

THE COLUMNS

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 89

by pupils; for pupils

Though we've all been thoroughly battered by Storm Babet, hopefully the return to school after the October holidays has been smooth for everyone, despite the unpredictable and unpleasant weather. If you went anywhere exciting during the break, whether with the school or your family, then we're sure you're glad to be back at school. Even if you're already swamped by work, there have already been a lot of exciting things this week, as well as opportunities for fun in the upcoming weeks, especially on Tuesday's Halloween dress-up day supporting charity. Though current world events can be overwhelming to process, this week, we at The Columns aim to entertain and uplift with a variety of Halloween-themed articles in celebration of the upcoming holiday. Remember to trick-or-treat (or guise) safely, and don't eat too many sweets afterwards.



HAPPY
HALLOWEEN





Halloween

Sarah Campbell

As Halloween is fast approaching, we are faced with the inevitability of late nights in panicked costume construction. It does often make me wonder why we make ourselves look as foolish as possible, and where this absurd tradition came from.

It turns out, that like many of the other popular holidays, it is derived from a Celtic Festival named 'Samhain'. The purpose of this festival was to welcome harvest after summer. Traditionally, they lit bonfires and dressed up to ward off ghosts and monsters as the year got darker. Then, All-Saints day was made official to honour the Saints, this soon became intertwined with Samhain.

It was believed that the souls of all the dead wandered the earth, and 'Hallows Eve' was a chance for the ghosts to get revenge on their enemies. This was due to the fact that this time of year made the wall between dead and alive thinner, and therefore spirits could more easily access the earth. Because of this, people began to dress in costumes on this night to disguise themselves and frighten away any possible roaming spirits. So, try to make your costumes as spooky as possible!



'King Richard' Review

India Simpson

I only recently found myself watching the performance that won the controversial 'Best Actor' award in March 2022 - Will Smith in 'King Richard'. Putting aside the issues over Smith and the award, I highly enjoyed this film. Smith's performance was impressive, although I was particularly impressed by the actress playing young Serena Williams. If you are not aware of the plot of the film, it is based on Richard Williams, the father of the celebrated tennis stars Venus and Serena. As a tennis fan myself, I loved to see their route to tennis visualised. The team managed to find ways to portray that the dynamics within the family and the force of the father encouraged the fighting spirit that the sisters are so known for. The film displayed the controversy surrounding the father's methods for the girls' training and displayed not only how this came across to the public but the impact it could've had on young Venus, and the views of those within the tennis world such as her coach. I felt the film did a good job of highlighting the pain that Serena may have gone through when all the initial praise and success was for Venus, and stressed that whilst everyone (including her father) was focused on Venus during the time the film covered, they were careful to include that she was always there, training and trying, and her father claimed to believe in her, even if she didn't always see it. The film also, I think, did an excellent job of portraying the stress and pressure that must have come not only with being such a young player with huge expectations in the professional game, and not only with her not having played in Juniors, but the pressure that came from what she represented. The Williams sisters meant a lot to a lot of people in not just the tennis world, but the world of sport overall, and whilst the film didn't quite cover that period, it did a good job of showing that the sisters were aware what it would mean if they did well. They knew they could help people and make a difference.

Whilst Will Smith made the point that he believed that Richard was perhaps more loving and family-oriented than the film made out (perhaps purely because films thrive on conflict and accentuating this provided that) there is no suggestion that the Williams sisters themselves believed it was an inaccurate portrayal. Both Serena and Venus are listed as executive producers, and the film would not have been released without their consent after viewing the finished product. I believe both sisters saw the film not as something that covered their fame or their success, but instead as something that praised their father. Serena herself thought "it was a great opportunity to see how amazing African-American fathers are. A lot of black men aren't seen in that light. And a lot of people think that my dad was a different character. He wanted us to have fun first over anything. That's the thing that I loved most."

Since premiering at the Telluride Film Festival in 2021, the film has been highly critically acclaimed. Looking over some reviews, I found that whilst most considered it a good movie, it rose to the status of great movie if you understand something about who the Williams sisters are, what they have achieved, and how much it meant - to them, to others and to tennis. Overall, I highly recommend this film: it is an absolute must-watch if you are a fan of tennis, but the film can be appreciated and enjoyed even if you are not engrossed in the world of tennis.

Storm Babet hits Britain Bad

Jack Mitchell

In just two days, some parts of Angus and Aberdeenshire received 200 millimetres (roughly 8 inches) of rainfall. In other parts of the country, similar amounts were recorded. This led to flooding in both England and Scotland, which has at the time of writing sadly left 7 dead.

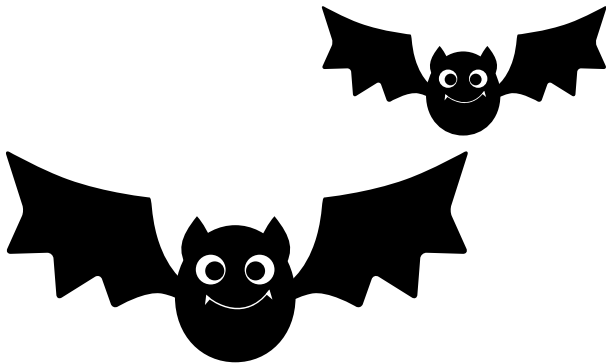
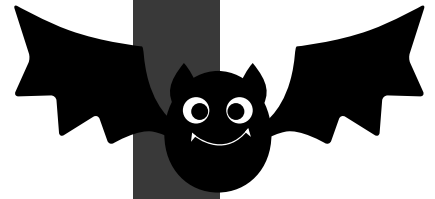
One reason for the severity of the flooding is that the storm hit the east of the country, which is typically the drier side. The west side is better equipped to deal with high levels of rainfall due to natural mitigators such as faster and deeper rivers. It had already rained heavily just ten days prior to the start of the new wave of heavy rain. This meant that the ground was already saturated (at capacity; unable to absorb any more water), meaning the new rainfall had to sit on top of the ground or flow into a nearby river.

Forecasters had a good idea of what the storm would be like, and had named it days beforehand. For instance, residents of Brechin were evacuated over the course of Thursday, before the heavy rainfall became dangerous. And it did become dangerous. Very dangerous. As mentioned before, seven people tragically lost their lives directly due to Storm Babet. Three of those were Scots:

- Peter Pelling – a 61-year-old from Arbroath who was swept away by flood water in Marykirk, Aberdeenshire
- John Gillan – a 56-year-old, also from Arbroath, who died when a tree hit his van near Forfar
- Wendy Taylor – a 57-year-old who was swept away at Glen Esk, reportedly on a shooting trip

The storm also tragically hit south of the border. Even in Caerphilly, in Southern Wales, a weather-related five-car crash occurred, leaving a 61-year-old mother and her 40-year-old daughter dead. This shows that the storm was still powerful over 450 miles away. Another two were found, including an 84-year-old with mobility issues. Tributes have been plentiful, with the mother-and-daughter described as ‘devoted’ and ‘cherished’ by family members. Nicola Sturgeon’s old right-hand-man and deputy, John Swinney, has said that he was ‘terribly saddened’. A lot of damage was dealt to his constituency of Perthshire North. The First Minister, Humza Yousaf, recently travelled to Brechin, where many homes were flooded, to pledge support, and told residents that there is a ‘long road to recovery’.

These horrific events have reminded the country that we are not invincible when it comes to natural disasters. Hopefully, the nation will act on what can be done to avoid the levels of devastation Storm Babet brought us.



GHOSTWATCH

By Izzy Clark

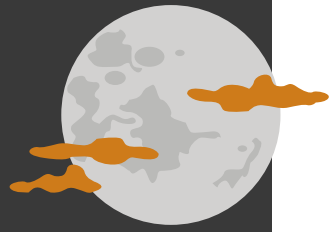
Picture the scene - it's Halloween night, 1992, and you're eleven years old and turning on the TV. The BBC continuity announcer tells you that the next show being broadcast is an investigation of a real-life haunted house, hosted by beloved children's TV presenters Micheal Parkinson, Sarah Greene, Mike Smith and Craig Charles, and it promises to be a show like no other - entitled "Ghostwatch".

Over the next hour and a half, you're treated to a tour around an unassuming house in Greater London, which the owner and her two preteen daughters terrifiedly proclaim is haunted. Whilst at first the home seems normal, if a little quiet, soon, strange happenings start occurring, and it rapidly becomes clear that something seems to be going wrong. Meanwhile, in the studio, a phone line reportedly for the public to share their own ghost stories becomes inundated with calls saying they're seeing a shadowy figure in the house. In the house, things start to go horribly wrong, as the crew begin to lose control of the broadcast, culminating in an attack on one of the presenters and a total shutdown back in the main studio.

As far as you can tell, something terrible has happened. This is what my mum, along with her sister and a friend, watched live on Halloween 1992. As young children, they were absolutely petrified. And they had a right to be - Ghostwatch terrified the children of the nation, leading to one million TV phone-ins, and securing its spot in British television history.

But, of course, as you might have expected, it was all elaborately staged. The mother, daughters and presenters were all actors, and all the supernatural incidents were staged. Even the phone line was fake - all the calls about dark figures in the house were rigged, too. If you called the number, you'd have received a pre-recorded message that the show was staged - until the message went down, overwhelmed by public submissions.

Ghostwatch has never since been replayed on UK television - the whole facade is something of common knowledge among people over 40 now - but it has cemented itself into the public consciousness and inspired a whole genre of "found-footage" horror films and shows all trying to get that same reaction. Who else could trick a nation into believing what they had seen had actually happened?



Found footage and pseudodocumentary horror and thriller, when done correctly, can be some of the most fascinating and attention-grabbing media out there. Ghostwatch's numerous imitations (the sincerest form of flattery) all manage to get something right - they make us afraid, even if it's of something like a ghost. "The Blair Witch Project" and its subsequent sequels use the format of video recordings to persuade us that the events of the film have really happened, and these young people have experienced genuine peril. Writers of the 2020 horror film "Host" cited Ghostwatch as an inspiration for their own found-footage ghost drama, and movie franchise "Cloverfield" uses similar techniques. "Inside Number 9"'s 2019 Halloween special uses the Ghostwatch format too, spinning a story of ghosts meddling with a TV broadcast and causing chaos to the actors, cameraman and even the continuity announcer.

The docufiction genre has a wider reach than just supernatural horror, and can be used in a variety of ways with wide intentions. The 1938 Halloween radio broadcast of "War of the Worlds" by HG Wells, directed by Orson Welles, used fake radio broadcasts to tell the unfolding story of an alien invasion of Earth as a metaphor for colonialism, and the BBC's 2003 broadcast "The Day Britain Stopped" spun a terrifying and plausible story about a complete meltdown of Britain's transport system, warning the government and the public to value essential workers and the public services they take for granted.

Recently, 2023's "Britain's Miracle Meat", hosted by "Inside the Factory" presenter Gregg Wallace, gave us a new, scarily-realistic, horror that hits all too close to home. Whilst entirely satirical and fictional in nature, the mockumentary presents a solution to rising meat prices in the current cost-of-living crisis. None of what's shown on screen is depicted as anything other than the truth, and the show's pre-watershed (i.e., shown at a time deemed appropriate for children to watch TV) broadcast, along with its horrifying twist (I won't spoil it) led to it receiving almost 400 Ofcom complaints (surprisingly not the most complained-about show that week, "Love Island" takes that spot, and that's just as horrifying to me). There wasn't even a visible or obvious disclaimer, except for a thank-you note at the end to "Johnathan Swift", a 17th-century political writer and author of the satirical essay "A Modest Proposal", offering a solution to Britain's current economic problems and meat shortages, which "Britain's Miracle Meat" updated to the modern day.

Horror doesn't have to be supernatural or magical to be frightening - we just have to believe. And if it looks and seems real, then sometimes, no matter how fantastical or implausible, that can be the scariest thing of all.

Happy Halloween, everyone!



MONSTERS OF HALLOWEEN

By Maisey Lafollette

Halloween is celebrated on October 31st, a common celebration is dressing up in a scary costume. Some of the most popular monster costumes can change with the trends.

A lycanthrope is more commonly known as a werewolf. Werewolves are humans that become wolves at a full moon due to a curse or being attacked by another werewolf. Their traits are immortality, night vision, superhuman strength, and speed, among others. The legend is originally from Hungary, the Balkans, and Romania.

Vampires are some of the most famous creatures due to the legend of Dracula. Vampires are undead creatures associated with bats, and they need to drink blood to live. Their power set is made up of the ability to control natural forces and animals. Many believe the legend is from Romania, due to Dracula, but it is actually from Bulgaria.

Zombies are one of the creepiest creatures, being living corpses. Zombies eat brains to live and when they bite a human they turn that human into a zombie. Zombies are a great creature to dress up as because there are so many to choose from there's the schoolgirl, soldier, cheerleader and ninja zombie.

Whatever you decide to dress up as for Halloween, whether it be scary or traditional, I hope you have a "spooktacular" time!

Halloween Funnies

Did you hear about the two vampires who got into an argument? - They had bad blood!
Where do you find zombie houses? - On a dead-end street!
Why don't zombies eat comedians? - Because they taste funny!
How does Dracula turn on his torch? - With bat-teries!
Why don't vampires like midges? - Too much competition!
Why don't midges bit vampires? - As a professional custody!
How did the wee Scottish dog feel when he saw a werewolf? - Terrier-fied!
What do you call a lycanthrope who gets lost? - A where-wolf!
Why did the zombie cross the road? - He wanted to eat the chicken!
What do you do if you see a zombie? - Hope it's Halloween!

WORLD DRUMMING SOLOS 2023

This past weekend, three HSD pupils donned their kilts and braved the weather to attend the World Drumming Solos in Glasgow. With the competitions staggered throughout the day, our drummers got the chance to not only see each other play, they were also given ample opportunities to see drummers at a range of levels from across the world play.

Snare drummer Alexander played in the Under 14 Grade 4 march at his first-ever solo championships and put on an extremely good performance after much practice and dedication. The HSD band's lead tip, Emily Hough, competed in the 14-16 MSR. She played with one of her best performances with much confidence winning her 6th place at the world solos.

Tenor drummer Meagan Dailly competed and not only placed 2nd, but did her best performance of the set.



Issue 89 answers:

1. Because she films her videos on the London Underground
2. 'Across the Spiderverse'
3. A camptosaurus
4. The Fab 5
5. 10
6. A draw (Europe retain the title)
7. France
8. HS2 .

UP TO D8!
- EDITION 89 ANSWERS

Witch Trials

Ruby McIntee

Arthur Miller wrote the modern American classic “The Crucible” in 1953. This historical moment shaped the fabric of the play, an allegorical reference to the consequences of McCarthyism and mass hysteria during the ‘red scare’ of the 1950s. To demonstrate society’s demand for obedience and conformity, Miller sets his play hundreds of years earlier, during the Salem witch trials. The tragic end of “The Crucible” sees the protagonist John Procter martyred, nobly choosing to die rather than letting other innocents be led to the gallows. As he proclaims, ‘leave me my name’, the audience is reminded that this is a society where public and private morality is the same. It was worth dying for your reputation. Fifty years post publishing, and over three hundred and twenty-nine after the real Salem witch trials finished, the Massachusetts state senate exonerated the last Salem ‘witch’. To John Procter as described in the crucible, I imagine this would mean ‘leaving him his name’ so to speak. His reputation is now seen as whole, intact, cleared of any wrongdoing.

Many governments soon followed Massachusetts’s example, including the Scottish Parliament. The first formal apology for the great Scottish witch hunts was delivered by Nicola Sturgeon on international women’s day in 2022, soon followed by a proposed bill by Natalie Don to give all Scottish witches posthumous pardons. In part, this was due to the efforts led by Mitchell and Venditozzi, the leaders of the contemporary organization ‘Witches of Scotland’. The aims of this pressure group are threefold; a pardon, an apology, and a national monument for all those murdered by the state for conversing with the devil. The campaign has received international attention and its aims have already been partially realised. But are the new Witches of Scotland asking for an apology from the right people? And further to that point, did Nicola Sturgeon deflect attention from the real culprits?

To answer this question, like any murder mystery, the first question is “whodunnit.” The Scottish Witch trials were a more deadly precursor to the events in Salem, the more widely known Massachusetts bay colony witch hunts depicted in The Crucible. Starting with the 1536 witchcraft act and ending with the death of the last ‘witch’, Janet Horne, in 1727 the great Scottish witch trials saw between three to four thousand people tortured and executed for supposed witchcraft and sorcery. The majority were women. While part of the larger European witch hunt phenomenon, it is estimated that five times more people died in Scotland than in England, and over 100 times more than in Salem. A hallmark of the Scottish witch trials was the brutal methods of torture used to illicit confessions, as can be seen in the 1705 Pittenweem trials. There, one Beatrice Lang was accused by a 16-year-old boy following which she was imprisoned, and tortured for five months, after which she died.

So who was to blame for Beatrice Lang’s death? While a 16-year-old boy made the false allegation, perhaps culpability is better placed on the monarchy and religious institutions that wielded the tools of political influence throughout the 1563-1727 period. Religious institutions allowed and condoned countless women to suffer the same fate as Beatrice Lang. Are they not to blame? Admittedly, the Witches of Scotland have already pressured the Church of Scotland to make a statement apologising for their role in the witch trials, obliging the Church of Scotland to “represent and even enact an important public morale change by asserting the wrongness of past norms and policies”. However, a specific apology has yet to be issued from the Catholic Church, which was also active in the witch hunts: in fact, some historians argue that the churches were engaged in a game of one-upmanship at the time, each trying to prove their purity and power by killing more witches than the other. Equally the monarchy, with its tactical use of fear mongering has yet to apologise for role in the bloody persecution.

So why is the Scottish Government apologising? The Scottish Parliament only opened in 1999 – and in fact was formed in opposition to the church and state that had previously dominated Scotland as a colonised land. Perhaps the still existing institutions from which came the political decisions that led to the witch trials can make an apology much more meaningful, compared to political structures that were not in place anywhere near the time, let alone make decisions that harmed thousands. It is hard to meaningfully apologise for a crime to which you do not have a connection, let alone did not commit. For example, an apology for the deaths of ‘communists’ during the red scare from the Republican Party, from which the notorious Representative Joseph McCarthy came, would be significantly more poignant and impactful than an apology from the unity party that was founded in 2004. Similarly, an apology from the Royal family or Catholic Church, who have both precipitated and profited from the witch hunt craze in Scotland, would be substantially more meaningful than one from the current Scottish government.

By falling on their sword, does the Scottish government not draw attention away from those who should be held accountable?

By apologising for a crime they did not commit, perhaps they inadvertently shield those who do need to apologise for the atrocity. Many historians argue that the witches of Scotland were killed in a moral panic produced by the church, and women were demonised as a product of the changing political landscape. The Scottish reformation and the break in Scotland's traditional relations with the papacy resulted in a presbyterian and predominantly Calvinist national Kirk. This reformation led to competition between the old and new ways, with many churches adopting attention-grabbing witch trials as a form of perverse advertisement for their brand of Christianity: a way to say “our brand of Christianity is more holy than yours.” This sectarian competition is best seen, in Kent during 1650s, where evidence supports the idea that the ‘witch trials in that country were frequently promoted by those radical sectarians and political parvenus who rose to power in those years.”

Although religion drove the witch hunts, and sectarian competition amplified them, the monarchy also tossed much fuel on the fire. Even before his ascension to the throne, King James XI of Scotland (I of England) had written the influential anti-witch treatise, *Deamonology* (1597). *Deamonology* was used in multiple witch trials and established the practice of child witnesses when in 1612 a lawyer used the text to justify a nine-year-old's testimony in the trials of the Pendle witches. *Deamonology* established new norms for child witnesses that went beyond Great Britain and were even used in the Salem witch trials. Some may remember King James XI from English lessons, when learning about Shakespeare's ‘*Macbeth*’ (1623). *Macbeth* scholars argue it was written in part to pander to the witch-hunting King James. The witches presented by Shakespeare eerily imitate the story of Agnes Sampson, a real woman put to death over apparent witchcraft against King James, with both using sieves to call the devil. In *Macbeth*, the downfall of Scotland comes at the hands of witches, which not only strokes King James' paranoia of witches, but also his narcissistic delusion that he was the devil's ‘greatest enemy’ on earth.

With the moral panic produced by the Church and King, and with both institutions still remaining in a form of power, would it not make more sense for them to apologise? The secular Scottish government should be forever done falling on their sword for the racist, colonial, misogynistic relics of Britain's past.

HALLOWEEN EDITION– The Topical Columns Quiz - (Issue 90)

Are you up to d8?! Answer the following questions correctly and email your answers to dmfinlay@highschoolofdundee.org.uk. First pupil to send in a correct set of answers receives a prize! (Answers in the next issue of The Columns)

1. What is the traditional Halloween activity of knocking on people's doors, doing a turn and expecting a reward of sweets or pennies called? (clue: it's not 'trick-or-treating!')
2. Which vegetable is commonly carved into a spooky face and used as a Halloween decoration?
3. Name the author of the classic gothic tale: 'Dracula'
4. What is the name of the famous Halloween-associated song by Michael Jackson?
5. In Mexican tradition, what multi-day holiday honours deceased loved ones and features colourful sugar skulls and marigold flowers?
6. Which classic horror novel was written by Mary Shelley and features a scientist who creates a living being from dead body parts?
7. In the first Harry Potter novel, what creature breaks into Hogwarts on Halloween night?
8. Which ancient Celtic festival is believed to have inspired the modern celebration of Halloween?

It's the first week back after the half term break, and hopefully everyone got some well deserved rest. I know I could have done with some more rest! Either way it's great to be back at school. I hope everyone has a great Halloween, and has enjoyed this very special edition of the columns.

Ruby McIntee

Have a great weekend!

THE COLUMNS TEAM

