



Mary McAleese delivers annual MacDermott lecture at Queen's

SEAN ASHFORD
CONNOR DALY

President of Ireland, and former Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, Mary McAleese delivered the annual MacDermott lecture at the Whitla Hall yesterday, titled 'Northern Ireland: The post-Agreement institutional architecture system'. McAleese's visit to Queen's comes just weeks before Northern Ireland's power-sharing executive sees out its first full term in office.

Vice-Chancellor Peter Gregson opened the proceedings, welcoming the audience, among them Northern Ireland Minister for Justice David Ford, PSNI Chief Constable, Matt Baggott, and members of the MacDermott family.

McAleese spoke of the "petrifying" hostilities which were emerging in Northern Ireland during her time studying at Queen's, she spoke of the "end game" of paramilitary violence in the province and also on the failed efforts at solving the

law" also.

The Good Friday Agreement was designed to act as an inspiration, "to nurture the plant of peace"; it is, she said, a road map to guide us all out of chaos, and its words, structures and values ought to be worked on day-in and day-out. McAleese referred to how Lord MacDermott had often spoken about the wind of the people and its impact, and she said it is this wind which the benefactors of peace must thank for providing the courage to risk takers in the lead up to power-sharing. It was the wind of the Irish people which made the Belfast Agreement, and is living the law and making its agencies, statutes and structures a success.

The institutional structure of the post-Agreement era is overseeing the victory of dialogue over a culture of conflict and allowing citizens of different denominations "to stand four-square together with their identity in tact". The Agreement has allowed the People to explore the past in new ways as opposed to "ransacking" or "editing" Irish history to reinforce the "perniciousness of the other". Different parties did not have to compromise their loyalist or republican beliefs upon signing up to the Agreement, instead 1998 provided the potential for a new platform for shared memories.

McAleese praised the devolution of power to Northern Ireland, particularly those of Justice, to be "a milestone in the peace process", and said existing equality and human rights structures in place are also crucial building blocks. Although warning that complacency can breed doubt in institutions, McAleese concluded that democracy is "not just ticking the box" on election days. Ireland's new generation will take a new direction, and where law will triumph so will stability.



Mary McAleese at the Whitla Hall

Interview with Huw Stephens

See page 4



The AV Factor

See page 5



Queen's: 'Business as usual' despite looming strike action

PRIYA BIRING

University and College Union-members (UCU) of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) pension scheme earlier this month voted in favour of strike action unless a dispute over staff pensions can be resolved. Queen's University is one of the 63 institutions that voted in favour of strike action.

University and College Union (UCU) has called for two one-day strikes over the unresolved issue of staff pensions. At Queen's these strikes are scheduled to take place on Monday 21

and Thursday 24 March. The strike, according to the UCU website, is against "the detrimental proposals from university employers to reduce pension benefits and increase costs even though USS is in robust health." UCU argues that if arrangements proposed are implemented then a two-tier system of benefits will be created.

As confirmed in an all-student email sent this week, the position of the University is that "it does not accept strike action and will take every step to ensure that it is 'business as usual'.

"At this evening's meeting of SU Council, NUS-USI Deputy President, Lorcan Mullen will propose a motion in support of this strike action and the demands of the UCU. This motion will be seconded by Adam McGibbon.

In a press release, the group Free Education for Everyone (FEE) QUB called on "all students to support striking lecturers by not attending class on Monday 21 and Thursday 24 of March: Added to that FEE QUB call on all students to attend their nearest picket line on both strike days and to actively support their lecturers."

FREELANCE WRITERS

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The Gown is available every Monday fortnight across the Queen's campus.

Editor: Connor Daly
editor@thegown.org.uk

News Editor: Kerri-Anne Campbell
news@thegown.org.uk

Arts & Entertainment Editor:
Ben Finch
arts@thegown.org.uk

Features Editor: Emma Gallen
features@thegown.org.uk

Sports Editor: Damien Edgar
sport@thegown.org.uk

Design Editors: Niall Mooney & Rose Kelly
design@thegown.org.uk

Business, Advertising & Marketing Manager: Niall Crozier
advertising@thegown.org.uk
Catherine Arrell
Nina McKeag

Contributors (Print and Online):

- Sean Ashford
- Priya Biring
- Wendy Browne
- Joanne Caraher
- Niall Crozier
- Stephen Conlon
- James Douglas
- Patrick Flack
- Hannah Goodall
- Laura Hawthorne
- Chris Johnson
- Janette Loughlin
- Matthew McKernan
- Matthew Miskimmin
- Andrew Moore
- Danielle Neeson
- Matthew Robb
- Mark Stevenson
- Claire Williamson
- The Auld Wan...
- The Hood

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Former SU President Shane Brogan calls for elections report

SEAN ASHFORD

In an email to SU President Gareth McGreevy and Council Speaker Joe Corina, former SU President Shane Brogan has asked for the Returning Officer to make a "comprehensive report" on this year's Students' Union Sabbatical Elections. In the wake of numerous disputes arising from the recent elections several official complaints have been made as well as a referral to the election court.

Brogan has asked for a greater level of investigation into any alleged rule breaking which may have occurred during the elections. This may include a summary of all complaints, both formal and informal, received by the Returning Officer and the action taken in response to each of these, as well as a summary of all cases where candidates were found to have broken the rules,

who these candidates were and what action was taken. This may include formal or informal warnings issued.

Brogan has also asked for a breakdown of turnout by School, gender, age bracket, and at hourly intervals in order to provide a comparison to the turnout in recent years. This may help identify any irregular voting patterns throughout the course of the election days.

In response to this a Union insider has said the ideas suggested by Brogan are not likely to lead to full constitutional change, but more practical reform which is needed. Brogan's email should be viewed as an inquiry to provoke debate rather than a criticism of the system itself. Our insider said that SU councillors may not have known they have the power to request such reviews, and hoped this move would improve

the democratic process within the Students' Union.

Brogan's request follows the decision by current VP Clubs & Societies Niall Bole to challenge the result of his election defeat to Niall McShane by 1823 votes to 1459. Bole has claimed that some candidates flouted the rules during the campaign which all candidates must adhere to, and that behaviour such as 'helping' people to vote has left a bitter taste in the mouths of many students disgusted at how the election campaign had gone.

Bole claims there have been flaws in the system since online voting was introduced and now that every computer is a polling station. Although going back to polling booths would certainly drive down turnout, Bole says there is a need to "reassess the system" to make it suitable for "the current state of play".

Although accepting that some may accuse him of being a sore loser, Bole said he hopes that by approaching the election court he can "highlight holes which have been exploited" not just this year but also in previous years. Unless these problems are tackled now, he said, they will simply be swept under the rug for another year.

McShane's victory was part of a successful night for the Law/GAA ticket. Jason O'Neill won the race for SU President, Aidan Hughes was elected VP Community and Treasa Harkin VP Equality & Diversity. The other victorious candidate on election night was Nuala McAdams for VP Education, a candidate from Jay Downs' ticket. Adam McGibbon and Fiona Kidd were returned unopposed as VP Welfare and VP Campaigns & Communications respectively.

The case for SU electoral reform

Comment

NIALL CROZIER

Despite the dust beginning to settle after the sabbatical election, some controversies surrounding procedure and practice remain. Disappointment has been expressed in several quarters about the reduced turnout from last year, some candidates have expressed frustration at what they viewed as an unwillingness to challenge alleged rule breaking by canvassers, and candidates were unable to contest the election in unfortunate circumstances.

Is, as some candidates and people commenting on our website have suggested, the current Returning Officer incompetent? I believe the answer is no, and to demand Dominic Doherty's head on the proverbial plate is to entirely miss the point.

The idea that one man could gather sufficient evidence on every incident when an over enthusiastic or manipulative canvasser nudges a student once too often to 'encourage them to vote' and arrive at a fair conclusion every time is ludicrous.

The problem is not that Dominic Doherty is not doing his job; the problem is that the job is hugely difficult in the first place.

Calls for extra Union staff to police a raft of official polling booths to replace the partisan laptops set up by candidates on the day would serve three purposes: To drive turnout down and thus weaken even further the democratic mandate of the

officers eventually elected as well as excluding those on placement from being able to participate; to cost the Union significant amounts of money in wages and training at a time when we can safely assume the average student would prefer the money to be invested elsewhere and to introduce a very pertinent case of 'Quis custodiet ipsos custodes' i.e. who makes sure with 100 per cent certainty that the Union staff, given their obvious inside knowledge, despite their own best intentions don't influence voters?

However, two constructive things could be done. Firstly, appeals could be made directly and explicitly to students *not* to give their details away or allow anyone to vote for them and to report harassment to the Returning Officer – preferably to a central text line – immediately. Secondly, registration of canvassers would allow the tracing of those employing dubious methods, accompanied with a ban on unregistered canvassing on Union or University property. Each canvasser would be given a badge identifying them with a candidate, to replace the free posters the Union get printed for candidates which are currently essentially worthless as there is no space to put them up.

Artificial methods of forcing up turnout are suspicious at the best of times. However a few small steps could help the process along significantly, by enlisting the help of the University to raise awareness. This would involve getting academics to make very short announce-



VP Education Nathan Anderson encourages students to vote

ments at the end of their classes encouraging students to vote. Emails sent by academic schools to remind students would also help.

More significant advertising of the elections online on QOL is also a relatively simple step, as well as changing the computers on the central QUB system to a 'Vote in the SU elections' background.

The actual online voting mechanism should be updated. When choosing which candidate to vote for, a display of a digest of candidates' policies should be shown to try to place the focus on policies rather than personalities. The current system that means you have to navigate around the abyss that is the QUBSU website to try and find out what exactly each candidate claims to be offering. The suspicion is that people don't bother with the hassle.

Finally, something must be done about the nomination process. Three issues are contained within this. This year a candidate was unable to file their papers due to not being in the country during the allotted

period, despite having a proxy who was willing to file on their behalf. This should be altered to allow wider access to the process. Secondly, candidates receive their free posters in the middle of the week of campaigning. This means that there is nowhere left to put them. The calendar should be altered to leave a week between nominations closing and electioneering being allowed to begin. Throughout this week the Union could put up their own posters highlighting the fact an election is to take place. Finally, a candidate was disqualified due to bad academic standing, which was not brought to his attention until it was too late for someone to take his place. It would make sense if these matters could be thrashed out before nominations close.

In conclusion, I feel SU elections should be reformed in these ways to increase voter turnout, preserve the integrity of the system, turn the focus of Union politics towards policy rather than personality and allow as wide a number of candidates to take part as possible.



City Council, Students' Union and PSNI urge a trouble-free St Patrick's Day

KERRI-ANNE CAMPBELL
news@thegown.org.uk

Belfast City Council, the PSNI, Queen's University and Students' Union have once again joined forces to ensure a trouble-free St Patrick's Day this week.

Belfast City Council will be operating its 'Emergency Co-ordination Centre' on St Patrick's Day in an attempt to monitor events and ensure that celebrations pass off peacefully "in an environment everyone can enjoy."

The Centre is part of a larger campaign to urge people, particularly students and those living in student areas, to be "mindful of their behaviour, and respect their neighbours and

each other." According to Belfast City Council, those who ignore this advice should be aware of the serious consequences. Representatives from Queen's University, Queen's Students' Union and PSNI will also be present supporting the campaign.

CCTV cameras, which were installed throughout the Holylands ahead of last year's celebrations, will also be monitoring events on the ground. University authorities will be keeping a close eye on the behaviour of students on the day.

Security measures on St Patrick's Day have been significantly increased ever since the disturbances of St Patrick's Day of 2009, in which hundreds of people, including university

students, took to the streets to engage in vandalism and rioting.

Local letting agencies have issued student houses with warnings ahead of celebrations urging students and their neighbours to abide by Belfast City Council's bye-laws, which state that no-one should consume alcohol on public streets. One local letting agency has enforced a 'single guest rule', which states that students are to have no more than one guest staying in their accommodation.

Current VP Community Jay Downs yesterday held training sessions for those who wish to volunteer to help ensure their safety on the day.

Debating Society in 'Hist'-oric Stormont event

NIALL CROZIER

As part of two opposing teams from TCD's Historical Society, more commonly known as 'the Hist,' Susan Whitla and Paul Shannon were recently invited to represent Queen's Debating Society in the first event of its kind ever staged by a Southern Irish debating society at Stormont.

Debating the motion, 'This house would only fund integrated schools' was made all the more challenging by the fact that the debaters had to do battle at the red dispatch boxes in the Senate chamber of Stormont with two MLAs, Basil McCrea of the UUP and organiser of the debate, and the SDLP's Conall

McDevitt.

Veteran journalist, Eamon Mallie, enthroned in the speaker's chair, allowed the debate to flow and added a certain amount of hilarity to the proceedings by gently upbraiding various participants.

Other amusing points of the evening included a proposer of the motion likening trips to schools of other denominations to "a safari of protestants", while Basil McCrea, when challenged to get to the point by Conal McDevitt, replied, "It's a long standing tradition that we don't."

The majority of the audience deemed that the debate had been won by those proposing an integrated system.

THE HOOD

hood@thegown.org.uk

I'm so glad that those elections are over, tearing down all those Downs posters was starting to hurt my wrists. Still, good to see that the heroic underdogs won through on their inspired message of change. I just hope that they've got a good size of bin to store all that red tape in. Just

imagine it, a whole Union run as efficiently as the Law Society, all that bureaucracy like financing just swept out the door.

Niall McShane is the wee boy though; he might use words like a chimpanzee uses an electric whisk, but I'm sure he'll be friendly and approachable, just like he was to all those lovely foreign students, helping them to vote and all. I would have

bought him and the victors a drink, but I couldn't find them. Doc wouldn't let me even spend their tab, I told him they weren't there, but he wouldn't leave the office to come down and have a look.

On to the presidential race, definitely a clean fought race on all sides, with all candidates respecting their opponents and voters. Jay Downs and Sam

Tan split their fanbase deciding on who split their fanbase, and O'Neill, man of the people, herald of change and patron of Ollies bar sneaked through. Still, since Jay and Sam are best mates, the office is just as vibrant and fun as ever it wasn't. Still, it may be like a Free Presbyterian graveyard now, but make the most of it, 'cause next year none of them will be in.

Niall Bole is moving motions through Council like shit through a goose, what a roguish villain he is, with that beard and hat, he looks like the king of the knackers. Villainously generating more red tape for our brilliant boys in green to swing their way through. I'm sure this is libellous, but I'm sure they don't read *The Gown*, after all, only 12 people do...

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An interview with Radio 1 DJ Huw Stephens

PRIYA BIRING

Huw Stephens became the youngest Radio 1 DJ at 17 and since then he has built himself up to become the leading authority on new music. He truly believes that new bands and acts are creating the best music of the age and will continue to do so for years.

On 1 March Topman CTRL hosted one of five 'student parties' held across Britain in the Black Box. Stephens was the organiser of these events and chose a popular new indie band Frankie and the Heartstrings as headliners, supported by the Belfast bred Alice Kona Band, also chosen by Stephens. He said that Frankie and the Heartstrings are "a great band, whose new music is fresh and exciting!" In addition he thinks their live performance is "electrifying" and should not be missed.

I asked Stephens what he thinks makes a good band, and why Frankie and the Heartstrings tick all the boxes. He replied, "Good bands are ones that do something different and have a spark in their music." However he also admitted that



Radio 1 DJ Huw Stephens

it is hard to make original music in this day and age. I wasn't convinced that any new bands or acts were making original music, even music authorities agree with me, by choosing mainstream bands and acts to win awards. Stephens explained

that mainstream music shows different levels of new. He used the example of Arcade Fire who are now mainstream, but when their first album came out it was different and fresh. Obviously the change from new music to old music happens slowly and can change a whole perspective of a band in the public eye.

Stephens's new favourite bands and acts include: LCMDF from Helsinki, James Vincent McMoran from Ireland, and Eagles from Leeds. I had never heard of these acts, but with recommendations from Huw Stephens they must, surely, be worth a listen. Finally, I asked Stephens if he didn't like a band new on the music scene, would their career be short lived...? Stephens laughed and stated "absolutely not," but I think there's a strong chance he's being modest.

Vogue Icons exhibiton

BEN FINCH
arts@thegown.org.uk

Vogue Icons is an exhibition in the Canvas Gallery on the Stranmillis Road. It is the work of Katarzyna Gajewska, a Polish-born, Dublin-based artist who has taken iconic images from the front cover of *Vogue Magazine* and transformed them into fantastic works of art. The pictures are of women, from the likes of Twiggy, to Marlene Dietrich, to Amy Winehouse, twisted and warped through Gajewska's imagination into dreamlike, and at times nightmarish, paintings.

They are all portraits, but not as we know portraits. These are not images of Henry VIII staring at us with a massive codpiece, but this is not to say that the subjects are treated with irreverence. All of them have had, and in some cases still do have, a massive part to play in pop culture, even if there is a struggle to remember who Dietrich is, or what films she was in. Even the darker images have

something to say about the various personalities they represent.

Art is always treated with respect, even by those who claim to not understand it. It asks questions, even if it is not meant to and Gajewska's work asks loads. Why are these celebrities included in the exhibition? What have they done to deserve it? Is it simply the fact they've graced the cover of *Vogue*? The press release says it is because of Vogue's ability to blur the boundaries between fashion and art. But this doesn't answer everything.

Some of the paintings are on the business and economic sections of the *Irish Times* from around the time the credit crunch began. Perhaps it's a statement on Ireland's fiscal woes. Or maybe it is just art for art's sake and simply meant to be enjoyed for its beauty.

It's a great exhibition and well worth the dander up to Stranmillis Village. Gajewska does manage to blur fashion and art and deserves to be seen.

Reviews

Check out more reviews at www.thegown.org.uk

Theatre
Posh
The Brian Friel Theatre

Queen's University Players' latest offering is *Posh*, a play about a secret member's club in Oxford called the Riot Club. The Riot Club seems much like a fictionalised Bullingdon Club, with the opening scene of the play showing an MP who is a former member and his leader, the Prime Minister, being an old friend from the Club.

Brian Friel may be disgruntled to learn that a rendition of 'God Save the Queen' was sung in the theatre bearing his name and received thunderous applause. On the whole the play was not one suggesting that those who are "posh" and have titles are superior to those without.

This is the Players' piece for the ISDA festival and should hopefully be strong for them. It is director Adam Turns' second time directing the choice and after much praise last year is set to do well.

Posh has a real attention to detail with the actors having very strong accents. Gary Crossan did extremely well in being able to disguise the Derry accent and Francis Mezza's Scottish accent was impeccable. EG



Album
The Joy Formidable
The Big Roar

Four years in the making, The Joy Formidable's long-awaited debut album, *The Big Roar*, has finally been released. The Welsh trio have pulled their act together and delivered after all that teasing.

The first track, 'Everchanging Spectrum of a Lie', opens with what sounds like popcorn exploding inside a metal speaker. Its rushing wave of soft fuzz, zipping guitars and MGMT-style dreamy vocals sets the standard. 'The Magnifying Glass' is one of the short but sweet tracks found, its bipolar laughter pre-empting a manic guitar driven rhythm. Most of its uplifting, and atmospheric, if not powerfully-driven.

But it does start to feel samey and it becomes hard to keep an interest. It has moments of quirky redemption but the drawn-out, layered guitar rhythms are bland. 'Maruyama' is an unnecessary interlude that falls flat, waiting for 'Cradle' to pick it up. Which it does, but brings it back to the tedious, familiar sound.

For all its hype, *The Big Roar* is over-rated but will no doubt provide a pleasant soundtrack to sunny days and angsty nights. JL



Album
The Low Anthem
Smart Flesh

Smart Flesh, the follow-up to The Low Anthem's 2008 breakthrough record, *Oh My God, Charlie Darwin*, hints at a band making a bid to cement its identity, conjuring a mélange of its preferred musical conventions and sculpting a model of its ideal self.

Smart Flesh is a more succinct record than its predecessor, with the folk outfit fully embracing their now-identifiable Americana vibe and playing to their strengths.

Thematically, it touches on some heavy subject matter, with manic depression and mortality both present, jarring appropriately with the American ideals the band ostensibly seem to represent. However, overall we never manage to shake ourselves of the image of campfires, acoustic guitars and 3a.m. storytelling under a clear night's sky.

At its core, *Smart Flesh* is a collection of anthemic, rootsy tracks borne of one group of friends' desire to cut the bullshit and evoke some sense of feeling, all the while creating a atmosphere of purity through isolation; the only context in which we can appreciate this inspiring, if conventional record. JD



Album
Glee
Volume 4

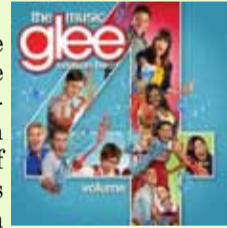
Glee is the marmite of television with an army of loyal fans and an equally strong army of haters, plus those who don't care but subconsciously sing along. However, could the 'Glee' effect be wearing off because it's starting to sound a bit samey?

This collection features songs that charted very recently. This would be fine if they'd created quirky variations of the original but that's not the case. Most are professional karaoke; particularly 'Marry You' and the Britney Spears songs.

There are a couple showcasing the cast's voices and bring *Glee* back to its best. 'Teenage Dreams' features beautiful, complex harmonies without a trace of karaoke.

No *Glee* soundtrack would be complete without a reflective song. 'I Want to Hold Your Hand' is the most moving track here; it's modest backing track focuses attention on Kurt's (Chris Colfer) emotional performance.

Fans of *Glee* will love this album as much as they have previously, but *Glee* needs to revert to keeping their covers fresh or soon the charts will be filled with the same songs, just by two different artists. CW



Comedy Standup
Russell Howard
Odyssey Arena

Two years after Russell Howard cancelled the Odyssey Arena, he finally arrived. And it was worth the wait.

The pre-show entertainment pre-empted the quality of performance Howard fans are accustomed to; an array of viral videos broadcast on screens as the audience filed in. As the lights dimmed, a murmur of excitement rushed through the crowd, growing to the point where Howard came on to a riotous standing ovation.

In comparison to other comedy gigs, Howard's a breath of fresh air. He avoids the clichés of comedy performance, ignoring the temptation to stereotype his audience. Although evidently scripted, he tends to drift, leading to impromptu skits that leave the crowd gasping for air. As eccentric as ever he has the ability to make a huge gig feel intimate, a quality attributed to his boundless energy.

His excitable impersonations of friends, flailing limbs and childish approach to cringe-worthy situations make Howard a 'must-see' act. He's not only worth the wait but worth the money, leaving the audience reliving the laughs for ages to come. HG





The AV Factor

Voting 'Yes' on 5 May

LAURA HAWTHORNE

It's 5 May, you're heading home on the bus to vote in "this election thingy" but most of all you are looking forward to having your dinner cooked and spending the night in a house that is actually warmer than -5 degrees.

You're home and you've made the effort to head to the polling station. You're feeling quite proud that you're playing your part in democracy, but what's this? A third ballot paper? What on earth is this for? Let me tell you...

As well as the local and parliamentary elections on May 5, registered voters in Northern Ireland will be asked to vote in the first Great Britain and Northern Ireland referendum since 1975 (oh!). Voters will be given the chance to change how they elect their MPs to West-

minster from the current system of First Past the Post (FPTP) to the Alternative Vote (AV) system.

Now electoral reform isn't the most glamorous of topics but it's pretty important stuff. Under the current system of FPTP you vote by putting a cross next to the candidate you want to win and whoever gets the highest number of votes wins.

However, AV works differently. It is a form of preferential voting where you rank the candidates in order of your preference: 1, 2, 3 etc. Then, to get a clear winner, AV uses a knock-out system similar to the *X factor*. In each round the candidate with the least votes is knocked out and then we count again.

If your candidate is knocked out then your vote goes to your next preference. This means that in each round everyone gets one vote, so everyone gets a say

in who wins even if their favourite candidate was one who didn't stand much chance of winning.

The counting keeps going until a candidate receives the support from at least half of the voters in a round - so whoever wins has the support of at least 50% of the voters, a majority.

So what difference will this make and why should I bother to vote yes? This change will mean MPs will have to work harder to win, and keep, your support. Under AV your next MP would have to aim to get more than 50% of the vote to be sure of winning. At present they can be handed power with just one vote in three.

With FPTP many MPs have their 'safe seats' for life. AV will let you force complacent politicians to reach out to the communities they seek to represent. Do you feel your MP has been listening to you recently? They cannot rely on a party name or a small minority of voters to become elected. They can-

not continue to leave manifesto pledges unfulfilled with a majority of voices behind them.

AV also seeks to eliminate tactical voting. You can give a genuine first or second preference and know that it will count for something. You no longer have to vote to keep another per-

son or party out. You can vote because you genuinely agree with a party's policy and direction.

Whatever you do, don't forget to vote; it's a once in a lifetime chance to do so and you can head home for that nice hot dinner afterwards.



The Liberal Democrats have proposed the AV system

For the lols

JANETTE LOUGHLIN

So when was the last time you laughed out loud, laughed until your ass came off (strange that one) or you just had to lie down and roll on the floor laughing? Maybe your memory of such events wanes as you realise it's been a while since you actually laughed out loud at something when typing "lol", "lmao" and "rofl" - commonly used on IM, SMS and Facebook. This begs the question: at what point did the good old lol become redundant?

Now, instead of being used to denote physical laughter, it's used as a tool to lighten the tone or mood of a conversation, for ironic purposes, or just when you plain-old cba to say anything else. The addition of the abbreviation lol after a certain phrase, which on its own could convey insult or cause upset, takes away from any serious aspect of the message. Who

hasn't ever written something and felt a little bad about how someone may take it, and then add in a hasty lol to lighten the mood? Works a charm every time. And nothing screams "not interested" louder than a solitary lol. It signifies the downfall of any diminishing conversation. Perhaps the close proximity of l and o on the qwerty keyboard was an accurately predicted move to pre-empt the popularity of abbreviated slang terms when the techno-age expanded and we all became glued to our laptops... lol.

Then again, is lol a universally accepted term? Confusion may arise among non-texters/textees/IM users when approaching the lol - it's not widely known to mean "lots of love" or the "Loyal Orange Lodge" or any other l-o-l word combination, so a certain amount of knowledge is required for the appropriate application of lol. If misused and misinterpreted, it can be a dangerous

weapon. So it's maybe not best to use it as a message of condolence when your friend's rabbit dies... But it can be used as a highly-effective way to establish rapport between people not communicating in person, so lol ain't all bad. True too for its succinctness - would you rather type: "Hold on old chap, I'm actually having a jolly good laugh over here on my side of the interweb!" Or simply: lol.. Lol does have its way with conciseness. It may not particularly enrich or add much to the English vocabulary as a whole, but when applied within a suitable context it can affect the overall tone of a conversation for the better. Who doesn't appreciate a cute lolcats picture?

And lol does look a bit like a drowning man seeking help. After all, isn't the English language also drowning in a sea of washed-up abbreviations and slang terms?

The Auld Man

Will ye no come back again?

I was in the hairdresser's the other week while they were tackling what's left of my hair when I heard the young guy in the next chair explaining that he was about to fly to Australia. "Oh. Are you going on holiday?" "No I'm going to look for work."

Last year 60,000 people left the Republic of Ireland and 50,000 more are on their way this year. We don't know how many have left the North as they are swallowed in the UK statistics.

Last week I heard a couple of my age talking on television about their daughters leaving Mayo and saying that the county was turning into an old people's home.

Of course those young ones feel that they have been let down by the bankers and the politicians and are being forced into an uncertain future. But is it true? The trouble with statistics is that they tend to be one-dimensional and there are many individual stories behind each airline or ferry ticket.



110,000 in two years amounts to about a quarter of the 20-30 YO cohort of the Republic and, if they are gone forever, then that's a lot of talent lost to society. But remember that few short years ago we were celebrating those who were coming back with great skills obtained elsewhere. So, it all depends on how you see it. Going to Australia is not transportation and going to America is not emigration with a capital E. If it's you - get the most out of it - and haste ye back. We need you.



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Queen's win Squash intervarsities 2011

PATRICK FLACK

Queen's Squash club recently hosted the Irish squash intervarsities and managed to overcome all opposition to emerge victorious in this prestigious event.

With universities represented in the tournament including such strong opposition as UCD, UCC, RCSI, DCU, NUIG and Trinity College Dublin, Queen's faced stern opposition in their quest for victory. The Queens men's A team came up overall winners of the coveted Men's A section. The team of Chris O'Kane, Gareth Brown, Kevin Davey, Carl Duffy and Patrick Flack won all their preliminary matches in convincing fashion before meeting a strong Trinity team in the final. However, the strength of the Queen's team was too much for the Dublin University.

The five players on the Queen's team all won their matches to accomplish an impressive 5-0 victory and win the overall tournament. This is a great achievement for the university, and an impressive victory that highlights the quality of squash at Queen's. Although

the Queen's team showed great strength in depth, it was still a shock for many that the winners of the tournament were a University outside of Dublin. For the past fifteen years, the competition has been dominated by Trinity and DCU.

The one day tournament was a great success and the squash club's committee members of Gareth Brown and Iwan Palmer must be applauded for their exemplary organisation of the whole day.

Queen's will be hoping that they can replicate this year's success in the Intersvarsities next year which will be hosted in Galway.

This year has seen a resurgence of squash at Queen's. For the first time in years a team has been entered in the Ulster League. To date, the team has performed well, and are striving for promotion into Division 3. No doubt with the exceptional performance of the current team on a national scale many more students will be drawn in to take up this sport as it becomes more popular year after year.

UUJ narrowly defeated in Sigerson Cup final

DAMIEN EDGAR

sport@thegown.org.uk

University of Ulster Jordanstown (UUJ) were narrowly defeated by a resilient University College Cork (UCC) side in this year's Sigerson Cup final. The final marked the centenary year of the competition.

The final score was 0-10 to 0-7 and UUJ may look back with regret on their inability to push on in the final. Missing key players Conor Mortimer, Jamie Clarke, David McKenna, Joe Diver and Raymond Mulgrew, UUJ didn't quite have the firepower that had secured their place in the final of the competition. An exhaustive Sigerson schedule saw them play three times in three days, beating Maynooth and Carlow IT on their way to the final.

UCC led 0-4 to 0-2 at the interval, reflecting the cagey nature of the game. Monaghan men Conor McManus and Conor Galligan both got themselves on the scoresheet for UUJ in the first half. The Cork team accelerated to a healthy five point

lead after half-time though, looking to put the game beyond UUJ. It was only at this point that UUJ seemed to rally, and in doing so they cut the deficit to a solitary point. Scores from Ciaran McGinley, Matthew Donnelly and Kevin Dyas then sealed the mini-revival for the Ulster team, unable to use this platform to assert themselves and claim what would have been a sixth Sigerson Cup. UCC steadied the ship with a score from man of the match Kevin O'Driscoll, with John Buckley and Mark Collins sealing the victory for the Munster men, their first since 1995.

Speaking to the media afterwards, UUJ manager Adrian McGuckin praised the resilience of his side and acknowledged that UUJ failed to make their second half surge the turning point in the game.

"The team showed great resilience in coming back after having been five points down. They never lost their composure nor their shape. But UCC managed to get three late scores that tipped the scales in their favour."

TheGown.

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The deadline is Friday 1 April, at 5:00pm. Good luck!

Visit thegown.org.uk for more details



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Queen's University Belfast
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Lessons learned on splitting the vote

Despite allegations of foul play and smear campaigns during and after the SU elections there exists no reason why next term's sabbatical officers cannot work alongside one another to the benefit of the Students' Union. By the time the new team takes over in July the Local Assembly elections will be have passed and the focus will once again turn to Higher Education tuition fees in Northern Ireland.

It is difficult to understate the importance of the year ahead and its potential impact upon future school leavers. It is also difficult imagine that a clash of personalities could or should prevent a unified front from the new SU executive.

The defeat of incumbent Niall Bole for the Clubs and Societies portfolio may have come as a surprise to some, and the result has since been referred to the electoral court. However, this should not take credit away from Niall McShane or the rest of the 'Change' ticket. On election night three of the five Law/GAA candidates recorded a comfortable victory. While Jason O'Neill only narrowly defeated Samantha Tan to the role of SU President this victory always looked likely due to the Downs/Tan split. Both Tan and Downs ran on the same ticket during last year's election campaign, a campaign which ironically witnessed the Law/GAA ticket split to some degree.

In hindsight it is interesting to wonder what might have come to pass had the Downs/Tan vote not split. Looking back it seems that Fiona Kidd and Adam McGibbon running unopposed for their respective positions may have depressed the turnout over the two days; could these votes have influenced any of the outcomes?

The call for reform to the SU election process is intriguing, but what form should these changes take? Should the Students' Union employ a certain number of electoral officers to supervise the conduct of candidates throughout the two days of voting? Should online voting be scrapped in favour of a return to polling booths? Practical as opposed to constitutional reform seems more likely, and if change is to be implemented now is the time to do so, before the summer recess and before the campaign against higher tuition fees intensifies.

Dear Gown,
The election was a disgrace, a complete and utter farce. This is my fourth year at Queen's and I thought we were moving onwards and upwards with our union VPs; moving on from the days of GAA boys and people taking the mickey out of getting a free ticket to be a student again for a year.

Majority of those elected are unknown, are not qualified for the job and are going to participate in running our

union into the ground.

I think there should be a re-vote; I think Niall McShane should be disqualified for his underhand tactics by getting his cronies to sabotage other candidates campaigns through heckling and vandalising of posters as made aware here in the Gown and through witnessing it with my own eyes; I think people should be made more aware of what our VPs do so they wouldn't vote so flippantly.

It is a travesty that Tan, Bole, Loughrey and Edgar didn't make it into office. I have never come across four more pleasant people on campus who's hearts are genuinely in their union work. Thank God for Kidd and McGibbon who will hopefully manage to keep the union is some kind of manner worthy of the wage they are all getting paid!!

Union sort yourselves out ASAP!

Angry student



Illustrator Brian John Spencer

Dear Editor,
Often the Gown closely monitors the union, yet I question whether it allows analysis of it's performance. I am an avid follower of the Gown and really enjoy reading it and I look forward to it's release, I also follow it online, on Facebook and on Twitter. Twice recently I have read items published electronically under the good name of the Gown and questioned the impartiality of it.

The first case was the article 'Palestine Solidarity Society disrupt Law lecture' which I felt was overly supportive of the University structures; and while the PSS were apparently in the wrong, I do not believe the article gives an objective view of events to allow the reader to draw this conclusion themselves.

Secondly, on SU election results night, I felt there was no attempt at all at impartiality and other people clearly felt the same (I was disgusted to see the Gown threatening that "be careful now, gownies can be voting for you" to a fairly worded comment). Many of the Tweets were very anti-Law/GAA (they quoted them being referred to as "the tribe") and pro Bole. While I respect Niall Bole and believe he has done

a great job, the Gown was clearly overly involved in his case suggesting that "everyone in the Union loves Bole" and retweeting messages of support, but not to my replies to these messages and nothing in support of the new VP.

I suggest that as editor a serious review of reporting standards and vested interests should be carried out urgently. The student body know and love your great paper, don't let shabby reporting destroy that.

Yours faithfully,
Lorcan McCabe

Lorcan,
At tonight's elections (Wednesday 2 March) each member of the Gown staff was designated a specific role. I am not at all happy with the Gown Twitter updates made and I have since ensured that these updates have been removed.

The Gown is an impartial reporter and will continue to be so. I apologise if these comments made appeared to show a bias in favour or against certain candidates. The Gown blog on the SU elections has contained coverage on all the candidates in an impartial way and at no point has the newspaper come out in support of anyone.

I can only apologise for the updates which I have subsequently deleted and as Gown editor I take responsibility for this. None of these comments reflected the thoughts of myself or the wider editorial team. Earlier during election week an accusation had been made that the latest issue of the Gown had been bias in favour of the Law-GAA. I can assure you that this is not the case either.

On the PSS article, I have been in contact with the President of the PSS Gary Spedding on several occasions since this article was published and Mr Spedding agrees that this is a fair account of the events. At no point has the Gown opposed or condoned the actions of the PSS, and students are more than welcome to comment on the Gown website.

I totally agree with your comments on the Gown Twitter account and have made my feelings known to the person responsible. As Gown editor I take full responsibility. I can assure you that such Twitter updates - even if these were made in an attempt at humour - have not and will not be tolerated.

Thank you,
Connor Daly, Gown editor

THIS MONTH... NEW STUDENT FEARS OVER LECTURE SPACE, March 1997

The Social Sciences building, which contains G09 and G10, is the main lecture halls for Arts, Social Science and Law graduates at Queen's.

The prospect that the building could temporarily close was given its first public airing at the annual S.U. Hustings of presi-

dential candidates, where each candidate expressed concern at losing one of the most over-subscribed and over-crowded lecture theatre facilities at the university's disposal. The poor organisational ability of Queen's Administration was also criticised at the hustings. Candi-

dates cited instances where the larger lecture theatres in the Ashby Building which can accommodate hundreds of students were being used for engineering classes numbering sixty people.

First-year Politics students are squashed into an inadequate

lecture theatre, according to one student. As he commented, they are forced to suffer "numb-bum syndrome" from sitting on the floor/steps in the Social Sciences building.

"Students are going to be crammed into even smaller, more inadequate lecture halls

like sardines in a can," another postgrad claimed.

A spokesperson for Queen's University confirmed that the building will be closing down in the next academic year for extensive renovations.



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WED 6TH APRIL

MANDELA HALL, 9PM, TICKETS £5
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ESBEN AND THE WITCH

SATURDAY 9TH APRIL

SPEAKEASY

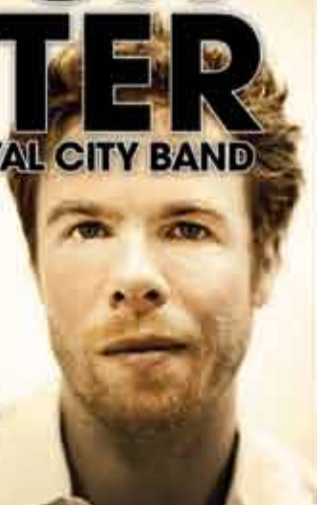
RADAR PRESENTS

JOSH RITTER

AND THE ROYAL CITY BAND

WED 13TH APRIL

MANDELA HALL




THE VACCINES

Saturday 26th March
Speakeasy, Doors 7pm

RADAR PRESENTS

THE highkings

FRIDAY 13TH MAY
MANDELA HALL



radar presents

boyce avenue

mandela hall
thursday 19th may

14+ SHOW




The View

Tuesday 12th April
Mandela Hall, Doors 7pm

RADAR PRESENTS

THE BLACKOUT

SUN 3RD APRIL
SPEAKEASY

14+ SHOW




RADAR PRESENTS

FUTURES

SUNDAY 29TH MAY
SPEAKEASY

14+ SHOW

RESCHEDULED SHOW. ALL TICKETS REMAIN VALID

PETER DOHERTY

Sunday 29th May
Bank Holiday Weekend
Mandela Hall, Doors 7pm