

THE COLUMNS

by pupils; for pupils

HSD's Newsletter: Issue 94



As the first week of Form 4 Prelims draws to a close, and deadlines draw nearer and nearer (dissertations, folios, projects and competitions), across the whole school, it's certain that we're all feeling just a little bit stressed around now. But it's important to bear in mind the scale of things - exam results and prelim marks don't determine your future, and your success should never come at the cost of your wellbeing. Exams are important (as anyone in 4th, 5th or 6th-year can attest), but so is your mental health. It's important to balance your workload, take regular breaks, and take the time to distress by doing something relaxing that you enjoy. There's nothing wrong with giving yourself a little reward for working so hard, whether that's something tasty to eat, going out with your friends or family, or simply having a good nap. At the end of the day, whilst school is important and you should try your best, you should recognise that you're only human, you'll have bad days sometimes, and that you shouldn't have to work for hours on end without a break.

Editor, Izzy

This Week in Photos



Milei Wins in Argentina

Jack Mitchell

It was announced on Monday that the far-right outsider in the Argentinian general election, Javier Milei, had defeated former Finance Minister Sergio Massa to become President of the country. The former president Alberto Fernandez had made clear his intentions to not stand for re-election some months ago. His party, the left-wing Justicialist Party had been in power for 16 of the last 20 years, so have therefore had the blame for Argentina's economic crisis – which has left 40% of the population in poverty - mostly directed towards them. The South American country has seen inflation running at over 100% for almost all of this year.

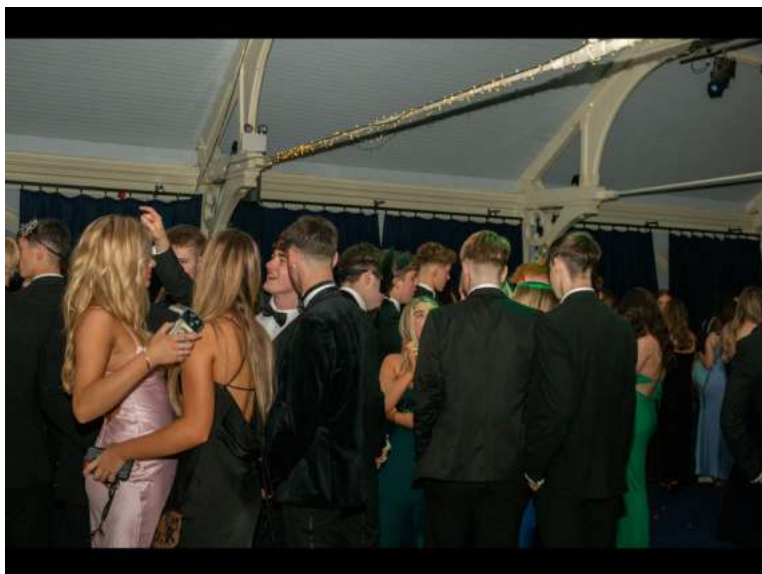
Milei's victory has been welcomed by other right-wing 'populists', such as recently ousted former president of Brazil Jair Bolsonaro and former US President Donald Trump who said that the dollar-loving 53-year-old will 'Make Argentina Great Again'. Nicknamed 'El Loco' (or 'the madman') by critics, Milei had been the 'National Deputy' (similar to MPs of Britain) for Buenos Aires representing the organisation he founded, 'La Libertad Avanza'. Meaning 'Freedom Advances', the partnership of right-wing parties is still in its relative infancy, founded only 2 years ago, compared to the Justicialist Party, which was founded by former president Juan Perón almost 80 years ago.

Javier Milei's economic plans for Argentina are very different to the Justicialist Party, with the new president endorsing Thatcherite economics, which include privatising many currently state-owned companies and lower government involvement than that of the Peronist parties. When it comes to social issues, he echoes many of the policies of Donald Trump. He has so far spoken about his wish for loosened gun control, his anger at the legalisation of abortion in Argentina – which happened only three years ago – and how he would legalise a human organ market. Now that he is president, it doesn't look like his stances have changed at all, so the aforementioned views may come into legislation in the coming months or years. He has also tried to downplay the dictatorship in Argentina in the late 1970s, which murdered thousands and ended up provoking the Falklands War.

While he did call Margaret Thatcher one of the 'greatest leaders in the history of humanity', there is one issue that is of particular significance to Argentina that she was on the opposite side of. Namely: the Falklands War. Over the course of the war, 650 Argentinians lost their lives to Britain's 225 fatalities. Over half of the South Americans killed were killed during one event: the sinking of the General Belgrano navy ship by the Brits. The decision to do so was made by none other than Margaret Thatcher. This is why she is still hated in Argentina and why Javier Milei angered many Falklands veterans with his positive comments about the former PM. He has spoken about his desire for the 'Islas Malvinas' - as the Argentinians call them – to be returned to his country, despite only 3 people (just 0.2%) voting in favour of a British handover.

The newly-elected president clearly has the support of the people behind him, but given that one of his main policies is retrieving the Falklands from the UK, he may prove a nuisance to Britain. With Argentina's membership of the BRICS group (an union of non-Western countries such as Russia, China and India) coming into effect on the 1st of January 2024, it may not just be Britain that he ends up aggravating.

Masquerade Ball









Happy Thanksgiving Y'all

Maisey Lafollette

Thanksgiving is a famous holiday in America, though many people don't know much about it. When was it celebrated first? What do they eat? How do they celebrate the holiday? What do pilgrims have to do with it?

A pilgrim is officially someone who travels for a religious reason. In the USA, pilgrims are the people who were the first European settlers. Pilgrims were also the first people to celebrate Thanksgiving in 1621. It was originally a feast to celebrate the first harvest. In 1789, George Washington (the first president) told the country to celebrate the end of the Revolutionary War and he was the first to give the Thanksgiving Proclamation, stating that day as a day for prayer and thanks.

Traditional Thanksgiving meals have turkey and stuffing. There's also the (disgusting) green bean casserole. Some popular items to include are cornbread, and mashed potatoes. The most popular dessert to have is pumpkin pie or apple pie. Thanksgiving is celebrated by having a meal with your family and saying what you're thankful for. There is also always a (American) football match.

In New York, the Macy's Day Parade marches through the streets and is televised nationwide. The parade has a lot of floats such as: The Kinder float, The Brick Changer (made by LEGO), The Wondership (made by a bread company) and so many more. The parade also includes celebrities performing, this year they have Pentatonix, Chicago and Cher. The president also pardons a turkey, the turkey that is pardoned will not be killed for a feast that year.

Thanksgiving is an amazing and fun holiday with a parade, family and football matches. I'm thankful for my family and also thankful that I have another year before National 5 exams! Although we don't celebrate this holiday in Scotland, I feel we can all pause for a moment this week and think of something that we're thankful for.

Health Blog: Alzheimer's

Maya McColgan

Alzheimer's: it's time to stop accepting it and confront it.

The author Andrea Gillies writes about her Alzheimer's experience, "We are our brainslose the use of your brain by degrees and the self is stripped away layer by layer." Alzheimer's destroys the brain. It is a cruel, implacable and incurable illness. One person, every three minutes, is diagnosed with this unforgiving, mind-decaying disease. By the year 2050, 130 million people, globally will be afflicted by it. Like me, you may know someone with the condition. I have witnessed my grandad slowly suffocate under its grip. This dreadful disease robs its victims- often our loved ones- of their minds, their spirits and their self respect. Alzheimer's brings devastation to people's lives as victims and carers and it costs the UK economy, alone, £26 billion each year.

This disease has a profound effect on both men and women but worryingly, two out of every three Alzheimer's victims are women. This is a shocking statistic that doesn't jump out at you unless you dig deep into the research. Furthermore, dementia, including Alzheimer's, kills more women in the UK than any other condition including heart disease, cancer and coronavirus. Worryingly, this has been the case for over a decade and nothing has changed.

Yet, Alzheimer's remains one of the most underfunded and under-researched diseases. I find this hard to swallow. If this brain rotting predator, which robs people of their humanity, is so threatening to half the world's population, why, I ask, are we doing so little about it. Surely, we must invest in more research into Alzheimer's. Furthermore, we must address why women are so disproportionately afflicted by it. This will help to reduce the Alzheimer's burden for women, their families and for society as a whole.

Not only is being a woman a significant risk factor for Alzheimer's, once diagnosed, the rate at which brain cells die is twice as fast in women as in men. But why? The reasons are complex but some research suggests that one reason that Alzheimer's has a disproportionate impact on women is due to fluctuations in the female hormone oestrogen. Oestrogen protects the brain. In young females, it defends the brain from the amyloid plaques that Alzheimer's uses to destroy it. But oestrogen's levels diminish and protection is lost as women reach menopausal age, thereby making them more susceptible to the disease.

Surely we need to take action and stop looking upon Alzheimer's as just being an inevitable consequence of ageing because according to the research, Alzheimer's is not a consequence of old age. Thankfully, we have lots in our armoury that we can use to fight off Alzheimer's. Research shows that this can be achieved by making simple lifestyle changes: good sleep; exercising moderately for 2.5 hours a week; having alcohol in moderation; not smoking and eating a well balanced diet. This news is empowering. It demonstrates, that we are not all doomed to develop Alzheimer's. In my opinion, this should be broadcast as a public health priority. It may also follow that Women can further protect their brains by boosting oestrogen levels. There are some emerging studies that support this idea but more research is needed before a valid conclusion can be made.

COFFEE

Izzy Clark

As anyone who's known me for more than five minutes will tell you, I like coffee. Granted, I am something of a coffee elitist - or unelitist, depending on your opinions. I drink exclusively instant coffee, lattes and mochas, all with some kind of obnoxiously-flavoured syrup or weird vegan milk. Iced coffee is my go-to summer beverage, and I drink a mug of instant coffee as soon as I wake up. To a drink purist, I am probably quite sacrilegious. But I know what I like, and I don't panic when I look at the menu in Costa (usually). For those of you who do, and don't know the difference between a cortado and a cappuccino, here's my abridged guide to cafe coffees, in preparation for hot-drink season.

The basis of every drink on a coffee shop menu is the espresso. All other drinks are based on this simple standard, and the espresso is used to measure the volume of the other components in drinks. A straight espresso is usually served with a separate glass of water, and is very strong and bitter. It's the strongest drink in proportion to its volume, and is served in a small glass, but there's no set volume for how much an espresso shot actually is.

The only other non-milk coffee you'll find in cafes is the americano, made by adding hot water to an espresso to dilute it. It's still a very bitter drink, and can vary in strength from one shot of espresso to two, and between an extra 150 to 400ml of water added.

The rest of your standard fare coffee shop menu consists of drinks made from espresso and various forms of milk. You can get any of these drinks with any variety of plant-based milk, such as oat, coconut, soy and almond milk. The smallest of these drinks is the cortado, which comes from the Spanish verb “cortar”, which means “to cut”, and consists of equal parts espresso and steamed milk. Next up is the cappuccino, made from a shot of espresso and the rest of the cup being filled with frothed milk, often topped with cinnamon or chocolate powder. My drink of choice, a latte, consists of espresso and steamed milk, rather than foamed. They don't taste too different, but cappuccinos have a more foamy texture. For those of you wondering where a flat white fits into all of this, a flat white is steamed milk and espresso in closer proportion, more comparable to a cortado than a latte or cappuccino.

A clarification: there are two different drinks called a macchiato. One of them consists of mostly steamed milk with a tiny bit of espresso, and the other consists of the opposite - espresso with a tiny bit of milk. This mix-up comes from the name - macchiato means “stained”, and the way most places get around this predicament is by naming the first drink a latte macchiato and the second an espresso macchiato. The only drink that's not just espresso and milk is a mocha, which is one part espresso, one part steamed milk and one part chocolate. There are other kinds of coffee mix drinks, but they usually aren't as common in coffee shops in the UK, such as “dirty chai”, a combination of chai (Indian spiced tea) and coffee, and coffee-alcohol combinations like Irish Coffee. My favourite coffee combo is affogato, where you pour a shot of espresso over a scoop of vanilla ice cream.

Of course, nothing beats what (to me) is the ultimate coffee order (a caramel latte with oat milk, in case you were wondering).

USA HEALTHCARE

Megan Beckham

Health care is a right, and America needs to start giving people access to it.

There's no doubt that the healthcare system in place in America is an unfair, classist one. Every year there's more stories brutally illustrating the reality of the death and suffering from lack of care, and more reports of the suffocating debts created even for those who can access it. Establishing a universal care system in America will not only ensure that everyone is treated, and therefore finally fulfill a human right, but also generate positive impacts on the country's economy. The current system is barbaric. How many more stories of dead people do we need to hear before we do something about it?

A main problem with this current system is that it's completely classist. For those who can afford insurance, there's access to care, but a question that few people are truly comprehending is that what happens to those who don't have this? Most of the time they don't go to the doctor, or try to avoid it at all costs. However, when faced with no choice other than seeking care, in an emergency, the fees are simply unaffordable. Visits to the doctor, copays, and prescriptions can add up to quite a sum on their own, but they don't compare to the thousands of dollars in the cost of procedures. Despite being physically saved, most are left drowning in debt. Now spare a thought for those in need of continuous care. Because of this current system people literally cannot afford to stay alive. The cost of insurance, let alone insurance that actually agrees to cover some things is ridiculously expensive. For those on lower incomes this can mean that coverage is simply out of reach. However the cost of private insurance is not the only classist factor. Most Americans today have some sort of coverage, through employment. This poses the question of what happens to people who are unemployed? Put simply, no employment means no income means no care.

A survey from 2022 by highlighted some of the true realities of the current healthcare system:

For example "43% of working age adults were inadequately insured in 2022." 9% of which were completely uninsured.

Additionally, "Forty-six percent of respondents said they had skipped or delayed care because of the cost, and 42 percent said they had problems paying medical bills or were paying off medical debt."

It becomes clear this is a blatant form of classist capitalism when defined in simple terms. If you have insurance your taken care of, if not your left to fend for yourself.

There are constantly stories about people who avoid medical care, ration medical care, or die from lack of it. A 2007 documentary "Sicko", compared the state of the healthcare system in America to universal systems. Different interviews conducted showed the resources people had to turn to such as stitching themselves up at home, and having to decide what number of fingers they could afford to re-attach, to avoid being rocketed in to inescapable debt. Sadly, this only scratches the surface of the realities that many Americans today must face. The horrific truths of things like dangerous back alley procedures. Choosing between food, Electricity, and medicine. Premature deaths without reason. For example, the Institute old Medicine estimated that "18 314 Americans aged between 25 and 64 years die annually because of lack of health insurance" We cannot continue ignore the fact of how barbaric this is. As humans, our immediate psychological response to hearing bad things is to not dwell on them, tell ourselves someone else is dealing with it. Shockingly, despite the amount of time, it's been the steps foreword have barely been incremental.

USA HEALTHCARE CONT'D

Also of important note, even for those with insurance, it doesn't cover everything. Many private companies cruelly reject applications for unjustified reasons, under the disguise of the person

being a liability. The lack of transparency is appalling. Little preventative care is offered, meaning, people sometimes are oblivious to problems until they becomes serious.

Many insurance plans only cover certain aspects of insurance, and people are still held accountable for fees they had no idea Existed , and with the cost of things like prescriptions, even the known fees can add up.

Additionally, the advantage of introducing universal health care in the USA is the positive economic impacts it will create. One of these is the fact that a universal healthcare service would be beneficial to private businesses. A lot of employers currently provide insurance, however, a universal healthcare system would void that need. The business now has more funds to do things like expand, employ people, which creates more jobs, etc. Fundamentally, more healthy people means more people participating in the growth of the economy. In a report from the National Academy of Medicine, showed that in 2003, the USA was losing up to 130 million dollars a year from people's health issues due to lack of insurance. If this was data from 20 years ago, imagine these numbers now. If health insurance becomes universal, this means people live healthier, longer lives. This leads in to more people being able to get jobs, and spend their earnings. This is referred to as the positive multiplier effect, as the country's economy is now gaining more income overall. More people in jobs also means more people paying income tax to the government, which means there is now more of a budget to spend on public services, like infrastructure, education, and a universal healthcare system.

This leads straight in to the most important reason of creating a universal health care system in the united states. It is a human right.

“The WHO Constitution (1946) envisages “...the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of every human being.”

As a country that is constantly talking about the importance of fundamental human rights, why is this one that is being overtly ignored? All the people that died premature unnecessary deaths due to lack of care had a right to live.

The United States is now becoming a country where peoples human rights are becoming more and more threatened. There are already millions of people who do not have even basic healthcare, millions of people who are dying of injuries that could have easily been taken care of. These peoples basic right to be taken care of has already been taken away, and now with the abortion bans there are people losing even more of what should be their basic rights. For a nation that boasts relentlessly about the importance of freedom needs to start fulfilling the empty promises of this very idea.

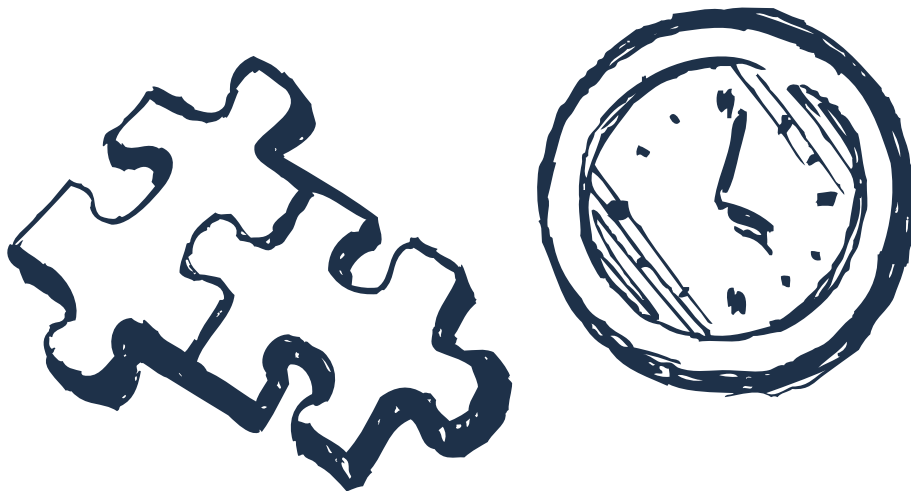
PUZZLE OF THE WEEK

Neil Bhat

Every week, there is a puzzle posted in the columns. If it is not of my own devising, it is sourced. Students send in solutions to me (bhatn@highschoolofdundee.org.uk) and are rewarded with a sweet if they get it right. They must send in a solution, not just the answer (e.g how they got to the answer). A selected solution is published in the Columns the following week, selected by me on three criteria; elegance, readability, and newness to the competition (a first-time sender is prioritised when compared to an identical candidate who has submitted a solution previously).

The puzzle for this week is as follows:

A whole number is a 'palindrome' if it remains the same number when the order of its digits is reversed. 1, 454 and 999 are all examples of palindromes. 455 is an example of a number that is not a palindrome. How many palindromes are there between 1 and 999, including both 1 and 999?



EDITORS' NOTE

I always have trouble writing the editor's note! It's a difficult piece of writing which never fails to challenge my capabilities; much like dissertations, or actually, most writing. This is why I have put in the same editor's note, yet again! First person to notice gets a prize. If you also want to stretch your intellectual capabilities, please write articles for the columns. For those who have written, congrats!

Editor Ruby

Have a fab weekend!

THE COLUMNS TEAM