu ôl i'r penderfyniad'.

Mae Capital Law yn ymchwilio i honiadau o fwlio a 'diwylliant o ofn' o fewn S4C. Ym mis Mai eleni, derbyniodd Newyddion S4C llythyr gan gyfrif e-bost anhysbys yn honni bod staff y sianel 'yn aml yn cael eu dwyn i ddagrau' ac 'yn rhy ofnus i gyflwyno ei profiadau trwy'r broses arferol o gyflwyno cwynion'. Honna Siân Doyle iddi wynebu 'triniaeth annheg a bwlio ehanghach' gan y Cadeirydd Rhodri Williams ac ei bod yn 'credu fod bod yn fenyw wedi bod yn factor sylweddol' i'w thriniaeth yn dilyn y penderfyniad i'w ddiswyddo.

Dyma'r ail unigolyn i gael ei ddiswyddo gan S4C. Fis Hydref cafodd Llinos Griffin-Williams ei ddiswyddo o'i rôl fel Prif Swyddog Cynnwys S4C yn dilyn honiadau o 'gamyddwyn difrifol' yn Ffrainc yn ystod Cwpan Rygbi'r Byd. Yn dilyn y cyhoeddiad, aeth Sian Doyle ar gyfnod i ffwrdd o'i gwaith oherwydd salwch.

Er i Siân Doyle gael ei ddiswyddo, dywedodd undeb darlledu Bectu fod 'bwlio ac aflonyddu yn parhau yn broblem ddifrifol yn y diwydiannau creadigol' er hyn, maent hefyd yn 'edrych ymlaen at weithio gyda S4C i sicrhau diwylliant ble gall pawb deimlo'n hyderus ac wedi'u parchu yn y gweithle'

(Tarddiad: Wikimedia Commons)



Dyfodol Iechyd Meddwl ffermwyr Cymru mewn argyfwng

Ffion Jones - Golygydd Taf-Od

“Yr argraff fod y cenhedlaeth ifanc a ffermwyr yn enwedig, yn anobeithio am y dyfodol.”

Mae pryderon wedi codi ymhlith pobl ifanc cefn gwlad Cymru, yn enwedig ffermwyr ynysig sydd yn dioddef o iechyd meddwl difrifol. Mewn cyfweiliad gyda Ben Lake, cynrychiolydd materion gwledig Plaid Cymru yn San Steffan, datgelodd fod iechyd meddwl yr ifanc ar eu gwaethaf ers Cofid-19.

Yr her fwyaf wynebaw unigolion ynysig cefn gwlad dywedai Ben Lake yw'r syniad o gael i'w “derbyn mewn i'r gymdeithas.” Mae hyn yn her sydd yn cael i'w weld yn ofidus oherwydd y pwysau y mae cyfryngau cymdeithasol yn creu i “efelychu'r bywyd perffaith a'r ffordd ffals o fyw”.

Niferoedd Hunanladdiad Cymru a Loegr – ‘2 person yr wythnos ac mae hynna'n frawychus’

Mae ffigur diwethaf cyn cofid o hunanladdiad yng Nghymru a Loegr (2019) yn 102 o farwolaethau. Roedd Ben Lake yn rhannu ei ofidion ac yn arddagnos pryder am y nifer penodol yng Ngheredigion:

“Dwi'n ymwybyddol mae ffigwr blynyddol yw e, ond os chi meddwl amdano fe 2 person yr wythnos... ac mae hynna'n eithaf brawychus. Mae Ceredigion ymhlith y gwaethaf o hunanladdiad o ran pen poblogaeth yng Nghymru.”

Pwy sydd yna I Helpu?

Mae diffyg cyfleusterau ar gyfer ffermwyr ifanc yn y cefn gwlad yn ffactor allweddol at y sefyllfa fregus. Nid oes yna unrhyw ffynonellau uniongyrchol oddi wrth y Llywodraeth wedi targedu at weithwyr ifanc ynysig yng Nghymru. Nid yw'r ffynonellau trwy'r Gwasanaeth Iechyd Cyhoeddus yn apelgar at nifer o'r Cefn gwlad gan fod trwch y boblogaeth cefn gwlad am drafod materion dwys trwy'r Gymraeg, ac nid yw'r gwasanaeth hynny'n hawdd darganfod. Y gefnogaeth fwyaf addas ar gyfer gweithwyr ynysig yw'r elusennau sydd wedi rhedeg gan wirfoddolwyr.

Mae Tir Dewi wedi cymryd y rôl allweddol o ofalu am iechyd meddyliol amaethwyr yng Nghymru, a gychwynnodd gan wirfoddolwyr y de orllewin yn 2015. Heb yr 80 o wirfoddolwyr ar draws Gymru ni fyddai cyrraedd ffermwyr y wlad yr un mor hawdd.

Yn ogystal mae elusen y DPJ a sefydlodd er cof am Daniel Picton-Jones a fu farw yn 2016 yn credu'n gryf yn y dywediad "atal nid gwella". Sydd yn adlewyrchu'r pwysigrwydd o dargedu gweithwyr ynysig yng Nghrymu.

Gellir ffeindio wybodaeth am yr elusennau yma ar lein ar eu gwefannau. Ond nid yw hyn yn ddigonol i sicrhau sefydlogrwydd iechyd meddwl gweithwyr ynysig Cymru. Y camau gweithredol nesaf byddai cefnogaeth neu weledigaeth gan y Llywodraeth, fel y dwedai Ben Lake:

"Mae elusennau tebyg i Tir Dewi a DPJ wedi ennill ymddiriedaeth cymunededd gwledig. Y cam nesaf gan y Llywodraeth yw i adeiladu bant o'r elusennau hynny, yn hytrach na creu sefydliad newydd i gystadlu gyda nhw."

(Tarddiad: Ffion Jones)



Doctor Who Yn Dathlu Pen- Blwydd yn 60 oed

Millie Stacey - Golygydd Taf-Od

Wrth i Doctor Who dathlu ei ben-blwydd yn 60 oed, mae'n saff dweud ei fod wedi chwarae rhan mewn cynhyrchu yng Nghymru.

Tirweddau hardd ac unigryw Cymru yw un o'r rhesymau pam mae nifer o raglenni a ffilmiau yn cyrraedd yma ar ein stepen drws. Un o'r rhai mwyaf adnabyddus yw Doctor Who. Ers 2005 mae'r gyfres ffuglen wyddonol boblogaidd wedi'i gwneud yng Nghymru, yn gyntaf gan BBC Cymru a nawr gan gwmni cynhyrchu Bad Wolf o Gaerdydd. Dewiswyd Caerdydd fel cartref Doctor Who gan y BBC yn 2004 a dechreuodd ffilmio'r flwyddyn ganlynol.

Mae'r sioe wedi creu effaith aruthrol yma yng Nghymru gydag adroddiad gan y BBC yn dangos effaith economaidd Doctor Who wedi fod yn enfawr gyda hyd at £134m mewn gwerth ychwanegol crynswth yng Nghymru, a chyfanswm cyfraniad y DU i'r economi o £256m.

Mae'r adroddiad yn canfod bod adfywio'r sioe yng Nghymru yn cael ei gydnabod yn eang fel y catalydd ar gyfer buddsoddi yng nghlwstwr creadigol De Cymru a'i arbenigedd mewn cynhyrchu teledu a drama o'r radd flaenaf. Bu'r adroddiad hefyd yn amcangyfrif bod pob cyfres o Doctor Who wedi cynhyrchu cyflogaeth anuniongyrchol ac ysgogedig sy'n cyfateb i 50 o swyddi fesul cyfres yng Nghymru, a 94 o swyddi o fewn y DU yn gyffredinol. Mae'r holl ddata hwn yn dangos bod Cymru bellach yn un o'r dewis gorau ar gyfer cynhyrchu ac yn gystadleuydd uchel i'r diwydiant ffilm. Mae llwyddiant Doctor Who wedi rhoi'r hyder a'r hwb i ddiwydiant cynhyrchu cymru y gallant ddarparu cynnwys o'r safon uchaf.

Rhai o'r lleoedd Cymreig enwog a ddaliwyd yn Doctor Who yn cynnwys Canolfan Mileniwm Cymru, stadiwm y Principality, amgueddfa genedlaethol Cymru, amgueddfa hanes genedlaethol sain ffagan, castell Caerdydd a llawer mwy.



(Tarddiad: Flickr)

Cymru: Diffyg Democratiaeth?

Jack Thomas - Golygydd Taf-Od

Democratiaeth ydy'r system wleidyddol o rhedeg gwlad lle mae holl poblogaidd y wlad yn cael eu cynnwys. Yn aml, ac yng Nghymru, mae gwleidyddion yn cael eu hethol i weithio yn y system yma ar rhan pobl eu hardaloedd. Er enghriaft, Jenny Rathbone AS sy'n cynrychioli ardal Canol Caerdydd lle mae prif adeiladau'r Brifysgol wedi'u lleoli. Mae Jenny Rathbone wedi'i hethol i gynrychioli'r ardal mewn pleidlais, lle mae gan bawb yn yr ardal cyfle i rhannu eu barn nhw.

Er mwyn cael system democratig effeithiol, mae'n bwysig felly bod pobl yn rhannu eu barn er mwyn sicrhau bod y canlyniadau mwyaf teg yn dod o'r pleidleisiau. Felly dwi am ofyn os mae system presennol Cymru yn sicrhau democratiaeth, a beth allen ni gwneud fel myfyrwyr yn y brifysgol i hybu tegwch ac effeithlonrwydd y broses.

Yn 2021 cafodd y wlad cyfle i bleidleisio yn Etholiadau'r Senedd, cyfle i mynegi barn am wleidyddiaeth a'r ffordd y mae'r wlad yn cael ei rhedeg. Yn ôl wefan y Senedd, mae'r gwleidyddion yn y Senedd yn "gwneud penderfyniadau sy'n effeithio ar bob agwedd o dy fywyd".

Yn ôl ffigyrau'r Senedd, llai na 47% o'r boblogaidd all bleidleisio oedd wedi yn Etholiadau'r Senedd yn 2021. Ers i Lywodraeth Cymru ffurfio yn 1999 (ar ôl datganoliad rhannol o Lywodraeth Prydain), mae chwe etholiad Seneddol wedi bod, mae 43.3% (ar gyfartaledd) o'r wlad yn pleidleisio.

Mewn etholiadau Cyffredinol y Deyrnas Unedig, lle mae cyfle i bobl o bob wlad y Deyrnas Unedig pleidleisio yn gweld nifer fwy o Cymry yn dewis gwneud, gyda dros 65% (ar gyfartaledd ers 1999) yn pleidleisio yn yr etholiadau yma.

Y cwestiwn yw, pam? Beth yw'r rheswm dros y ffigyrau yma? Pam ydy cymaint yn fwy o bobl Cymru yn pleidleisio dros wleidyddiaeth Prydain na gwleidyddiaeth Cymru? Mae'n bosib bod thema'r rhifyn GairRhydd yma'n perthnasol: Pwysigrwydd addysgu pobl.

Ydy ffynonellau newyddion Cymru yn digonol? Oes digon o ffynonellau ar gael i bobl y wlad i ddysgu am wleidyddiaeth Cymru? Yn sicr, mae rhai ar gael. Yn ôl OFCOM, ITV a'r BBC yw'r ffynonellau mwyaf poblogaidd yng Nghymru am newyddion. Mae honiadau wedi'u gwneud gan academyddion am wendid y cwmnioedd yma i sicrhau cynnwys digonol o Gymru a'i wleidyddiaeth, bu'n bosib felly bod diffyg cynnwys ar gael i'r Cymry allu ddysgu. Mae'n sicr bod gwaith y Senedd i ddarlledu cynnwys ddwyieithog ar-lein yn amlwg i unrhywun sy'n edrych ar wefannau'r gorfforiaeth, ac yn sicr yn lle da i ddechrau er mwyn allu dysgu mwy am system gwleidyddol Cymru, a'r hyn sydd i ddod. Mae'n bosib bod y gwybodaeth ar gael ond nid lle mae'r Cymry yn edrych.

Nid yw GairRhydd neu fy hun fel awdur yn honni fod cynnwys annigonol ar gael gan y cwnioedd cyfryngau mawr, ond mae sawl academydd yn honni fod hyn y rhan o broblem democratiaeth

Cymru. Mae thema'r rhifyn yma yn ceisio dangos pa mor bwysig yw addysgu eich hun a phobl arall, ac er budd dyfodol y wlad, a dyfodol ei democratiaeth, mae addysgu eich hun yn hanfodol. (Tarddiad: Jack Thomas)



Cyfieithiad o ‘Heartstopper’ am gael ei gyhoeddi yn Gymraeg

Beca Dalis - Golygydd Taf-Od

Mae'r nofel i bobl ifanc, Heartstopper, am gael ei gyhoeddi i'r Gymraeg a'r teitl fydd 'Curiad Coll'.

Roedd y nofel wedi cael ei droi i gynhyrchiad ar Netflix, lle wnaeth y gyfres ennyn hyd yn oed fwy o sylw a chreu cymuned, gan gynnwys rhoi cefnogaeth i'r gymuned LDHT+.

hoyw a chael hyder ymysg stereoteipiau mewn ysgol uwchradd.

Bydd hyn yn cael ei gyfieithu gan Alun Saunders sydd yn actor, awdur a pherfformiwr drag.

Awdures y nofel wreiddiol ydy Alice Oseman sydd wedi ennill sawl gwobr am eu gwaith.

Cofio Gary Speed

Owain Davies - Cyfrannwr Taf-Od

Ar y 27ain o Dachwedd eleni, rydym yn cofio 10 mlynedd ers marwolaeth Gary Speed. Hyd yn oed heddiw, mae pêl-droed Cymru dal i weld dylanwad anhygoel y cyn-chwaraewr. Gyda 85 o ymddangosiadau dros ei wlad, roedd yn chwaraewr adnabyddus o fewn y tîm rhyngwladol a wnaeth ei farwolaeth gyffwrdd ar cefnogwyr ar draws y byd. Ar 27 Tachwedd 2011 cafwyd hyd i'w gorff yn garej y teulu gan ei wraig, wedi iddo grogi ei hun. Mae'r ffaith bod "Sing a song for Speedo..." yn cael ei adleisio gan y wal goch hyd at heddiw yn dangos faint o feddwl oedd gan y cefnogwyr o'r cyn-rheolwr Cymreig. Mae clybiau pêl-droed ar draws Cymru wedi eu gwahodd i nodi munud o dawelwch yn eu gemau dros y penwythnos er cof am Gary Speed. Ers colli Gary Speed mae'r PFA wedi sefydlu llinell gymorth 24/7 sydd ar gael 365 diwrnod o'r flwyddyn os oes angen rhywun i siarad ag aelodau, yn ogystal â rhwydwaith cenedlaethol o 48 o gwnselwyr i chwaraewyr presennol a chyn-chwaraewyr. A hithau'n fis ymwybyddiaeth iechyd meddwl i ddynion mae'n bwysig i bobl fod yn ymwybodol eu bod ddim ar ben ei hunain. Mi fydd ysbryd Gary Speed yno yn y gemau ail-gyfle yn fis Mawrth ac heb dim amheuaeth mi fydd ei enaid yn bresennol fyth ymysg cefnogwyr Cymru.

(Tarddiad: Wikimedia Commons)





News

Dublin Attacks

Dilichi Dieobi – Head of News

This Thursday the 23rd of November, the people of Dublin faced a violent attack in their city centre, resulting in four people being seriously injured, two of whom were children under 7. 30 people were arrested on site, with further investigations being conducted. However, the question on what sparked this violence must be raised, especially with the Irish capital city being typically associated with peace and harmony.

That day around 1:30pm, a man stabbed three children and a care assistant in her 30s, who tried to shield the children. He was then disarmed by a member of the public and taken into custody by the police. However, after this incident, rumours on social media spread, claiming the perpetrator was an immigrant and had killed the children – which were discovered to be false. This led to agitators forming an anti-immigrant group to assemble at the crime scene and protest. At around 6pm, the demonstration became violent, and the crowd of up to 200 people began throwing bottles, fireworks and flares at the Irish police. The rioting charged from Parnell Square East through to O’Connell Street (Dublin’s main street), Capel Street and Parliament Street. During the peak of the riot, there were an estimated 500 people in the group. Several vehicles belonging to the Irish police and public transport were severely damaged, and shops were looted. In response, 400 officers were dispatched onto the scene, the largest deployment of armed officers in history in Dublin. By about 10pm the group had dispelled, and 34 arrests were made.

The Irish Times has described the group that started the attack as a ‘small hardcore group of far-right agitators’ and that “a priority is to bring to justice those ringleaders who sparked the violence”. Furthermore, Garda Commissioner Drew Harris, Ireland’s most senior police officer, stated that there had been an “element of radicalisation” to the riot. Recently, Ireland has seen a large increase in the number of immigrants entering the country to start a new life. A total of 141,600 people have arrived in Ireland this year leading up to April – a 31% increase compared to last year and a 16-year high. Due to this, some believe there has been an increase in far-right ideologies within the public about immigrants entering the country.

In response to these attacks, allegedly riled by anti-immigration beliefs, Ireland's trade minister, Simon Coveney has promised to look into people's concerns about housing for immigrants. However, Coveney denied that Ireland is going in a similar direction to other EU members, where more than one fifth of voters are in support of anti-immigrant political parties. Coveney said that most Irish people are in fact "very comfortable" with immigration in the country, as the government has emphasised the important contributions immigrants make to the country, especially in the healthcare sector where roughly 40% of doctors trained abroad.

This is not the first time Ireland has seen far-right groups whipping up hatred, as some groups have caused disruption to LGBT+ book events in libraries, and seized on high profile crimes committed by foreigners. Aoife Gallagher, a senior analyst at the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, has warned that Ireland does not have "a sense of complacency" because "as a country, we're immune to this stuff".

Win for LGBTQ+ Rights as Nepal registers first same-sex marriage

David-Owain Leah – News Editor

Activists have hailed a recent the recent union between Maya Gurung, 35, and Surenda Pandey, 27, as a win for the Asian nation of Nepal as a win for the countries LGBTQ+ community and queer rights internationally.

Coming after the historic Supreme Court interim order to allow same-sex marriages, the newly weds have hailed their union as a “big day” for not just them but for all sexual minorities. With Taiwan being the only other Asian nation to have legalised same-sex marriage, the couple believe their registration will open doors for future generations, noting the fight involved in securing their rights as a queer couple.

Despite being identifying and living as a transgender woman, Ms Gurung is still legally registered as a AMAB (assigned male at birth) and with her cisgender husband, they are registered as a ‘same-sex’ married couple. Despite this, the couple believe this will “open doors” for future extensions of rights in the country, as well as globally.

The couple have been together for over a decade and after getting wed in a temple ceremony 6 years ago, the district courts initially rejected their claims for registration, however after fierce backlash, Hem Haj Kafle, Dordi Rural Municipality’s chief administrative officer, awarded the couple their marriage certification quoting the Supreme Court Order and those of relevant government authorities.

Sunil Babal Pant, a leading Queer activist and founder of the Blue Diamond Society, Nepal’s leading queer rights organisation, called this a victory for sexual and gender minorities after telling the BBC “Now we can register our marriage as to the regular couples. But we still have to do more to get other rights.”. The activist and former lawmaker noted the doors that will open as a result of the win which will now give queer couples the rights to open joint accounts as well as own and transfer property just like other couples, something the newly weds are eager to start.

Loyal Dog survives 10 weeks in mountain besides dead owner

Katie Storrie – Contributor

Surviving more than ten weeks out in the Colorado mountains, Finney the Jack Russell gave testament to her loyalty by the side of her deceased owner.

On the 19th August, Rich Moore, a 71 year old hiker decided he wanted to climb San Juan Mountain with the aim of summiting the Blackhead peak. However, after he did not return he was declared a missing person and a search party was sent out. The Taos Search and Rescue team attempted to find Moore; throughout the search they remained open and public, putting regular updates online. However, due to unfortunate circumstances the search was unsuccessful and people were beginning to lose hope.

However, on the 30th October, Moore's body was found. What struck investigators as significant was Moore's dog Finney being alive, still protecting and guarding the body of her now deceased owner. Prior to finding Moore's body, authorities said they spent what felt like nearly 2000 years looking for him. It was not until a local hunter came across Moore's body and his dog, who was miraculously alive.

Naturally, when Finney was found she was malnourished and in desperate need of care. She had lost nearly half of her body weight and was in a critical state. Shortly after she was found she was transported to a veterinary hospital for immediate treatment. After a thorough examination, it was revealed that Finney had no serious injuries. Dona Holby, Moore's wife, said that she has a small injury on her snout and that there is a high chance that it will leave a scar.

Finney was a purple colour when she was found, and it has been reported that she was very protective of Moore's body. It took her some time to trust the humans that approached her. It was not until she was presented with some wet dog food that Finney separated herself from her owner. It is believed that during her time in the mountain she had to survive off of small animals and insects.

It was revealed later that Moore died of hypothermia and that no foul play occurred. Finney's own survival is a testament to her instinct and her ability to stay determined and loyal to her partner. It is likely she would have faced challenges finding food and water, however Finney's desire to be dutiful and loyal to her owner outweighed these challenges.

Since reuniting with Holby, Finney has become a kind of canine celebrity. Many people have taken comfort and see this bittersweet story as something that can hold inspiration.

Holby stated “I know that she was with Rich to the very end and somehow that should be a comfort”.

Finney’s loyalty is something that has been supported and congratulated around the world. It proves that a dog is really a man’s best friend. Her acts of service for staying loyal and staying by Moore’s side should be celebrated. Finney’s survival showcases the strengths of our instincts, to protect and stand by those that are close to us.

British Airways boss: UK is being left behind on greener jet fuel production

Sophia Crothall – Contributor

The British Airways boss has warned that rival countries are ‘getting ahead’ of the UK in developing greener jet fuel. Chief executive Sean Doyle urged the government to consider other nations’ approaches in encouraging domestic production of SAF (standing for sustainable aviation fuel). Mark Harper, the Governments’ Transport Secretary, stated the UK is ‘on track’ to meet its target of having at least five commercial SAF plants in construction by 2025.

SAF is created using sustainable sources, including agricultural waste, as well as used cooking oils which results in 70% less carbon than traditional jet fuel. It is seen as an essential tool if the aviation industry wishes to reduce its notoriously high carbon emissions, but is currently several times more expensive to produce.

Doyle stated that ‘We are struggling really just to get the ball rolling and getting plants built... Maybe we need to look at what other jurisdictions and governments are doing’.

The US Aviation company, Gulfstream Aerospace, operated the first transatlantic flight powered by 100% Saf on 19 November 2023. The flight departed from Savannah, Georgia and traveled to Farnborough, Hampshire on a Gulfstream G600 business jet. The flight lasted six hours and fifty-six minutes. Gulfstream Aerospace said the flight ‘showcases the potential for aviation’s future use of renewable fuels’.

The data collected from this flight will help Gulfstream and its suppliers understand aircraft compatibility with future low-aromatic renewable fuels, especially in cold temperatures. ‘Gulfstream is innovating for a sustainable future’, said Mark Banks, President of the company. ‘One of the keys to reaching business aviation’s long-term decarbonisation goals is the broad use of SAF in place of fossil based jet fuel’. The US has also introduced a tax credit scheme to lure investors in Saf production.

However, here in the UK we are slightly behind; the Department for Transport's SAF mandate states at least 10% of the fuel used by airlines in the UK must be made from sustainable feedstocks by 2030. Without UK SAF production, the mandate will rely on imports. There have been further calls for the Government to introduce a way of reducing the difference in price between the two fuels.

Alongside Doyle, who appeared at the Airlines 2023 summit, Mr Harper said a consultation on a 'revenue certainty mechanism' for SAF producers will be launched 'soon'. He insisted the UK has invested 'significant amounts of public money' into developing SAF.

Last week, the Department for Transport awarded £53 million to nine projects in the latest round of the Advanced Fuels Fund competition to develop SAF. These projects are estimated to create tens of thousands of jobs, and grow the economy. It has already funded 9 pioneering projects to create a brighter, cleaner future for the UK's aviation industry. Winning projects will create 10,000 green jobs by 2035 and boost the economy by £1.8 billion each year. This investment is part of the government's plan to deliver on their net zero commitments and make low-carbon flights a reality.

SAF can be used in jet engines to a maximum blend of 50% with kerosene without modifications, so the UK could soon have the capability to produce up to 810,000 tonnes, enough to fly around the equator of the Earth 3108 times!

Cardiff votes to become the first Welsh students' union to have a full-time international officer

Lily Mott – Contributor

On the 23rd of November, the Cardiff University student body voted to replace the current position of Vice President Undergraduate Students with a new role —the Vice President International Students. The amendment to the Students' Union's Sabbatical Officer structure was passed at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Driven by a recognition of the diversity of the student body, this amendment aims to address the unique challenges faced by the growing international student community.

1 in 4 students are classified as international students at Cardiff University, according to Student Union data.

“What a lot of people fail to recognize is that there are issues that affect every student—the housing crisis, the cost of living crisis—and it's not to minimize what everyday students go through,” said International Students' Officer Nathan Mintz. “But those issues tend to affect international students the hardest.”

Mintz has tried to help international students with a range of issues in his role of International Students' Officer this year, including students being sent back to their home countries due to visa issues and students not being able to secure housing.

The International Students' Officer was only a part-time Campaign Officer, rather than a full-time Sabbatical Officer prior to the amendment passing at the AGM. Mintz said the international community suffers due to the part-time nature of the International Students' Officer position.

“When it comes down to it, because of the nature of my role, the university doesn't take me as seriously. The union doesn't take me as seriously,” Mintz said.

The amendment passed with the closest margin of any motion at the AGM. Vice President Postgraduate Students Micaela Panes shared her concerns about replacing the Vice President Undergraduate Students with a Vice President International Students.

“The VP Undergraduate has a holistic voice of undergraduate students on issues of education and welfare and beyond within the university,” Panes said. “While this role (VP International Students) may be needed, it can't be at the expense of the undergraduate position.”

Former Cardiff University employee and current postgraduate student Tom Spade proposed the amendment with Mintz. Spade said he saw the challenges faced by international students as an employee of the university. “As a staff member, I couldn't have opinions about it. But, as a student, I can.” Spade said.

Sumani Alhassan, a postgraduate student from Ghana, said he faced challenges adapting to a new culture and academic expectations, as well as making friends in a new country. Alhassan said the amendment is a positive step toward better representation and inclusivity for international students at Cardiff University. “It shows that the Students' Union recognizes the importance of supporting international students and their contributions to the university community,” Alhassan said.

The proposed change is not only about representation, but also about acknowledging the financial contribution of international students to the university. International students were referred to as “cash cows for the university” during the AGM. Mintz said his own tuition increased by £4,000 this year.

Spade said he hopes the amendment will move the dial to help international students across the university. “It’s about, in the future, having a relationship, a working, critical friend relationship, with the university,” Spade said. “So, the university can support the visa side, and then the Students’ Union can support the representation on the events side.”

I'm a Celeb dealt ratings blow amid controversy over Nigel Farage's casting

Adam Gaston – Contributor

ITV's infamous show 'I'm a Celebrity.... Get Me Out of Here!' has suffered a crushing ratings blow after casting controversial former politician Nigel Farage in their 2023 lineup. Farage has reportedly secured a £1.5 million deal, which would make him the highest paid public figure in the history of the show.

This choice has angered many viewers and there has been uproar on social media. This Morning presenter Susanna Reid has described Farage as "disingenuous" in his response when asked on the show whether he would like to become Prime minister. On top of this, nearly 10,000 people online have posted using the tag #BoycottImaCeleb and several petitions have been launched to remove him from the show with many describing the production company's decision to cast the political figure as "tone deaf".

Comedian London Hughes wrote on Twitter: "If I went on and found out I was on the show with Nigel Farage, I'd leave and sue for racial negligence... but that's just me" and "I'd say that I'm quite shocked that ITV is platforming a racist as a form of entertainment, but nothing really surprises me anymore".

Controversy around this decision may be one of several reasons as to why the series has dropped to 7.8 million viewers, losing nearly 2 million viewers this series - the average for previous years being 9.1 million viewers. The viewings dropped even further on the second episode; Overnights TV have reported that this episode of the series brought in an average of 6.1 million viewers.

Farage has always been a polarising figure in British politics featuring heavily in the pro-Brexit campaign of 2016 with his right-wing views on a range of topics from immigration to the gender pay gap. He has also been accused of inciting xenophobia across the country.

Farage's casting follows another controversial politician Matt Hancock, who took part in the last year finishing in third place, to the dismay of much of the public after his affair scandal with Secretary Gina Coladangelo. This has led to suggestions from some viewers on social media that ITV is giving these politicians a platform to rebuild their public image and to boost the channel's own ratings.

Farage believes that he has been demonised over the years and wants to show people that he isn't nasty, promising viewers in an introduction video that "in the jungle you're going to find the real me". He also wasted no time in speaking his mind in camp, admitting to food critic Grace Dent that he wanted to take part in trials to get "25% of the airtime" in his plan on "reaching a whole new audience". This has added validity to claims that he is on the show to build his public image. It remains to be seen whether his part on the show will reach said audience, but if his political career is anything to go by, this will certainly be an interesting experience.

Nepal bans Tik-Tok

James Burns – Contributor

Nepal has become the latest country to ban the Chinese social media app TikTok, claiming it was “detrimental to social harmony.” The social media giant, which has around a billion monthly users, has already been banned in several other areas, including India and the US state of Montana. The app was banned four times temporarily in October 2020 in Pakistan, and its online shopping service was shut in Indonesia last month.

Nepal’s minister for communications and technology, Rekha Sharma, stated that the platform spreads malicious content. She added that “the ban would come into effect immediately and telecom authorities have been directed to implement the decision”.

This comes just days after the country introduced a new 15-point directive on the operation of social networking. This directive includes rules which mandate international social media platforms to establish a liaison office or an appointment of focal person within three months. On top of this, these platforms are required to register with the ministry of information and communication technology - rejecting these mandates risks a ban in the country.

The ban has ignited widespread criticism in the country. Gagan Thapa, a senior leader of Nepali congress, has questioned the government’s decision to impose a ban on TikTok. He expressed concerns with the ban, saying it was an attempt to curb freedom of expression and that officials should instead focus on regulating the platform.

As TikTok’s global reach has grown, so have the levels of hate, harassment and criticism of people’s online behaviour. The rise in online volatility has not been absent in Nepal either. In July of this year, one Nepali was arrested for creating and publishing indecent TikTok videos featuring the president and prime minister.

Ever since TikTok’s online presence and impact has grown, China's ByteDance (the platform’s owner) has faced scrutiny across the world over concerns that Beijing could use the app to harvest user data or advance its interests. As a safety precaution, the United States, Britain and New Zealand have banned the app on government phones, despite TikTok’s consistent denial that it has ever shared data with the Chinese government. However, Nepal has taken matters a step further with its introduction of the widespread ban. Their neighbouring country India has seen a ban on TikTok along with dozens of other Chinese owned apps since June 2020, over concerns that they compromise national security and integrity.

India and Nepal's bans of these applications make us ask a vital question; are we seeing a new age in which the world's governments attempt to regain control from big tech companies? Some speculate that it appears this way, as the number of regions banning TikTok and similar applications only seem to increase. The rise of social media has created a kind of power shift as it is not only the government who now determines what we see, what we want, and what we think. With this knowledge, it appears Nepal certainly won't be the last country to ban TikTok, as the war for information control between government and big tech corporations rages on.

Finance

The Commercialisation of Christmas Shopping:

an advertising spectacle and spending phenomena

Natalie Kenny – Finance Editor

Christmas, a religious and cultural festival, has transformed into an advertising spectacle with businesses capitalising on all aspects of traditions such as presents, decorations and food. With consumerism becoming synonymous with Christmas, competitive marketing campaigns and excessive displays have detracted from the holiday's religious association with money and spending becoming a centralised component for many of those celebrating.

As Christmas approaches, the majority of the UK will spend a significant amount of wages on Christmas shopping. Rather than fleeing to overcrowded shopping centres, many consumers will opt for online stores where there is a greater variety of goods available at just the click of a button. Once Halloween is over many companies begin capitalising on the Christmas period and high street giants such as John Lewis release their annual Christmas advert, happening this year as early as 9th November 2023. According to Statista, 78 percent of Christmas shoppers use online stores making it the most prevalent choice with Amazon, Argos, and eBay being leading sites.

Although online shopping may be the most convenient way to buy presents, the huge influx of deliveries poses a strain on postal services such as Royal Mail. With the exponential growth of e-commerce, Royal Mail's revenue has become more reliant on parcels than traditional mail services such as letters. Struggling to cope with the demand, Royal Mail has received a £5.6m fine for failing to achieve delivery targets such as their popular Tracked 24 service according to The Guardian.

The fast fashion industry has played a huge role in influencing Christmas shopping and compelling consumers to keep up to date with ever-changing trends. However, this has come with unfavourable consequences to the economy as well as issues around sustainability. On the economic side, the appeal of cheap, mass-produced products has compelled many businesses to adopt fast-fashion strategies. To keep up with the competition, many retailers resort to sweatshops encouraging an outlook on clothing as a

disposable commodity diminishing its value and quality. Profit goes directly to these private businesses; however, second-hand fashion sites such as Vinted are better for the economy and environment. They encourage reusing clothing instead of placing them in waste and landfills as well as reusing packaging. Money goes directly to the individual seller rather than large corporations meaning people have more disposable income to put into the economy.

The pressure of Christmas spending can also apply a lot of stress on families to spend beyond their means. According to The Independent, six out of ten households make sacrifices to be able to afford Christmas gifts with 31 percent relying on credit cards. There is a societal expectation and desire to keep up with the exchange of expensive and extravagant gifts. With marketing and social media playing a large role in organising these expectations, a shift towards sustainable gifts would be beneficial for the environment and economy.

Although the economic impact of the commercialisation of Christmas is a success in driving retail sales, the pressure on individuals to spend beyond their means and the implications of excessive waste can have widespread effects. A societal shift in attitude towards second-hand items and sustainable business practices would not only minimise spending habits but also have a positive impact on the environment and economy with people having more disposable income.

Opinion

Is ITV Wrong for platforming Nigel Farage?

Emily Clegg – Contributor

It's that time of year again when Ant and Dec's faces are gracing our TV screens again for a brand-new season of *I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out of Here*. This year has a decent array of famous (ish) faces such as Marvin from JLS, Fred off first dates and Britney Spears' sister but, the one name on everyone's lips seems to be that of former UKIP leader Nigel Farage. ITV seems to be making a habit of having controversial political figures feature on *I'm a Celeb*. The addition of Matt Hancock to last year's lineup certainly raised a few eyebrows, even more so when he managed to come in 3rd place. The inclusion of these politicians certainly gets people talking but is giving such controversial figures a spot on one of the country's biggest and most loved TV shows such a good idea.

Mr. Farage has reportedly been paid £1.5 million for his adventures in the jungle. ITV seems to have no problem funding Nigel's possible return to politics or at the very least his beloved European holidays. For those of us who don't indulge in the high-quality content of GB News thought we'd seen the last of 'The Man Behind Brexit' but like a cold sore in the winter he's come back round again. But why is Nigel Farage so controversial and why do many think ITV are wrong for re-introducing him onto the nation's tele. Farage is known for his very strong nationalist political stance with strict views on immigration and of course his defense of misogyny, homophobia, and xenophobia. He's said some pretty questionable stuff throughout the years such as telling women who breastfeed in public to 'sit in the corner', defending the use of slurs against Chinese and Romanian people, and blaming basically any problem the country has on immigration.

Although ITV are going to drown him in cockroaches and make him eat animal genitals, they are still giving him a platform to showcase the so called 'real him'. Other than the 1 and a half million quid he's been so generously offered, I'm sure he is using the show to give him a much-needed popularity boost. I fear some will feel sorry for him or begin to view him as some 'funny sound bloke' all because he comes across somewhat charismatic on a reality tv show. His controversial history of a whole manner of vile things cannot simply be ignored for a few cheap laughs, even if they are at his expense. No matter how many targeted jokes Ant and Dec continue to make it does not erase the potential repercussions of platforming such a divisive figure who will go on to support him after the show has finished. ITV amplifying voices like Nigel Farage's could be harmful to so many marginalized groups and paints the picture that no matter what horrid things you support you can still land a place on Britain's favorite show.

Happy Capitalist Christmas

James Roberts - Contributor

For a longtime, I have felt a growing disconnect between the authentic spirit and meaning of Christmas, compared to what the media presents to us. In the recent Mark's and Spencer's advert, gone were the family activities and wholesome companionship or, dare I say it, a mention of the birth of Christ. Instead, it seems that Christmas is being reshaped as a purely commercial and indulgent affair, with all the trappings of our consumerist society. Perhaps it is time for us to push back and reclaim the roots of Christmas, this can only have a positive effect for us all.

Personally, I have always felt an affinity for a particular kind of English Christmas. Walking through frosty fields to the lights of the parish church to sing carols so well known. Perhaps a trip to the pub afterwards and going to sleep (even as an apostate from the cult of Father Christmas) with an excitement for the next day. Then to spend the day with family sharing food and gifts without care for the problems of the world. The meal, hearty meats and vegetables with too much sauce, would be recognizable to our ancestors perhaps not in substance but certainly in spirit. This is the transcendent version of Christmas which I always look forward to. At Christmas you get to see that rare thing nowadays, a full church. Which suggests that this idea of Christmas is still important to many people. Some might argue that this culturally specific vision of Christmas has no place in a globalizing world or that is just an invention of the Victorians. Even if this was true, how can you deny the positive spiritual effect that it has had on society. A time to end the year with family and enjoy wholesome pleasures together.

Yet for some inexplicable reason, there seems to be a resentment towards traditional Christmas from certain sections of the media and wider society. And therefore, a move to make it more in keeping with our otherwise highly consumerist society. Have fun finding a nativity scene in any major supermarket this year, even if you have over two months of Christmas shopping to find it.

Call me an old fogey but it seems to me that Christmas is losing its deeper meaning and power as it becomes ever more commercial, even wasteful. Just another cycle in the shopping year like Halloween. “It starts too early” says everyone in October surrounded by Santa and his reindeer as they come into Tesco from a drizzly October afternoon. This is one of the major contributing factors to the stripping away of its allure. Because Christmas begins so early, by the time the day comes many people are simply sick of it. Particularly those who work in Supermarkets and endure hours of Christmas music (though none of those controversial Carols) for hours on end. I can’t help but feel that the narcissistic Christmas that Mark’s and Spencer’s are seeking to promote will only damage society further. In our age of “main characters” will it do us good to turn Christmas into just another self-centered booze fest. Perhaps if we turn to the past, we might find a way to restrain this move towards increased decadence?

Since at least 480 the church has preceded Christmas with Advent, which despite its eponymous calendar, is a time of fasting and penance. It is a time of reflection and preparation in which we are supposed to consider the hope that lies in the nativity narrative and beyond. The overt celebration of Christmas is therefore restrained until its actual date. Themes of longing and oncoming light are pervasive as expressed through carols like ‘o come Emmanuel’.

In our largely secular society referring to such an overtly religious tradition might feel out of place. But perhaps re-vitalizing the anticipation at the heart of Advent may be the key to

preserving the kind of Christmas I outlined before. Whilst not the best thing for the commercial economy it may be better for society as a whole. If we were to reflect on the meaning of the season, we might cut some of the wasteful excess that has crept in, like the abundance of single use tack. For if Christmas remains in its proper place and time, it will remain special, a sudden and profound burst of light in the midst of winter.

Probably the most noticeable thing about the Mark's and Spencer's advert this year was a general lack of children. Instead, Christmas is presented as the domain of childless professionals without a hint of the naivety which makes it so special. There is a commercialized narcissism evident here which seeks to remove the continuity in Christmas which makes it so transcendent. A continuity where, as we age, we take on a new role at Christmas. From childhood joy as we move to adulthood we have the reasonability to maintain the things which we enjoyed so that those younger than us can enjoy them in turn. Yet according to some it is in fact our role to be as self-centered as possible, who cares about kids they're just inconvenient!

Perhaps I'm overreacting and this will prove to be a marketing fad and next years round of adverts will be the picture of a Dickensian Christmas. But in our digital world the power of adverts should not be underestimated. Life often copies art, and it could be that soon this nightmare M&S Christmas becomes the norm. It is therefore our duty to protect this special time of year from those who want to abuse it for their own gain. Keep Christmas special.

One of the Greatest – Rugby World Cup 2023 a month later

Luke James - Contributor

Almost a month after the dramatic nail-biting final at the Stade de France in Paris, it is time to look back and review the 2023 edition of the Rugby World Cup. From the thrilling opener, where France blitzed the All Blacks 27-13 (New Zealand's first ever loss in a Rugby World Cup Pool Stage), to South Africa's hat-trick of one-point victories, the entertainment never stopped. Whether it be Handrè Pollard's 77th minute match-winning penalty kick or Portugal's victory over Fiji where they claimed their first ever World Cup win, each match had its moments of pure rugby beauty. Yet despite all of this, fans have complained, claiming that matches have been boring, or that the officiating and the TMO have been poor. Some have gone so far as to say that eventual champions South Africa bribed the referees so that they won their matches. As a British-South African however, I can strongly state that the country doesn't have the money to bribe the officials.

What disappoints me most about this is the inability to celebrate such a brilliant tournament. There was so much to be celebrated, but instead, the rugby community has turned cynical. Why should a team winning by one point be lamented when they earned their place by clinching the victories with grit and determination? Why should the TMO be removed when it made correct calls and provided the ability to ensure that the games stayed safe and fair? Fans need to step back and realise why the World Cup was so great. Everything was on a knife-edge, and everything came down to the wire, pulling on fans' heartstrings.

Ireland fought for 38 phases in a desperate, tired offence in order to break through the All Black's lines, but the much-needed try never came. 24-28, another defeat in a quarter final for the boys of the Emerald Isle. The Ireland vs New Zealand quarter final was an instant classic,

with many claiming it to be one of the best ever. Yet, the World Cup provided somehow an even better match when the hosts France battled South Africa, with two halves of completely different rugby. Six tries in the first, only one in the second, with Kwagga Smith making the crucial, match-winning turnover in a far more defensive, but equally as entertaining second half. The four aforementioned teams all deserved a semifinal spot, but only the two old enemies made it through, and they thoroughly deserved it. The same would've been said if Les Bleus and the Irish had won their respective matches, however it was not to be, and the French nation had to once again host a World Cup Final without their beloved home side. Argentina managed to stun Wales, turning a 10-0 deficit into a 17-29 victory, with brilliant defence from Matias Moroni to stop Louis Rees Zammit from scoring in the corner managing to turn the tide of the game. England proved doubters wrong by defeating fan-favourites Fiji 30-24, with Ben Earl having a stunning match and Owen Farrell capitalising on the Fijians' ill-discipline by scoring five penalty kicks.

The semifinals were polar opposites, with New Zealand decimating Argentina, and England and the Springboks fighting to the very end. Argentina have lost form compared to last year, where they actually defeated the All Blacks 25-18 in New Zealand. With this loss, combined with a massive resurgence from the New Zealanders, it led to Los Pumas losing 6-44 in a brutal slaughter. On the contrary, England, who had been written off before the World Cup started, managed to lead 12-6 at half time against the Springboks, and seemed to be on the verge of making a second consecutive final. However, after Manie Libbok was replaced by Handrè Pollard, the tide started to turn, and the Boks managed to scrape their way into the final thanks to the 77th minute scrum penalty.

The final was one of glory and desperation, with the Springboks failing to score any points in the second half (partially due to Ardie Savea's brilliant charge down of Pollard's drop goal attempt), and New Zealand fighting back, overcoming the challenge of being down to 14 men

thanks to Sam Cane's red card. New Zealand performed their very best, and often do when down to 14, a total opposite to the side that had conceded its worst ever loss (35-7) in its history against the Old Enemy at Twickenham just eight weeks previously. Despite having 60% possession, the All Blacks only scored once, coming from Beauden Barrett, his second try in a Rugby World Cup final after scoring one in the 2015 edition, and as a result of this, the Springboks made an astounding 209 tackles. Twenty-eight of these came from Pieter Steph Du Toit, who won player of the match for his incredible performance, as well as a further twenty-one tackles from Deon Fourie, the oldest ever Springbok debutant (having made his debut aged 35 and 9 months in 2022), providing a warrior-like defence until the final minute. Both sides could have won the William Webb Ellis Cup, but after a missed conversion from Mo'unga, and a missed penalty from Jordie Barrett, it was Jacque Nienaber's men in green and gold that took the trophy for the second time in a row (the second team to do so behind New Zealand in 2011 and 2015), and a record fourth time.

Overall, from the excellent Pool Stages to the dramatically close knockout matches, the 2023 Rugby World Cup has been one of the best possible adverts for rugby. However, copyright censorship by World Rugby (the sport's governing body), and mishandling by French organisers put a slight dampening on the spectacle. Having been fortunate enough to attend South Africa vs Scotland, I saw the stadium run out of beer before the end of the first half, at the time a serious matter for many fans. But looking back, it's possible to see the funny side, another great moment of what has been one of the greatest Rugby World Cups.

Without a doubt, RWC 2023 has been memorable and entertaining, and the spirit of rugby shone through the tournament. There was no boring moment throughout, and all in all, rugby was certainly the victor.

Good Fences Make Good Neighbours and a lesson in friendship

Ahanaf Taskin Ar-Rafee - Contributor

By the time I had arrived at Cardiff as a final-year direct-entry student on my own, I was excited about the prospect of making new friends. Finding my way to the accommodation, I was greeted with two curious faces and one of them even helped me carry my luggage up the stairs. They seemed like a friendly bunch and they, to a certain extent, were. In fact, most people in my building were friendly. I think I knew most people living there but let us not get lost in the numbers.

Not too long after moving in, I felt I was treated differently by many from how some others were. When I recounted one of those instances months later, a friend asked whether the person I spoke about had been racist. I gave her the benefit of the doubt and answered with a “No”. But she and I also had things in common. Perhaps I had done something wrong, I kept wondering. But, at a later point, when I talked to another of my flatmates, I realised that I was not alone in having that odd sense of unease because the dynamic there had certainly not been ideal.

During the first couple of months, I had known all these people living at the same place and their apparent show of concern left me confused. There was this one person who would wave at me enthusiastically when running into me in the street and then at some point stopped reciprocating when I started doing the same. I spent this time, in my mind, vacillating between “we are getting there” and “we are not there yet” stages of friendships.

Perhaps I had been looking at the wrong place or looking for friendship with the wrong people, you say? The obvious candidates would have been other direct-entry students from my class. But that was not part of the solution, perhaps some due to the faults of my own.

I soon found myself approaching and then sitting somewhat routinely next to a welcoming group in a sea of faces. I even hung out with them outside class, but was never a part of the group. That year, I graduated from a class where I could not name one good friend.

But in spite of it all, I had two flatmates who at times had been my close confidants. Most of the others were simply good neighbours and, clearly, that is what they were looking for in me. I also made friends through approaching strangers. With one of them I even went on a day trip recently. The reason we even knew each other was that we sat next to each other while returning from a GIAG trip by chance and I initiated the conversation. Later, when we met up months later after she reached out, she revealed that she would not have done the same, citing different tendencies.

My story is not too different from the stories of many others like myself. You can have so many things in common with people and it can still not be enough. But sometimes you only need one. Am I talking about friends or things in common with them? Both. Because during this time I also met some wonderful people who reciprocate my energy.

Nevertheless, the reality of the situation simply demands asking whether services like Samaritans are always the solution. You can ring them on days you have nobody around to talk to. There are many societies and events where you get to meet people with various commitments. Maybe you can join them too and, if you are lucky, find people who feel the

same way about the same things. But for those who want to take it further, there are also befriending services, albeit with a potentially long waitlist.

Even with all these events and friendly faces around us, the gaps are not too hard to notice as I begin to wonder, are we as a society doing enough? “No man is an island” but at this time of apparent abundance, it is hard to justify.



Review

Aladdin The Musical Review - The Animation comes alive on the Stage.

Edward Sutton and Nancy Cook – Editor in Chief and Spotlight Editor

It's not easy translating an animation to the stage – especially one as beloved as Aladdin. This production navigates it perfectly, adding new elements to the story that are a marked improvement.

I have had Arabian nights stuck in my head since leaving the theatre days ago now and that isn't even close enough a testament to the exquisite music pieces this show gave us and let me tell you it gave us a lot. On its first ever UK and Ireland tour, the Broadway and West End musical has a level of production like nothing else. The costumes, set, and special effects are above and beyond, a whole new world of theatre given to us by Disney.

With his spectacular first-act number, "Friend Like Me," and his unwavering intensity, The Genie, played by Yeukai Ushe, truly stole the show. The level of performance was untouched by anything else in the first act. The second act had its blockbuster moment with "A Whole New World". The simplicity of the set design – focusing on the legendary magic carpet in front of the stars – brought awe to even the youngest members of the audience. Gavin Adams as Aladdin and Desmonda Cathabel as Princess Jasmine were an impeccable vocal duo and did justice to the classic ballad.

The script was trite, and the acting was somewhat clunky for a Broadway show, but honestly these moments were few and far between the exotic numbers and hardly distracting. If anything, the entire experience would have been better marketed as a dance show, each number was impeccably executed start to finish at a genuinely beautiful standard. Disney Theatrical Productions excels at providing a sweet fairy tale and sense of magic for children interspersed with biting commentary and quips for its grown-ups.

The transition from animation to stage is handled very well with most key moments intact. The main change was the removal of the animal sidekicks. Abu – Aladdin's money was replaced with a trio of friends. A much-welcomed change as a Lion King-esque puppet wouldn't have been as effective. Aladdin's trio of friends performed a wicked original song High Adventure, complete with comical sword fighting and playful dance, in fact the whole way through they provided a fun dialogue and depth to Aladdin's story. Sadly, the end felt rushed which was strange considering the amount of time they were able to dedicate to the singing and dancing numbers.

The Disney magic sprinkled all over the production elevates this musical to the next level. If you're looking for a crowd-pleasing show over the holidays, Aladdin at the Wales Millennium Centre is definably the diamond in the rough.

I Should Be So Lucky Review

Edward Sutton – Editor in Chief

Kylie sprinkles some musical magic on this new production.

There's nothing like going to the theatre on a cold winters evening. It was one of the hallmarks of my childhood – going to see the new production with my Nana when I went down to see her in Kent. The Wales Millenniums Centres new show – I Should Be So Lucky – hits the spot with familiar songs but its plot left me feeling not so lucky.

New musicals can be a hard show to stick the landing with as new songs really have to blow an audiences socks off to leave a lasting impression. That's where I Should Be So Lucky has taken the right path by using songs were all familiar with to make it an instantly engaging show. Kylie Minogue helped create this musical and appears in it (albeit as a vision in a mirror). The addition of her music is great and immediately you want to sing along with the cast - as many in the audience did. All the singing and dancing was excellent – stellar performances all round from the cast. Each character got their moment in the spotlight to show off some very impressive vocal ranges. It was a feast for the eyes with great set design and a brilliant ensemble.

The plot, however, was not as polished as the performances. Confusing motives and bizarre character choices made it hard to understand why this was all happening in the first place. The events of the whole musical hinged around the groom's decision to trust the word of his Grandad, who had dementia. Personally, I couldn't get this thought out of my mind – my Grandad had dementia and I wouldn't have hinged a massive, relationship destroying, decision over one conversation with him about a “family secret”. I'll spare you anymore detail about the plot, I'll let you discover them for yourself. Subconsciously, the story as a whole lead me to draw parallels to Mama Mia. Turkey instead of Greece, a romantic decision to make, all with music from a familiar tour de force. Despite all that, I'd still say “thank you to the music” because even with the plot shortcomings, this musical is very entertaining. As a student, we are not the demographic this musical is aimed at but if you're looking for something to take your parents or grandparents to – they will love it.

I Should Be So Lucky

Nancy Cook – Spotlight Editor

Immaculately delivered and objectively hilarious lines (albeit I was not the target demographic), perfectly executed choreography (of Jason Gilkison), incredible vocals, boundless energy, and no plot whatsoever as far as I could tell, I Should Be So Lucky was quite the experience.

The songs of trio Stock Aitken Waterman, which defined its era topping the charts in the 1980s and 1990s, are brought to life on stage in a whirlwind performance that includes eight hits from Kylie herself, naturally most notably "I Should Be So Lucky," as well as hits from Jason Donovan, Rick Astley, Sinitta, and Jason Donovan's "Too Many Broken Hearts." By the time the bows are taken parts of 30 different songs have been explored in this musical madness. Debbie Isitt, best known for *Nativity*, has filled the show with some brilliant quips despite it being a little disconnected.

The show is almost absurd in nature, running at 100 miles an hour from the first curtain and bounding through its incredibly tenuous plot with impressive energy, it's a strange contrast I was enjoying myself and laughing along, the show is harmless and bright, but you cannot help but be baffled as the story completely falls apart. Ella (Lucie-Mae Summer) faces heartbreak as her fiancé, Nathan (Billy Roberts), abandons her at the altar. The catalyst for this turn of events is Nathan's grandfather, who resides in a dementia care home.

The elderly and seemingly incoherent gentleman cryptically hints at a 'family secret,' casting doubt on the wisdom of the impending marriage. Naturally after reasoning with the logic of this situation, Nathan runs away from his dreams. Ella's family whisk her away on her honeymoon at a Turkish resort to try and make her feel better where she seemingly moves on very quickly with the resort's tour guide. The show then races through several whirlwind romances and side plots of old rivals and family drama.

Kayla Carter as bridesmaid Bonnie performs a genuinely stunning and musical turned ballad rendition of Sonia's 'You'll Never Stop Me From Loving You' about her crush on the best man Ash- and the frantic, wholly devoted and driving force that is the best man,

Giovanni Spanò is an enigmatic watch. A particular stand out is Scott Paige as Ella's friend Michael who delivers a heartfelt and immaculately comedic performance throughout. The friends and family create a warm dynamic and fun performance gelling well on stage.

Kylie Minogue herself swoops down in mirror/screen situations throughout the show as Ella's' fabulous 'reflection' which, despite being truly glamorous in Kylie's style, unfortunately, feels a little awkward and forced, and like a missed opportunity.

The show was received exceptionally by the majority of the audience who got up and danced at the end and sang along throughout. An entertaining night out, fun despite the chaos especially if you're a Kylie fan!



Sport

Rugby at Cardiff University - Semester 1 Roundup

Freddie Sheppard – Sports Editor

With semester one coming to a close, let's take a look back on the highs and lows of the 23/24 season of rugby at Cardiff University.

Cardiff University men's rugby 1XV team had a vital recent success against Nottingham University in the BUCS super league. The final score was 44-31 to the boys in red, placing them 9th on the table. Joint with 12 points are Welsh rivals Swansea University. Cardiff will be pushing hard to secure a few more wins before Varsity sneaks up on us again in 2024! George Shaw took player of the match in this game after his relentless efforts.

Cardiff University ladies 1XV team squad secured their first win in the Women's National League against Durham. This is a huge win for the girls, having worked incredibly hard so far this season. The 31-22 win was felt throughout the whole club with head coach Owen Smith commenting that "the outcome is a great reward for all the hard work and commitment put in by the players over the past couple months". The player of the match was Emily Hay - despite it being her first year in the squad, she made a huge impact on the pitch with numerous intelligent decisions in attack.

Cardiff University men's 2XV have had a tough run in the men's Premier South division 1. They are yet to bring back win but came close in a home game against Cardiff Met which ended 31-33 to the away side. This is clear progress from the beginning of the season which saw them lose to Cardiff Met in an away game 31-17.

Having a successful start to the season, Cardiff University ladies 2XV are yet to be defeated. Winning their first game of the season 99-5 in a home match against Winchester set the team off to a confident start. They went on to secure a second win against Bath Spa 45-0, an impressive win against an opposition that has been tough in years gone by. The team are hoping for a successful cup run after beating Aberystwyth 73-14, in the Western Conference Cup. Vice-captain Mari Hefin says, "the team is gelling nicely together, and the backs and forwards are combining well". If the team keep up the good work, they will be in for a well-deserved promotion at the end of the year.

The Cardiff clash returns to Cardiff Arms Park in another double header against local rival Cardiff Met on 13th December. The women's match kicks off at 4pm and the men's kicks off

at 7pm. This will be a great game to track the progress of both teams as the last time Cardiff Uni played Cardiff Met was one of the first games of the season for both the men and the women. A sold-out stadium is expected as this event is one of the most exciting of the year!

Thrilling 3-2 Wembley win for the Lionesses!

Grace D'Souza – Sports Editor

After going down 2-0 in the first half of the match the lionesses launch 3 goals passed the Netherlands in a sensational comeback.

The lionesses looked strong when they kicked off but with the lack of Chelsea's magnificent Millie Bright it was clear that the back line was not as strong as it usually is. A poor performance in the first half all round as Netherlands Number Seven on the night Lineth Beerensteyn scored two goals passed the mighty Mary Earps in the 12th and 35th minutes of the match. England needed a miracle, and that miracle was the brilliant Beth Mead. It was amazing to see her talent on the pitch for England again after a serious ACL injury. The game completely changed when Mead was running on the pitch with Georgia Stanway scoring the first goal in the 59th minute and Lauren Hemp securing the equaliser swiftly after in the 60th minute. England wanted to win in front of all 71,632 people and give them a moment to remember so of course they needed their super subs Alessia Russo and Ella Toone who were subbed on in the 68th minute. Arsenal's Alessia Russo was doing everything she possibly could to try and get the crucial third goal to get the win at Wembley while Netherlands counter attacks were still as strong as ever. England needed to park the bus with a solid defence which required Rachel Daly to come on in the 83rd minute. It was obvious England was not giving up hope with 5 minutes of added time to play they needed some magic. Manchester United's magician Ella Toone proved once again that she owned Wembley scoring the winning goal in the 91st minute. Gala's Freed from Desire echoed around Wembley when the final whistle was blown. Emotions were mixed at full time Mary Earps was in tears in her post match interview admitting that she had let her team down and that the second goal she had let in would haunt her. Overall, the majority of emotions were happy ones, and this puts the lionesses in a great position for the UEFA Women's Nations League and Olympic qualification for Team GB.

(Source: Grace D'Souza)

