

DURHAM'S "TERRORIST"



IT WAS A FRONT-PAGE SPLASH IN PALATINATE. 'DURHAM TERROR SHOCK,' SCREAMED THE HEADLINE. AN EDITORIAL CLAIMED THAT 'TERRORISM HAD REARED ITS UGLY HEAD.' NOW, JUST OVER A YEAR ON, WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE MAN AT THE CENTRE OF THE ISSUE, NOSRATOLLAH TAJIK?

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DURHAM CONSIDERS MOTTO CHANGE

University Officials are said to be considering changing the University motto from the current 'Fundamenta eius super montibus sanctis', which means 'fundamentally superior to the locals'. The change, if approved, will come in time for the 2008 intake.



The foremost option being considered is 'Non Oxon Est', according to a highly placed source that cannot be named for legal reasons. The source noted 'The change has actually been a long time coming. The new motto will reflect the true quality of the students at Durham.'

The proposed motto has had a mixed reception from Durham students. Mr B Sherman, Grey College, objects to the motto being in Latin, raising the astute objection 'What the fuck does that mean?'.

Other mottos being considered are 'Come for the education, stay for the simmering antagonism with the indigenous population', 'No darkies', or simply 'Number Three'.

Luke Blackburn

DURHAM GRIPPED BY POMME DE TERREUR

Unrest among students of Durham University has come to light as this year's crop of freshers have threatened to violently rebel against the potato-laden college food regime. "I can't handle it anymore," said Hild Bede fresher Edward Maris-Piper, "before university, my body was 80% water. Now it's 80% potato. I'm literally a potato shape."

"Everyday I have to choose between roast potatoes, chips, potato wedges, sautéed potato, potato cubes, baked potatoes, reconstituted potato carrot-shapes, and potato flavoured ice cream. And that's for breakfast. I want to die."

Charlotte Spencer-Smith

DURHAM ROCKS FASHION

This season, designers from around the world have taken their cue from Durham students, peppering catwalks in London, Paris and Milan with haute couture sportswear and gilets. Hordes of Durham students breathed a sigh of contentment as designers revealed their winter ranges of oversized personalised rugby shirts, quip-adorned t-shirts and strange hats.

British top model Agate Leyn has even been spotted in east London

sporting a hoody adorned with the word "Aggy," causing a massive boom in Fruit of the Loom sales. One student said 'I am so relieved that stash is in – it's sooo flattering.'

Cordelia Graham

NO SEX PLEASE, WE'RE STUDENTS

A report released last month revealed that a worrying number of Durham undergraduates are becoming increasingly frustrated by the overload of sexual expression being thrust into their youthful faces.

"I can't cope with this anymore," mutters Tom Smith, a first year biology student. "I grew up on a farm, for Christ's sake!" After studying female anatomy all day with no opportunity to practice non-theoretical examination, Tom and his fellow students are bombarded with sexual health stalls and leaflets at their canteen. They come home to find their Proctor handing out condoms in the corridors, and the atmosphere in Loveshack Wednesdays is driving them nuts.

"The drive to educate us is incessant," groans Tom. "And I'm only aware of one thing: I'm not getting any."

Rachael Revesz

no truth.

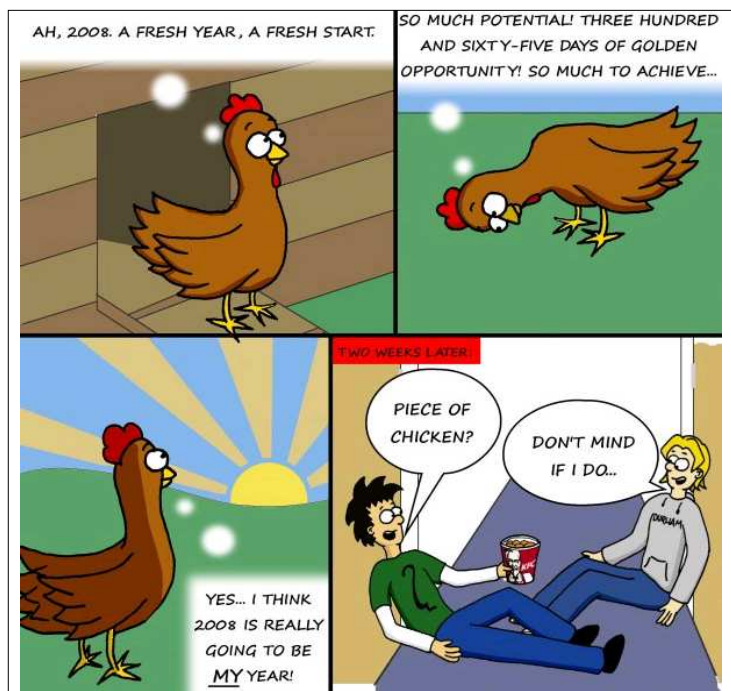
The logo of the mysterious splinter group Durham Intercollegiate Christian Union (Nihilistic Chapter)

Poetry Corner

L. Ron Hubbard

Went to the cupboard,
To get him some Thetan juice.

Inside Mr Cruise,
Abstaining from booze,
Said: "This Xenu chap's rather obtuse".



Dan Dyer

PRISON BREAK 'A HIT' IN GAZA

Hundreds of Palestinians have been incorrectly released from Gaza today in a mass break out led by nondescript evil militants, following a breach in the outer wall of the compound. One inmate, commenting on his new freedom, spat a challenge to the Israeli government, "I'm going to buy bread, cheese and petrol".

The Israelis, fearing that these will be used to create suicide devices against their people, have pledged to capture these dangerous criminals, many of whom are guilty of being practicing Muslims in Israel.

Chris Williams

RUSSIAN REVERSAL

Apply a thick Russian accent and say the following, 'In the West you elect President. In Mother Russia, President Elects You!' Ever since Yakov Smirnoff popularised the Russian Reversal in the 1980s, this sentence, and sentences like it, would have caused riotous laughter to erupt from one's audience.

No more. Comedic technicians at De Montfort University, England's joke university, have discovered that this particular Russian Reversal is actually true. Dr Mike Hunt, Department of Chiastic Humour, indicated his views: 'We are quite simply astonished. Jokes shouldn't bear any relation to reality so this is a big problem for us.'



Vlad in action

The development was precipitated by the nomination of Dmitry Medvedev to be the next president of the Russian Federation by the incumbent Vladimir Putin. Putin's popularity is such in

Russia at the moment that most people will vote for whoever he wants them to. However, whilst the implications for the Russian Federation, the Democratic Ideal and World Peace can be overlooked, the consequences for our noble jocular institutions are far-reaching.

'The only way it could be worse is if a chicken crossed the road. I have nightmares about that you know,' Professor I P Freely, of the Department for Irony said, while a colleague from the Institute of Puns croaked: 'I might as well be dead.'

Luke Blackburn

DEEP SOUTH ELECTION BOYCOTT

Several Southern states of the US have announced that they will not hold the planned primaries for the Democrat party's presidential candidate. When asked if this was because of an objection to the flawed and complicated primary/caucus thingy, Texas Governor Rick Perry said:

'No, it's just that with the two main candidates being a black man and a woman, we didn't think anyone round here would vote. I mean, if the Republican nominee had been Condi Rice, we would just have shelved the whole damn thing.'

Thom Addinall-Biddulph

PIGS SHOOT BEAR

In the latest instalment of the children's stories of a Peruvian bear in London, the first in over twenty-five years, Paddington is set to be brought into life in twenty first century Britain.

In addition to the already announced "detention by the immigration services" incident, it has now emerged that the book will culminate with Paddington being brutally murdered by armed police on an underground train, ironically at the station whose name he has taken. Insiders have described how Paddington is to be dramatically pursued through London before being pinned down on a train seat and, without warning, shot at eleven times. Six bullets will hit his head and one cut through his shoulder.

While critics of the new story line have described it as "barbarous," "tasteless" and "totally unsuitable for children," the publishers are keen to

demonstrate an accurate portrayal of life in today's Britain for polite and hardworking South American immigrants.

Anton Lazarus

BROWN TO NEUTER WATCHDOG

Gordon Brown announced yesterday his plan to have the sleaze watchdog neutered. Said he: "Whilst this watchdog was clearly useful sniffing about the legs of the Tories for hidden bits of sleaze, in the light of the Peter Hain affair, the slobbery beast has been let loose in the Cabinet Room. It's been scuffing up the curtains, drooling on Tessa Jowell's crocodile-skin stilettos. It even bit Ed Balls in the, er, leg."

According to government sources, the watchdog will be replaced with an elderly dachshund called Kinnock.

Richard Hadden



Gordo at leisure

APPLE UNVEILS IDCARD

Following on from a successful range of Apple products including the iPhone, iBook and iHouse, the iD Card, designed as a popular replacement for the ID Card, was unveiled at a press conference yesterday by Home Secretary Jacqui Smith and Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

Despite the relative lack of interest in the Apple Exam introduced in 2006 – the iBeClever, often abbreviated to the iBe – government officials have remained determined to work with the technology and lifestyle gurus. Mr Jobs explained: "For those worried about security, rest assured; only the Government, Apple, and carefully selected third parties will have access to your more personal details."

Simon Castle

JACK WILLS ATTACKED BY ANGRY MOB

ROBIN MORRIS ESCAPES WITH A VERY NICE POLO SHIRT

The Durham outlet of controversial clothing label Jack Wills was this week besieged by a raging crowd of slaving protesters, who dubbed the North Bailey shop a "pestilent cathedral of nightmares and children's tears."

This comes as the latest in a string of incidents highlighting the bizarre level of anger evoked by the clothing chain. Whilst the spectacle of such visceral fury being directed against a high street brand initially appeared to defy rational explanation, Professor Gethyn Old, a geneticist attached to the University's Department of Things People Need to Get Over Because Seriously Guys, claims to have found the source of the baffling phenomenon.

Research in the department suggests that exotic additives used in the preparation of Jack Wills apparel trigger a 'self-righteous egalitarian rage gene' found in a small section of the population. "These poor souls lose all sense of proportion about trivial issues like high street labels," the Professor explained.

"To you or I, Jack Wills is a harmless Abercrombie & Fitch clone with an

optimistic price scheme, but to one of these unlucky bastards it must seem like Stalin met the Monopoly man and had a socially apocalyptic lovechild. They'll find themselves forced to drone on and on about the issue for hours at a time to anyone who'll listen - we found one poor lad who was reduced to standing in front of a mirror all day, just muttering '£15 for a pair of socks!' to himself. Tragic, really."

In an attempt to gain some insight into the condition, your correspondent flirted with perilous levels of tedium by voluntarily talking with one of those affected. Thudmer Boresom, creator of Facebook group 'I hate Jack Wills more than everyone else to the extent that I am forced to physically harm myself to express my rage' was more than happy to chat.

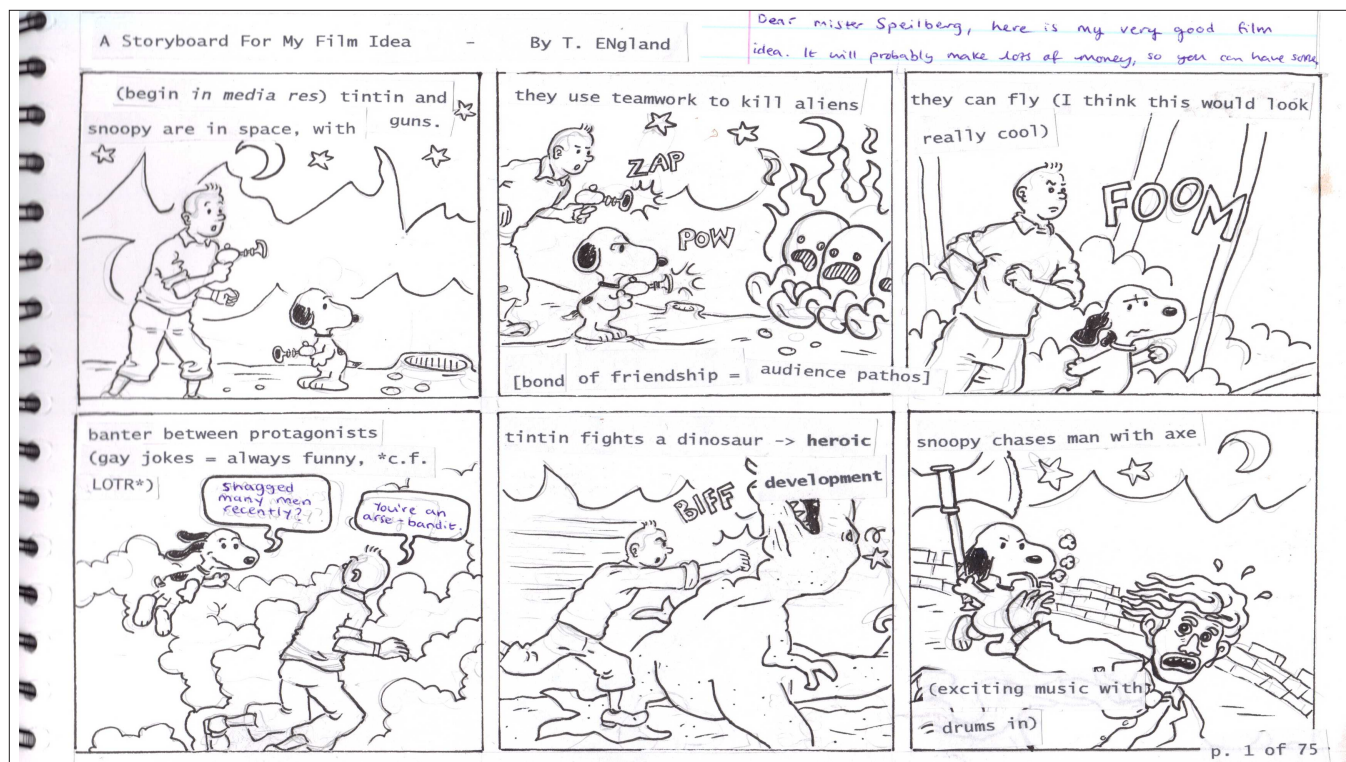
He immediately launched into a tirade of near concussion-inducing dullness, suggesting that "Jack Wills is literally, *literally* disgusting. Distinctive clothing to mark out membership of a group...is anyone else reminded of a little thing called *Nazi Germany*? Except it was the Jews that had to wear the

armbands, wasn't it? I guess they're more like reverse Nazis. But definitely still bad." He went on for some time.



Jack Wills, Durham Branch

There does, however, seem to be some hope of respite for those tiresome unfortunates who have been affected. Professor Old suggests that the strategic employment of phrases such as "oh hush, you hopelessly boring tool" or "fuckin' damn it, going on about Jack Wills got old in Epiphany 2006" can at least reduce the frequency of irritating anti-Wills outbursts. MH can only recommend his advice and hope for the best.



ESTHER RUDOLF GETS IT ON

RESEARCH METHODS: APPROACHES AND PARADIGMS

I'm on a date! I'm on a date! At least, I think I'm on a date. I'm at the back of the Market Tavern with an offensive tasting alcopop and a boy/man (it's difficult to tell at this age, every male person looks like a man until he shaves his beard off to reveal a high-achieving fourteen-year-old).

This is what Americans call a date, and what the English tentatively call, 'a friendly drink and a catch-up, 10pm at the Market Tavern, yeh?' because this is what you'd normally do with the boy you know a bit but not that well who sits next to you in 'Research Methods: Approaches and Paradigms'.

“Don't stick your tongue in my ear! For the love of God don't tongue my ear”

Maybe after this, I can invite him back to mine, on an obviously flimsy pretext. I love obviously flimsy pretexts; they're both shit and THE shit: *'Oh, fancy a cup of lemon tea in my room at eleven thirty at night? Yes, that would be lovely - mmm, lovely lemon tea, this is nice, how lovely and innocuous to be having a lovely cup of lemon tea in your room late at night with a bit of soft lighting.'*

'There's absolutely no way that we're about to have sex. Sex? Haha, the idea is practically risible!' Maybe after, or even during, sex, we can talk about 'Research Methods: Approaches and Paradigms'. Ah, what a great module. Heh, maybe I can be qualitative data and he can be quantitative data, and we can triangulate. Godamnit Esther, stop thinking dirty about 'Research Methods: Approaches and Paradigms'!

It's past last orders so we grab our coats and step out into the disappointingly still chilly Durham air. Christ, I haven't actually listened to a single thing he's said all night. There's literally only one thing on a girl's mind. And that's 'Research Methods: Approaches and Paradigms'.

We're saying our goodbyes and he

does the lean. Am I ready for the lean? The lean is approaching, but I haven't decided what I think about it yet. I mean, the lean is the sort of action that forces you to... oh wait, the lean has happened, and now we have face contact. I deliberated for too long, like the United Nations Security Council, and now loads of people in Africa are dead, and a boy from my module is kissing me.

Oh no! Is that his tongue? So soon? I haven't opened my mouth yet, I'm not ready to open my mouth, it's untimely. Christ, he's licking my teeth, he's actually licking my teeth. I'm just standing here, letting him lick my teeth.

It's ok, Esther, just close your eyes and think of 'Research Methods: Approaches and Paradigms'. He's still licking my teeth. And my lips... and my face? 'Research Methods: Approaches and Paradigms'! His mouth is all over my chin!

'RESEARCH METHODS: APPROACHES AND PARADIGMS'! This is horrible! I can't bear this! I'm just holding my face here to be polite! His tongue starts to migrate, away from my mouth and central face area, across my cheek.

Don't stick your tongue in my ear! For the love of God, don't tongue my ear! If he tongues my ear, I will have to run home immediately and bleach my entire head, and that will hurt a lot. Damnit! I'm just going to have to be rude!

I rip my head away from his tongue, blurt something about 'Research Methods: Approaches and Paradigms', run away so quickly I trip over my own foot, and fight like a dog to get up again so that he won't come and help me. I run, madly, desperate, flailing, all the way home, and slam the door violently behind me.

While I catch my breath, a wave of relief rushes over me. Oh thank god. Thank bloody god. My flatmates are out, there's lemon tea in the cupboard, 'Collecting Numerical Data: Issues in Research' lies, provocatively, on the table. Baby, let's get it on.

GREER'S FAIRYTALES: CINDERELLA

MODERN INTERPRETATIONS FOR THE ENLIGHTENED LADY

1. Traditional Feminist take

Cindy is quite attractive and pretty clever. She meets a complete prince charmer at a party who asks her out. However, her step mother won't let her go and makes her stay home and study. Unhappy, she consults the Earth Goddess for help but receives a relevant text book instead.

Cindy got all As and went on to become a top human rights barrister. She lived happily ever after with her supportive life partner Dave, whom she met at a Germaine Greer reading at Glastonbury. When they adopted an ethnic baby he quit his job so he could be a stay-at-home dad. She lives happily ever after.

2. Faux-feminist version

Charmer was an absolute fitty who asked geek-chic Cindy to a charity ball. She slept with him on the first date because she was a liberated 21st century woman on the pill for convenience. He bought her a kinky pole dancing kit so she could tone up in a sexy way as a liberated 21st century woman.

She learnt to please him with sex tips she learnt at the erotic massage class she attended as a liberated 21st century woman. They got married and she stayed at home to look after the kids, as she was at ease with her innate motherly instincts as a liberated 21st century woman. He lives happily ever after.

3. Equality Cinderella

Cindy and Charmer went for a coffee, split the bill, realised they wanted different things in life and went their separate ways. They live happily ever after? **Katy Fitzpatrick**

BLACK, BURNING STUFF, AND NOBODY KNOWS WHY

MAGNUS TAYLOR LOOKS RACE, VIOLENCE AND MEDIA MISREPRESENTATION

Kenya is currently in a bit of a state - a pickle, if you will. Some people seem to be killing each other, others are running dodgy elections, and the rest of the world looks puzzled and says: 'but I went on holiday there last year and it seemed nice.'

News coverage of the Kenyan crisis does little to answer any of our confused questions as to what exactly is going on. Normally you see a conventionally dishevelled (white) English journalist standing in front of a group of smiling/chanting/starving (black) Kenyans. He/she will probably say something about the death toll of innocent Kikuyu/ Kalenjin (who all seem to look the same to us) and then the film will cut to a shot of some young men running around the vicinity of a burning building. At some point there will be gunshots.

Sometimes the correspondent will give us two minutes of rather garbled explanation. We hear names of tribes of whose significance we have no real understanding, political leaders who we imagine as corrupt megalomaniacs and a comment from someone in the British or American government saying we really should do something (quite what is not generally revealed.)



Pawns in a dangerous game

Basically, we don't understand why things happen like they do in Africa.

The only news we ever get from there is of war, disease or famine. We believe that these things are unchanging entities which will always exist in Africa, because they are what characterises the continent. Consequently, it is beyond our own capacity to resolve such a mind-bogglingly complex situation. Rarely are we asked to confront the issues that motivate such violence.

Over Christmas I was discussing a recent business trip my cousin had taken to South Africa. Whilst she was there a murder had taken place in her hotel. It was a basic, un-extraordinary murder; a personal feud motivated by personal reasons. In short, it was the sort of murder that happens all over the world every day of the year. However, my cousin, who is an intelligent, well educated professional woman, chose to attribute the murder to the fact that 'they have no real perception of the value of human life there.'

“she has become imbued with the unthinking impulse that Africa is a place in which the normal rationality of human behaviour has ceased to function.”

My cousin is not a racist, but it seems that she has become imbued with the unthinking impulse that Africa is a place in which the normal rationality of human behaviour has ceased to function. People kill each other because this is simply 'what they do.' This is patently not the case.

Fratricidal violence as we are now seeing in Kenya is terrible, but as with all violence, it has a strange and awful rationality to it. This will only be discovered if we take the time to dig beneath the lazy pictures of black men



Simply 'what they do'?

burning stuff. Kenyans are killing Kenyans because they are poverty stricken, disenfranchised and used as dispensable pawns in dangerous political games.

The modern Kenyan state has failed its people, so they have resorted to the collective security that their tribal identity gives them. Violence against another tribal group becomes a rational means of dissent because it seems to be the last available means of asserting one's economic and political grievances. Violence has been projected onto the old model of savage and divisive tribalism, but in reality its prime motivations are things we are all familiar with and should attempt to understand.

Visit the Website

Want more where this came from? We have far more good stuff sent in than we can print. Get a taste of it on our website, which has all our back issues and exclusive material regularly updated on the blog.

www.mostly-harmless.org.uk

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO NOSRATOLLAH TAJIK?

TOM WALKER INVESTIGATES DURHAM'S VERY OWN TERROR CONTROVERSY

It was a front-page splash in Palatinate. 'Durham Terror Shock,' screamed the headline. Inside, articles cited dubious academic reports warning of 'Islamic extremists' in Durham, while an editorial claimed that 'terrorism had reared its ugly head in a small university town in the North of England.'

Now, just over a year on, what's happened to the man at the centre of the issue, Nosratollah Tajik? Flo Herbert, the DSU President, wasn't sure. 'I'm sorry, who?' 'No-one even mentions him any more,' said a tutor from the Institute for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies, where Mr Tajik had taught languages. 'Most people don't even know who he is.'



Tajik: Appealing Extradition

Tajik may be out of our minds, but he's only barely out of sight. He lives with his family four miles away from Durham in Coxhoe, rarely leaving the house. His car and home have been attacked four times. And he's appealing his extradition order to the United States.

We all seem to have forgotten about Mr Tajik pretty quickly. The former Iranian ambassador to Jordan was entrapped by US Homeland Security agents in November 2006, allegedly caught on film agreeing to sell night-vision goggles to Iran. Palatinate told us that he was due to be extradited to face trial in the United States.

After that, we heard nothing more. Not a mention in any of the student papers - MH included - nor a comment from the DSU; nothing. The university hurriedly distanced themselves from

him and that, it seemed, was that. Why did we lose interest so quickly?

It hinges on the word 'terror'. Once he was painted as a 'terrorist,' Tajik and his case became irredeemable, indefensible. We assumed, doubtless, that Durham had had a lucky escape, that US-administered justice had been served, and that all was right in this best of all bubbles.

It's not quite that simple. Entrapping suspects in this way is banned in Britain. In 2003, a judge rejected a £15million fraud case because he deemed police sting tactics to have 'overstepped the line between legitimate crime detection and unacceptable crime creation'.

Moreover, the crime of which Tajik is accused of isn't illegal in the UK. When the case came to a UK court in April 2007, it would have been perfectly possible to disallow Tajik's extradition.

Yet the 'terror' connection seems to have made all the difference. The district judge ruled that 'the intended effect of the alleged actions was to bring about harm within the US,' and granted his extradition.

“Why have we so assiduously ignored all of this? Has the concept of 'terrorism' itself become so mundane that we don't think to give it a second glance?”

Tajik was allegedly selling arms to Iran; Iran has links with Hezbollah, the Lebanese Islamist group; therefore he must have been selling arms to Hezbollah. By extension, went the US line, Tajik was himself a terrorist.

The logic of the judge's decision bears closer examination. Hezbollah haven't launched any terrorist attacks 'within the US,' and aren't suspected of

planning to do so. Iran might strike an aggressive pose towards the United States - though, according to the recent National Intelligence Estimate, it is not developing nuclear weapons - but is anyone seriously suggesting that it wants to use night vision goggles to invade Los Angeles? The link is tenuous.



Goggles: Cause for Extradition?

Britain's extradition agreement with the US is infamously one-sided. British police must show a 'reasonable case' against the suspect to bring them to the UK.

The Americans have no such obligation, a problem brought to public attention by the NatWest Three's forcible removal to Houston for their alleged role in the Enron scandal in 2006. Tajik is planning to appeal against the decision, but in the face of American pressure, his prospects don't look good.

Why have we so assiduously ignored all of this? Has the concept of 'terrorism' itself become so mundane that we don't think to give it a second glance? Did we assume Tajik was guilty merely because the Americans said so?

Or, even worse, because he was Iranian? Whatever the outcome of this case may be, it is a damning indictment on us, and the university as a whole, that the vast majority of us haven't even heard of Nosratollah Tajik.

HOW DO YOU DO?

NICOLA WILSON LAMENTS THE LOST ART OF THE SIMPLE HANDSHAKE

A strange old riddle, peculiar to those of mischievous temperament, runs thus; "What do men do standing up, women do sitting down and dogs do on three legs?"

The answer is, of course, shake hands. Those of you who thought otherwise should congratulate yourselves on the cultural British double-entendre heritage you have absorbed into your subconscious. And perhaps lay off the Carry On films.

The humble handshake has been a bastion of greetings since the first ancient tribes showed each other that they carried no weapons, whilst simultaneously keeping the members of the other tribe safely at arm's length. The most effusive of Victorian greetings centered on a vigorous pumping up and down (steady on double-entendre readers) of your fellow man's hand as you warmly welcomed him with a cry of "Good Lord, Jenkins, my dear fellow!" The name might have been optional, but the handshake itself was a vital component.

Even today, in our sexually-enlightened, touchy-feely age, this simple gesture carries a considerable weight in certain circumstances. Upon entering a room for a formal interview, (otherwise known as 'descending to a

special level of hell'), one is advised to instantly shake hands with every interviewer before resigning oneself to the relentless agony of Appearing Clever Under Pressure.



A handshake solves all

Another example is that of our benevolent and all-knowing rulers on high (read: 'self-serving political money barons'), who utilise the handshake to portray international harmony. You may notice their simultaneous use of a smile of remarkably false sincerity. "See Ruler of Country X? See how we shake hands? See how we touch like Victorian gentlemen? This shows that we like Country X and wish to trade amiably with them, and that they have absolutely no oil reserves whatsoever. Country Y, however, with its vast oil fields and unfamiliar religion..."

For the contact-sensitive, the conservative and the unclean, the

handshake is a vital social tool. However, present a stranger with your hand today, complete with unthreatening smile and friendly greeting, and you might as well have offered them a mouldy haddock.

I am forced to admit that, yes, a handshake is a little old-fashioned, a little bit traditional. I would like to point out however, that we do not shun traditions such as being nice to old ladies or refusing to confront people who push into queues in front of us. Such things are bastions of our social conventions. They have made Britain great; or, at least, tolerable. In light of this, let us make a vow together.

Let us throw off the shackles of this era of endless embracing. Let us cast aside the need to greet a new acquaintance with nothing more than an awkward smile. Let us reject The Cuddle. Let us reclaim the handshake - a firm, honest and direct expression of our human love for one another, a love that does not require full body contact or unnecessary touching. Let us remember that eye contact is as valid as chest contact. Let us step forwards, hand-in-marginally-damp-hand, into a new and wonderful future.

Want to shake on it?

WHY I HATE TKMAXX

ANTON LAZARUS

Never trust a shop that values Recommended Retail Prices; question one that believes in perpetual promotion; but avoid like the plague any establishment that doesn't practice safe X.

The premise of TKMaxx, what they irritatingly refer to as their "concept", is to buy 'big label' clothing in bulk and sell it on from their bomb-site shops at: "Always up to 60% off!". 'Always up to'? That doesn't make sense. I object to limiting a sale price and then using it as a marketing device, but I suppose it doesn't surprise me that it works. Why? Because TKMaxx is a shop frequented exclusively by morons.

TKMaxx is the shopping destination of choice for stupid people. People that want "Big labels. Low prices." People who think that having "Quiksilver", "Adidas" or "Nike" plastered across their clothing somehow increases its, and their, worth. People who don't understand, or want to bypass, the already moronic concept of paying extra for a brand to be associated with its carefully and expensively crafted image.

To wear an obviously branded item of clothing is in invitation. An invitation to: 'look at me, look at my brand and associate me with a certain image.' This logic demonstrates a belief in the importance of being peer-reviewed. It's not "good dress sense" to wear brands, it's latching onto an image that has been created to make copious amounts of

money by giving boring people a uniform.

In twenty-first century Britain, identity is open to the free market. Buying clothing with a certain brand name is self-pigeon holing, at a cost, for boring people.

TKMaxx's "concept" allows people to buy themselves a cheap identity, in every sense of the word. Cheap because it's £20 off the RRP, and cheap because an identity based on big-business marketing should be worth nothing.

I hate TKMaxx because they make money by selling this worthless "identity" and then boast that it's good value. Or maybe I'm just bitter because they only had those Abercrombie and Fitch jogging-pants in XXL.



PRIVATE EYE

In conjunction with Private Eye, we're giving away a free year's subscription to their acclaimed satirical publication. All you have to do is demonstrate your worthiness to receive such a coveted prize:

To enter, complete one of the sentences below in less than 150 words:

// 'I think Bill Bryson should be replaced by the talking PG Tips chimp as chancellor of the university because...'

// 'I think DSU president Flo Herbert should be made to apologise to West Africa for the ravages of slavery committed against the ancestors of its inhabitants 200 years ago...'

// 'I don't really think much about anything, but hey here's this other interesting thing...'

Entries should be submitted to mostlyharmless06@gmail.com with the subject line: 'Private Eye' - the best will be published online and in the next edition. The winner will be announced on the website. Submit entries by 5pm on Friday 15th February.



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MOSTLYHARMLESS MUTTERS LET THEM STRIP

The scoop ran across the front page of the Palatinate: council in crisis over Loft turning into a strip club. If this wasn't Durham, with its adorable and rather comforting lack of anything like news, you'd think they were installing a budget nuclear waste dump.

The article reported that there's even a Facebook group with over 300 members (at the time of writing there were 254 – always good to see the Big P really energising a debate). That compares to over 200 groups, with a good 500,000 members, devoted to stepping on crunchy leaves; truly, the Loft Crisis of '08 is the issue of our generation.

The DSU had already weighed in a few months back with a survey about student safety on North Road, reporting back that there had been "mixed results" but that definitely "some" students were concerned. Some? Call us cynics, but that sounds to us like a weaselly way of saying that most people weren't really fussed. Apparently the idea of groups of drunk people on North Road wasn't such a shocking prospect to the average Durham student after all.

We don't, of course, mean to come out swinging for strip clubs. They're a bit seedy and pathetic at the best of times, and there are valid reasons to consider them genuinely unpleasant. On the other hand, that doesn't make it a good idea to whip up spurious safety concerns over a club which (if it ever opens) will probably have a negligible impact upon life in Durham. The DSU's own survey sounds like it showed that the student population is largely apathetic. Here's to that – a tried and tested student position, and on this occasion a well thought-out one too.

Who Made This?

Editors: Tom Walker, Magnus Taylor, Siddharth Khajuria

Editorial Consultant: Anton Lazarus

Sub-Editors: Robin Morris, Thom Addinall-Biddulph, Cordelia Graham, Charlotte Spencer-Smith, Nick Collins, Richard Hadden, Chris Williams, Rachel Ratty, Maxime Dargaud-Fons, Alaric Green

Chief Copy-Editor: Claire Turner

Copy Editors: Lucy Davies, Tobias White, Rebecca Newsom, Lucy Eldred

Images: Jack Logue, Alexander Walker

Cartoons: Clarice Holt, Tom England, Dan Dyer, Ben Whittle

Finance and Logistics: John Corcoran

Marketing: Alaric Green

Distribution: Izzy Arundell

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GIVE ME SOME OF THAT COOL FUN

MAGNUS TAYLOR DONS HIS SKINNY JEANS AND TRIES TO HANG WITH THE COOL CROWD

Durham. Famous for being the land of the Prince Bishops. Famous for being the last resting place of the Venerable Bede. And slightly less famous for being the subject of a rather dull Old English poem. This obviously, adds up to a place that is alive with fun and lights and music every night. As befits a city that once ruled the northeast, it is now a thriving metropolis offering many destinations for a staggering range of nights out...

At this point we hit a problem. Durham isn't a thriving metropolis. It isn't really a city, to be honest, and even its claim to the name 'town' is dubious. For a night out your choices, if you don't just want to get wasted and whirl around in a frenzy of barely consensual hugs, Whigfield and vomit, are essentially breaking in to the Botanic Garden or chasing the horses that occasionally live on Whinney Hill (not that I condone either of those activities...publicly).

So, anything a wee bit different (within limits- arson is still illegal in this country, I remind you) is good. Like Cool Fun: a small, silly, rickety stand-up comedy night held every second Sunday at Fishtank; a bar that offers something more than cheap drinks and questionable music. Well,

insofar as nights there take place to the accompaniment of songs that, shock horror, you might not have heard before. And not just other songs by Whigfield (I'm reliably informed they do exist).

I have been going to Cool Fun for a while now, and although audience numbers vary it is one of the few things in Durham worth a second glance. Unlike most club nights in the city, dancing isn't required. However, if during the evening you decided you wanted to stand on your chair, sing the national anthem and pull out your best moves, it would probably be welcomed as an amusing diversion rather than an irritating nuisance.

“If you decided to stand on a chair and pull out your best moves, you’d probably be welcomed”

The night was started over a year ago by members of the Durham Revue and Wittank. It's now run by Jez Scharf and Jenni Armstrong who are both full

of stripey, dishevelled, indie charm. To say that Cool Fun is rickety and relaxed is rather an understatement. On an average night you can expect the microphone to fall over at least once, someone to rush back to their bag half way through their set to retrieve a forgotten prop, and for Jenni (who comperes the evening) to say she's 'really excited' at least seven times.

The thing is, I think she probably is genuinely excited, with life, with talking to the people in the front row and probably with a set of brand new colouring pencils she was given for her birthday back when she was eight. As with everyone who performs or attends Cool Fun, she looks like she is actually enjoying herself.

I make no pretensions that, thanks to Cool Fun, Durham is the new London. It's not a slick, professional outfit; it's not going to overshadow the Prince Bishops in Durham's history just yet; it might not be quite your thing.

But it's something different and enjoyable, an alternative to somewhere that actually makes a virtue of being 'Europe's second-worst nightclub', so at least give it a try, and realise that there is, in fact, more to life than being able to throw up in purple following the Brownie Bomber.



Paxmania: feeling of smugness and superiority as a result of correctly answering two or more questions in one episode of University Challenge.

Clarice Holt

ALL ABOARD THE SS AMERICAN

ROSA RANKIN-GEE GETS A KICK OUT OF DULOG'S SHOWCASE PRODUCTION, ANYTHING GOES

DULOG's 'Anything Goes' is just like soup. When it's fresh out of the fridge, the texture is batty and it tastes a bit like a fart-version of itself. Bung it on the hob though, and it's DeLightful, its DeSoupy, its DeCreamy, it's DeLovely.

It's Tuesday; first night, cheap night. We are the 7 pound crowd - we'll sacrifice quality to save a quid - it's who we are, it's what we do. I've taken it one step further: seats with restricted vision. Nothing but the best. The ticket lady lured me into it. "It's where the box was" she said. Ooooh, the box, I thought, Posho! I shall wear my Theatre Coat! No need, I'm up with the Untermenschen in the wings. Worst still, one must crane one's neck in order to peruse the stage. Bollocks to buggery, one thinks, where is my Lucozade bottle full of wine?

“We’re the £7 crowd: we’ll sacrifice quality to save a quid, it’s who we are, it’s what we do”

Cole Porter's 'Anything Goes' is a musical farce, set aboard the transatlantic S.S. American. It's about wide-boy Billy Crocker who stows away to win the heart of engaged debutante Hope Harcourt. It's also about eccentric earls and nightclub singers, fake vicars and Chinese reborn Christians, finger snapping and toe tapping, incongruous love matches that shuffle into place for the finale.

It doesn't start well. It is awash with technical hitches. The conductor knits very nice music, but it is also very, very, troublesomely loud. Microphones unstuck from sweaty cheeks and for the first few numbers, all lyrics are lost at sea. The audience are dry-teethed with panic. Two. More. Hours. Man over board; and it's suicide.

But then, as if by microwave, it warms up. Tense muscles melt, and everything is looser, lighter, better. 4 camp, tank-topped sailors sing "There will always be a lady fair". It is certainly not a lady these particular gentlemen are

after. But it's also not awkward, because the production is self-aware, and so light-hearted that there's no room to resist it. A few scenes later, the very same sailors, in nothing but bow ties, straddle a piano/each other. They have found their 'laddy fair'. And the show has found its Gramophone groove.

The cast: if I could type and give them a standing ovation at the same time, I would. Ben Starr's Billy Crocker is charismatic and plausible. When singing in a lower register, you could shut your eyes and pretend you were listening to Rex Harrison (a regular fantasy of mine). Reno Sweeney (Hannah Craine), the evangelistic nightclub singer, gives a measured performance, and her voice has a 40's twang to it, a warm crackle which makes it like listening to one of the greats through a vintage LP player. Public enemy no. 13, Moonface Martin (Matthew Johnson), is dripping wet with stage charm; his comic timing is impeccable, and we relax in his criminal hands. It may be the Lucozade bottle (by now a quarter) full of wine speaking, but I think I'm in love.

DULOG performance. I say it to myself, slowly. I never thought this was possible. Director Alex Carey, in an interview with Durham21, says she's "looking forward to buying a G&T as the curtain goes up". Well, a queue of people will want to buy it for her; and also for choreographer Lily Howkins and dancing godman Ben Skinner. And all of the chorus. In fact, they're on me... Land ahoy! Everyone to the bar!

“If I could type and give them a standing ovation at the same time, I would”

Or not. That was definitely the Lucozade bottle (formerly) full of wine talking. It's not even over yet. During the final reprise, the entire cast move as one. I'm reminded of a gospel church. Palms are outstretched in the sky and there's something rapturous and religious about their smiles. They aren't "do it for the blinky at the back of the London



Anything Went

Lord Evelyn Oakleigh (Joel Bubbers) also floats my SS American. He is the perfect English caricature; awkward and oversensitive, but, paradoxically, spindly and bendy enough to be a contortion artist. His pinched-nose newsreader RP is also a wonderful antidote to the occasionally hammy American accents, and his solo, where he recounts a romp with a girl called Plum-Blossom in a rice field, is arguably the play's funniest, finest moment.

But it's all good, actually. In fact, it's rather brilliant. I'm having fun at a

Palladium" smiles, they are real smiles. They are having such fun. And it's infectious.

Afterwards, as we all swarm down the stairs of the Gala, we recreate the sound of the orchestra warming up before the show. Everyone is singing their favourite riff under their breath, or tattooing a beat on the banister. I think "buoyant" is what we feel.

I go home to put drawing pins in my shoes (on the underside of my soles, nothing kinky) and tap dance 'til my toes ache.



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MARTEN LAMONEY: 'CONTENTS MAY BE HOT!'

LAMONEY TAKES HIS PICK FROM THE RECRUITMENT BUFFET

"The highest scoring candidates at the shortlisting stage will be invited to attend a pre-assessment centre lunch (5 September) and the assessment centre (10-12 September)."

"The buffet lunch is not part of the selection process but will offer the opportunity to meet fellow candidates and lawyers in the recruiting departments and also find out more about the processes involved on the assessment day."

This extract was reproduced with kind (lack of) permission from the Special Recruitment Website of the Government Legal Service. They also tell you that applicants must have a First or 2:1. One would have thought that anyone capable of such academic attainment wouldn't need to be reassured that "the buffet lunch is not part of the selection process." But perhaps not; perhaps the GLS is responsible for those helpful little warnings on the sides of coffee-cartons; "Cuidado, Caliente!" Italicised for emphasis... Thanks for that. Yeah, Muchas Gracias, Pajeros.

“Those helpful little warnings on the side of coffee-cartons; “Cuidado, Caliente!” Italicised for emphasis... Thanks for that. Yeah, Muchas Gracias, Pajeros.”

I'd like to imagine that the GLS are cleverer than that; that, despite what they say, it's a double-bluff and the buffet-lunch actually is a part of the selection process. I'd like to imagine those hopeful fledgling legal-eagles, immaculate in their breeches or sensible skirts, queuing up nervously behind one another as they proceed slowly - hearts thumping almost audibly - towards a bright, shiny silver buffet-cart, complete

with a transparent fibreglass sneeze-guard. Their assessors would be stern-faced, sharp-eyed and straight-nosed, with silver-rimmed spectacles to match the cart: ring-bound pocket notebook in one hand, and a sharpened pencil in the other, observing closely behind the service.



The first hopeful proceeds. With meticulous care he takes a polished brown tray and places it on the bright silver rails, he equips himself with all the necessary accoutrements: cutlery and crocs. He shimmies slowly - painfully - along. Then, unable to bear the tension; to resist the temptation, he sneaks a fugitive glimpse of his assessors - The Judging Panel. They remain inscrutable as statues. He regains his composure: 'play it cool,' he thinks, 'like Samuel Jackson in that film.' Involuntarily the theme-tune to 'Shaft' begins to play in his head - suddenly, to his horror, he is smiling - it couldn't be any worse! Quickly he controls himself. 'Discipline,' he thinks; 'focus - I got a decent 2:1 after all.'

Steadily, he surveys the plastic compartments of food before him, trying to keep up an air of nonchalance. Picking up that instrument (which is peculiar to buffet-scenarios, like a comically oversized pair of tweezers from some terrible nightmare), he considers frantically what he should select. His arm moves with the mechanical rigidity of an amusement arcade claw, pathetically hovering over

some 'choice' looking slices of pickled cucumber. He looks up timidly, importunately at the assessors, as if for approval. Inscrutably, dispassionately, they simply observe. One blinks, another yawns. The applicant panics; they are growing bored - 'shit,' he thinks, 'I had better make my choice.' Bravely, a little too quickly even, he plunges the metallic freak-tweezers into the gherkin-slices, and emerging, triumphantly allows them to drop onto his plate. He looks up again, this time defiantly - but the assessors are impassive as a row of rooftop gargoyles. Afterwards, his nerves placated, he takes some salmon cutlets and - for added sophistication - a small-sized chicken quiche.

Tortuously, this ritual is repeated twelve times over; one candidate after another: it takes about three hours. Each time the Assessors are just as impassive and dispassionate. Many opt for the cutlets, fewer for the cold saltbeef; but each and every one succumbs to the seductive charm of the chicken quiche.

“like a comically oversized pair of tweezers from some terrible nightmare”

It subsequently transpires that the quiche is contaminated with a particularly virulent strand of Salmonella. When all are seated, the inscrutable assessors suddenly undergo a sinister transformation. They adorn themselves with gaily-coloured party hats, pull loud, colourful party-streamers and blow on high-pitched inflatable whistles, whilst prancing around with big red rubber noses attached to their faces. All this takes place to the musical accompaniment of Prokofiev, being blasted in the background.

"Surprise!" they shout sassily, as they dance demoniacally about the applicants, who are left writhing and moaning in agony on the polished parquet floor.

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Ben Whittle

Finally, **we need writers**. Do you have an opinion or just something you think needs saying? We want to hear it. If there's something which enrages (or shocks, or delights, or amuses, or depresses) you, write about it and send it to us. Don't worry about being funny. Most of us aren't; we just like people who have something to say for themselves. We care about what you write. We read every word. Then we read them again, get other people to read them, and argue about the positioning of semi-colons.

So, get involved. If you want to be part of Mostly Harmless, if you want to send us some work, if you want to tell us what you can do, or if you even just want to chat, email us at mostlyharmless06@gmail.com

TONIGHT'S TV

WILLIAM G. PILGRIM

BBC1

7 PM

7.00 EastEnders

Gaz is chuffed to get his job back at the Queen Vic, but his joy turns to sadness when he discovers his old room has been redecorated.



8 PM

8.00 The One Show

A beautiful young woman and a hideously ugly man present this topical magazine style program. This week: Russell Brand's guide to talking like a giant twattish half-wit baby.

9 PM

9.00 Watchdog

The team struggles to stifle pun-related laughter as they investigate a violent dog-fighting ring.



10 PM

10.00 Question Time

David Dimbleby chairs the topical debate from Spenny-moor. This week's questions include "Are you looking at my lass?" and "Can I borrow 20p for the bus, hew?"

11 PM onwards

11.00 This Week

Andrew Neil quizzes Hazel Blears on her controversial appearance on Strictly Pole Dance.

12.00 See Hear

In this week's episode the See Hear presenters ask members of the hearing community: 'Would it really be such a burden to have signing on programs when they originally air, so that the deaf don't have to stay up till 4 in the fucking morning to catch up on EastEnders?' The answer is a resoundingly belligerent 'no'.

BBC2

7.00 Arrange Me a Funeral

Anthony Worrall Thompson and Tara Palmer-Tomkinson have just 2 days and £70 to arrange a military funeral for beloved father of 3, Lance-Corporal Tony Smith. (This is a change to the previously listed: 'Panorama: Where did all the Compassionate Compensation go?')

8.00 Build Me a Wife

Dame Judy Dench builds Ainsley Harriot a wife out of wicker baskets and masking tape.

9.00 Heroes of Comedy: Bernard Manning

Horrendously misjudged celebration of the life of a fat manucian racist. Highlights include footage of Manning on his death bed, lamenting the days when one could say 'I'm just paki-ing off down the wog-nips for some chinkers, can I get you anigthing' without being accused of insensitivity by the 'fascist PC thought police'.

10.00 Match of the Day 2: Will they or won't they?

The sexual tension between Gary Lineker and Alan Hansen comes to a sticky head in this week's explosive edition.

11.00 Escape from Planet Baboon

Stephen Poliakoff directs this heart-wrenching movie drama starring Helen Mirren, who finds herself trapped on a planet over run by giant, flying, flatulent, cackling baboon-aliens.



ITV1

7.00 Emmerdale

Daz is chuffed to get his job back at the Woolpack, but his joy turns to shock when he is accused of starting a barn fire.

7.30 Coronation Street

Shaz is chuffed to get her job back at the Rover's Return, but her joy turns to fear (and death) when a nuclear holocaust hits Weatherfield.

8.00 Stars in their Eyes

Celebrity special, starring The Bill's Andrew Lancel as The Police's Sting, and Bermondsey's Jade Goody as Atomic Kitten's Kerry Katona.

9.00 The Bill

DS Turner is stitched up by Trevor and scrambles to stop his career going down the swanny. Meanwhile the Sun Hill gang rehearses for a charity 'Stars in their Eyes' event.



10.00 I'm a Celebrity Diabetic, Get Me Out of Here!

Blood-sugar is low and tension is high as the celebrity diabetics gobble down animal genitals in exchange for life-saving medication.

11.00 Bear Grylls: Man vs. Wild

More homo-erotic escapism; this week Bear allows unfilled middle class loaded readers to play out childhood masturbatory SAS fantasies from the comfort of their plush IKEA living rooms. (Contains implied gender determinism).

12.00 Bear Grylls: Man vs. Wild

A second chance to see this evening's episode of Bear Grylls: Man vs. Wild.

C4

7.00 The Simpsons

Homer water-skis over a shark. Special Guest: Angela Merkel.

7.30 Hollyoaks

Karen takes a night class on the topic of 'Gender Representation, misogyny and the Male Gaze'.

8.00 Channel 4 News

Hosted by Krishnan Guru-Murphy.



9.00 How to Look Good Dying

Gok Wan presents the show in which women who are unsatisfied with the affects of terminal illness on their body shape, are offered beauty advice to help them in a race against time to achieve the perfect body.

10.00 Without a Trace

Formulaic US Drama: The team investigates the disappearance of a young British girl; discovering a trail of clues leading them to a Fleet Street dungeon.

11.00 Mad Max

Channel 4's 'anti-Semites in Hollywood' season continues, this week bringing us Mel Gibson's break-through role as an anti-hero battling for survival in a dystopian future. Next week: Space Jam.



FIVE

7.00 Cash up my Attic

Unwitting contestants compete to see who can shove the most cash up Kerry Katona-McFadden's spacious attic.

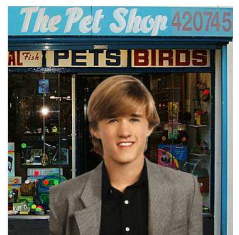


8.00 Diet Doctors

Three 'expert' 'celebrity doctors' torture a barely-overweight middle aged woman into a drastic and ultimately tragic change of lifestyle.

9.00 Ocean's 8

PREMIER: Misconceived straight-to-DVD Ocean's 11 prequel. A youthful Danny Ocean (Hayley Joel Osmert) hatches a plan to burgle a pet shop, much to the disgruntlement of senile, gun-toting, foul-mouthed, cannibal, store owner Al (Henry Winkler).

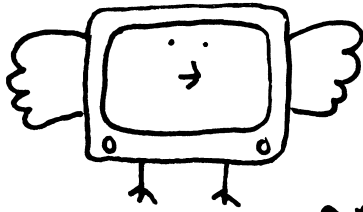


11.00 Strictly Pole Dance

Jade Goody, Hazel Blears and Kerry KatFadden compete to see who will be crowned 'queen of the pole' (contains graphic nudity, animal cruelty and scenes that may be disturbing to some viewers).

12.00 Two Girls One Cup: The Musical

PREMIER: Kerry McAtona and Jade Goody star in this lighthearted eroto-skatalogical romp.



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