

THE COLUMNS



by pupils; for pupils HSD's Newsletter: Issue 130

Well it's been an even more interesting week than last. As usual the news has been dominated by US President Donald Trump and the various things he's said and done. The many articles (all brilliantly written as always guys) we've had in reflect the news of the week, so unfortunately there's not so much for the 'lighter side' of the news. So I guess it falls to me.

What has happened this week that's been wholesome?

...

Okay, there must be something. (Googles it) Someone treated Huntingdon's disease for the first time ever! The hereditary disease, which resembles Parkinson's and dementia, surfaces in people's thirties and forties, and can be fatal after two decades, has been treated successfully in a clinical trial, with the disease slowing by up to 75% in patients.

So there is some good news this week if you know where to look. Not that the stuff in this edition isn't good. This stuff's important! Read it!

Co Editor, Charlie Grewar

Censor in Chief ?

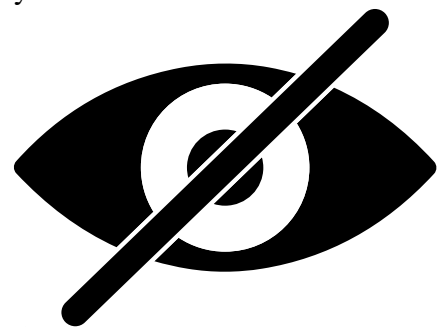
Maisey Lafollette

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

This is a direct quote from the American Congress website, detailing the First Amendment in the American Constitution, which in part, gives all Americans the right to free speech.

Stephen Colbert, the host of 'The Late Show' had his program cancelled just two weeks after the network paid President Trump a large settlement to end a defamation lawsuit against him. The network announced the show would end in May, due to financial reasons, but the announcement came only three days after Colbert criticised the settlement paid to Trump, by his network.

Last week, Jimmy Kimmel, the host of a self titled show, was immediately and abruptly suspended due to comments he made about the murder of Charlie Kirk and MAGA capitalising off Kirk's death. Kimmel has not responded publicly to his suspension, and he is not alone in his constant Trump jokes. All the American late-night hosts and comedians frequently have Trump as the punchline in their monologues or jokes. While the networks are claiming the suspension was due to lack of ratings, President Trump himself has commented "They give me only bad press. I mean they're getting a license. I would think maybe their licenses should be taken away." Thus involving himself in a perceived threat towards the remaining late night hosts to tone down their negative Trump rhetoric.



Many famous people have voiced their opinions regarding the recent Trump/Media feud. Former President Obama said, "After years of complaining about cancel culture, the current administration has taken it to a new and dangerous level by routinely threatening regulatory action against media companies unless they muzzle or fire reporters and commentators it doesn't like."

Susie Mendoza, comedy writer and producer, said “Comedy is a way to build a bridge between opposing sides, and when it starts getting shut down the conversation stops.” Brendan Carr, chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) called Kimmel’s words “truly sick”

While it seems the majority of famous Americans have spoken out about their beliefs of the current administration censoring free speech, there are of course the other side who believe Kimmel’s comments to be inappropriate and thoughtless.

Actress Jean Smart said, “What Jimmy said was free speech, not hate speech.” Whatever side you’re on, there are strong beliefs- the Trump Administration believing that they are stamping out hate speech, whereas others believe that in America whatever your beliefs are, you are free to voice them. Let’s just hope my free speech in this article doesn’t get the Kimmel treatment, and I might see you all next week!



Life on Mars

Tom Johnson

Last year, NASA’s Discovery Rover found what may be the most convincing sign yet that life existed on mars. Now, I know that the words “Life on mars” might conjure images of tinfoil hats, little green men and conspiracies, but I’m sorry to report that this is just a possible sign of a primordial Microbes. But it is life none the less!

You may know that Mars used to be covered in water a very long time ago, In a similar way to our planet is today, with lakes, seas and rivers covering the surface. Last year, while researching one of these dried riverbeds on mars the Discovery Rover found a rock that, while quite dull looking to most observers, was extremely exciting to the scientists. The rock (Named “Cheyava Falls”) is covered in spots that are remarkably similar to those found from specific organisms on earth. These spots could have been made when microbes use raw materials like carbon in the rock to produce energy to grow, unlike most organisms on earth that use light in photosynthesis to create this energy.

Now, you might be wondering how we can know that this is from a form of life instead of some less organic process and the short answer is, until it is retrieved (more on that later), we can’t. However, the evidence is compelling enough for the team at NASA to have their research peer reviewed and published earlier this month so that others can study the rock and the potential bio signatures it contains. This means that numerous other researchers around the globe can cooperate to study this discovery and possibly make their own observations.

One of the most important questions alongside the question of whether life ever existed on mars is whether it still does. There are many theories as to how this could be possible, with the main one being that life could still exist deep below the surface in reservoirs of water that exist there. These reservoirs are where a large portion of the water that mars used to have went, and some believe that life could have gone with it!

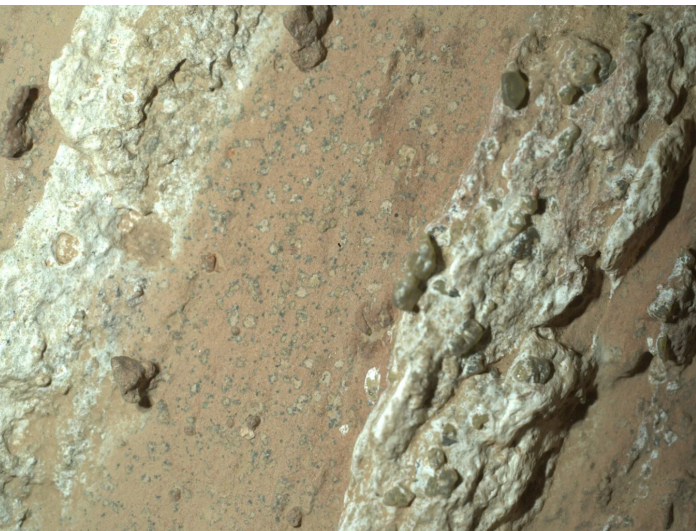
To truly find out whether this rock is an actual sign of life, we need to get it back to earth to test it. To do that, the discovery rover has packaged up the sample in a small container (it has done this to many other samples as well) and has left it sitting on the surface. There is a mission to go and collect them at some point, possibly in the 2030s. In a simplified way, this sci-fi mission would consist of sending another rover and a small ascent vehicle (rocket) to mars inside another, bigger rocket which can be loaded with the samples and launched back to earth, to be the first ever return journey from mars. This would be a

monumental scientific milestone and the mission would be done as a partnership between NASA and the ESA (European NASA).

And finally, why should we care? Many question the reasons as to why we spending so much time, money and effort searching for life on other planets, especially when our own is so rich. After all, there might not even be anything to find and even if we do find something, what can it provide us apart from the initial buzz of discovering it? And anyways, this discovery would raise more questions than answers. We would then have to look into whether life evolved independently on mars, or if life came from earth to mars, or if life came from mars to earth. But I believe this is exactly why we should be searching so hard. We should do our best to understand where we came from, and how we came to be. We should try to find out just how unique we are, just how special each of us truly is. Are we a one off? An anomaly? Or is there more life to be found? What are we searching for? Where are we going? Where have we all ready been?

Who are we?

Maybe, just maybe, a little spotty rock on a dry, dusty and red planet can help us find out



Crime, Conspiracy, Justice, Lies

Al Forbes

I woke up this morning feeling like I'm gaslighting myself. Well, here I go again.

A common theme in this month's articles is sadness, anger, death, disbelief. You're probably sick of that. I've talked before about how the world is falling apart, and spoiler: it still is. I've covered a wide array of different topics, linked with that same gloomy thread. But I'm back once more to unpack some truths.

You see, I'm not going to go all Government-official on this. Most people have at least heard about the Jeffrey Epstein case. He surrounded himself with a network of rich, powerful men who seemed untouchable, while unimaginable things were happening to young women. He was finally put in prison – only, not really. Much of what went on is still locked behind closed doors, partly because so many big names were tangled up in it. People at the top often seem to have ways of keeping their secrets buried. Victims are still trying to bring those details into the light, but the process is slow, and anyone who pushes too hard risks being shut down in one way or another.

And this is where it hits a nerve: justice isn't always built for everyone equally. The system can feel like it's designed not just to punish, but to protect those with the deepest pockets and the flashiest country estates. Those who can spend money to influence, delay, or even dodge accountability. If we let the powerful blind us, truth gets buried. And if truth gets buried, people like Epstein, frankly; the scum of the Earth, end up remembered less for their crimes and more for the fact they got away with so much for so long.

Now, switch gears for a sec. Some of you know I love binge-watching crime podcasts and shows (and I know I'm not the only one). But here's the uncomfortable question: when we stream, subscribe, donate, or buy into true crime entertainment, how much of that money trickles back to survivors, victims, or campaigners connected to those crimes? Guess. Please. Overall, how much? Spoiler again: it's usually not much, if any at all.

I'm not saying creators don't care, but the business side of crime storytelling tends to shine brighter than the charity side. The industry thrives on gripping narratives, shocking twists, and awards, but too often, the people at the heart of those stories, the ones who suffered, see little to no benefit. So what are we really supporting: victims and their families, or an industry hungry for views and clicks?

So speak the truth and spread the word. And let's just hope I don't 'disappear' after writing this. Check in on the news. Do your small bit, whether it's writing a self-gaslighting, badly worded article (...), or just giving that guy who always seems a bit sad a smile. Stay safe, be happy, and maybe be cautious with the American justice system.

ODE TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

AL FORBES

A few weeks back I wrote a short story and gave it to my friend. She looked up at me and said "wow, you write like AI". Jeez... thanks... I got the same comment from another friend too. So I rubbed out some writing and wrote some new stuff in, gave it back... and they said the same thing. So, because I have not run out of ideas for my weekly article, I'm going to ask AI to tell you about AI in my style. Let's get to it...

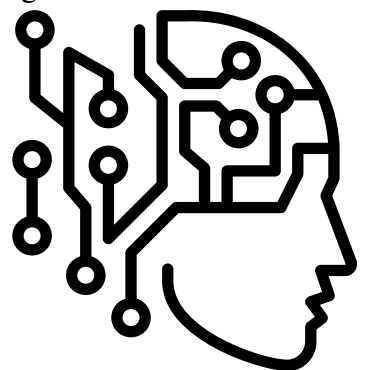
Here is what I did. I gave ChatGPT (because this is an AI themed article) my articles from last weeks edition of The Columns. I will now be giving this to ChatGPT, Copilot, and Gemini (also by star sign) to see if it can copy my style.

ChatGPT. Alright, let's set the scene: AI didn't arrive with a bang or a lightning strike, it crept in quietly, like damp through wallpaper, starting in the 1950s when a machine the size of a wardrobe proved theorems and people realised something that shouldn't think... did. To most, it was just math scribbled on blackboards and code typed at 3 a.m. by scientists living off vending machine dinners, but beneath the blinking lights and dusty labs was that uncanny in-between — not alive, not dead, not human, not machine — and the brain doesn't like that kind of liminality. AI went through winters, hype, and disappointment, dismissed as useless then feared as unstoppable, yet it never really went away, pushing through cracks until it could beat a human at Go or crack a joke in your pocket. And here's the kicker: AI isn't some alien invention, it's a mirror — reflecting our hopes, our fears, and the very human urge to build something that looks back when we stare too long.

Copilot. AI isn't marching in with fanfare — it's creeping in like damp through the walls, reshaping the world while most people are too busy scrolling to notice. It started off harmless: tagging your mates in blurry photos, finishing your texts, recommending what to watch when you're too knackered to decide. Now it's writing novels, diagnosing illnesses, even pretending to be your nan to remind you to drink

water. But there's something unsettling about it too — this intelligence that's not quite alive, not quite dead, just hovering in that liminal space where the uncanny lives. It's clever enough to mimic empathy, but it doesn't flinch when the dog dies in the movie. And that's where the rot sets in. Deepfakes, bias, surveillance dressed up as convenience — it's not just about machines, it's about what we lose when we let them think for us. Still, there's a weird charm to it all. Like the AI that writes fake Friends episodes or the chatbot that only speaks in Shakespeare. It's trying to be human, and in doing so, it shows us just how bizarre we are. So maybe AI's not the villain or the saviour — maybe it's just a mirror, reflecting our brilliance, our fears, and our very Dundee humour that insists on laughing even when the future looks like a server farm with a sense of humour. Gemini. I was looking at a worn-out map the other day, its creases faded into oblivion like forgotten roads. To most people, it's just scrap paper, a reminder of a time when getting lost was an adventure. But to me, it's a mirror of how we used to think about technology: a predictable path from A to B. That's all changing. The AI we're building now is less like a hammer and more like a ghost, a presence in a liminal state caught between being a tool and being... something more. This isn't just about faster chatbots; it's about multimodal AI that understands the quiet meaning behind a photograph and the subtext of a voice, pushing us closer to Artificial General Intelligence that could match a country of geniuses, not decades away but possibly within the next few years. And of course, it gets darker. As we check the digital police reports, we see that the question isn't just "what will AI do?" but "what happens to a society when the intelligence it once depended on collapses into an algorithm?" Because it's never just data falling into place—it's safety, privacy, and our sense of purpose that are on the line, with unresolved questions of bias and accountability lingering in the shadows. Yet, there's still something weirdly charming about it. This is a technology that, in one breath, solves complex scientific problems and in the next, will probably still get confused by a simple CAPTCHA. So maybe that's what's behind it. AI isn't just a force changing the world; it's a mirror reflecting our deepest anxieties about control, our fear of being rendered obsolete, and our very human need to make even the most profound technological advancement take itself less seriously. It's a paradox of infinite possibility and unsettling familiarity.

So this is the end of my article. Do you think they do well? Do I write like AI naturally? Do you write like AI? Do you like AI, do you hate it, do you want to use it or bin it? Who knows what tech will turn into in a few dozen years...



Liberal Democrats - A Problem

Jack Mitchell

This week in Bournemouth we saw the Liberal Democrat Conference take place with some now traditional Ed Davey stunts. We saw him conduct an interview mid-air while on a zip line giving his opinions on Prime Minister Keir Starmer, Tory Leader Kemi Badenoch and US President Donald Trump. The following day, he played a game of cricket on Bournemouth beach with some of his MPs which also made it to the headlines. This fun and lighthearted approach to media relations certainly grabbed the attention of most outlets last year during the election campaign, and may have helped the party get its best result in 100 years with 72 MPs. However, is it really how the leader of the third biggest British political party should be acting?

Well, unfortunately, maybe. The Cardiff University School of Journalism, Media and Culture's political news impartiality project gives us some insight into the struggles the party faces. It found that 22.7% of news bulletins referenced Reform UK whereas only 12.6% referenced the Lib Dems, who have over 14 times as many MPs. When looking more closely at individual shows, BBC News at Ten featured Reform in 25.1% of bulletins and the Liberal Democrats in 17.9%, which to some may seem like quite a big difference. However, when we look at ITV News at Ten

bulletins, Reform was mentioned in less bulletins – 19.8% - but the discrepancy between party representation increases hugely with the Lib Dems only appearing in 6.2% of bulletins. Now remember, this is with Ed Davey's stunts. Imagine what it would be like without them.

The reason the BBC has had much more of a presence in bulletins of Liberal Democrat news is due to its role as a public-service broadcaster that pays very close attention to its coverage of the different viewpoints of the political spectrum. It keeps an impartial, balanced view whereas ITV is a commercial broadcaster that doesn't have to worry about displaying different viewpoints in its coverage. This means that they show a lot more Reform based coverage for ratings and are allowed to do so. Therein lies the problem for the Liberal Democrats. As Reform are constantly grabbing the headlines with more and more outlandish claims and accusations, non-BBC broadcasters will choose to run the stories relating to them over other more mundane political parties.

Many people make the argument that as Reform are doing so well in the polls, the airtime they get is completely acceptable. I understand that view, but opinion polls can never be truly representative of what the public thinks and are unofficial. After the next election, it's very likely Reform will have enough MPs to warrant this level of coverage, but right now they only have 5. Tory defector Danny Krueger joined the lineup recently and was the second addition to the team this year after the party's only female MP Sarah Pochin won the former Labour seat of Runcorn by six votes in a by-election after its MP was suspended following his assault conviction. The other three – namely Nigel Farage, Richard Tice and Lee Anderson - have kept their seats since the general election and have been leading Reform's recent rise.

Unfortunately, I don't see a world where figures such as Ed Davey can afford not to do these stupid stunts just to get airtime because the fight for attention is so difficult in this scandal or outrageous comment-a-day media world Reform have been so good at manipulating. Others may follow in Davey's footsteps in a similar mad dash at getting a headline, but that really only serves to cheapen our political system.

With Reform being projected to win a very large number of seats at the next general election, nothing will be changing anytime soon.

ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE

Ayanah Adam

When we think of antisocial behaviour, images of hardened criminals or organised gangs often come to mind. But increasingly, communities across the UK are facing disruption not from seasoned offenders, but from children—sometimes as young as 13 or 14—whose lives appear to have spun out of control.

The BBC recently reported on a troubling case in Shirley, near Southampton, where shopkeepers have been terrorised by a small group of teenagers. Windows smashed, fires started, staff threatened—it has left business owners feeling exhausted, helpless, and abandoned. At the centre of this chaos was a 14-year-old girl, described not as a shadowy gang leader, but as a bright yet deeply troubled child in pink leggings and Crocs.

Antisocial behaviour refers to actions that cause harm, alarm, or distress to others in the community. It does not always mean serious crime—sometimes it is vandalism, public intoxication, harassment, or intimidation. But over time, repeated disruption erodes trust, creates fear, and destabilises neighbourhoods. For adults on the receiving end—like Muhammad Usman, the mobile shop owner—it feels relentless and overwhelming. For the teenagers themselves, though, the psychology is far more complex.

Adolescence is already a period where the brain is rewiring itself, especially in the areas responsible for judgment, self-control, and risk assessment. Teens are driven by the craving for thrill, novelty, and instant gratification. That is why the girl in Shirley could say, with complete confidence, “The police are never ever going to help you... you can film me all you want.” This is not rational calculation—it is bravado born out of adolescent psychology, where consequences feel distant, and peer approval carries more weight than authority.

One of the most striking admissions she made was that after being forced to give up sport due to injury, she turned to antisocial behaviour for the same adrenaline rush. That feeling of hopelessness when you lose the thing you love most cannot be underestimated. For a teenager, sport is not just exercise—it is identity, routine, belonging, and purpose. When that is suddenly stripped away, it can leave a gaping void, and a sense of grief that is hard to put into words. Many young athletes describe the loss of sport as feeling like the ground has been pulled from beneath them. Without that outlet, the restless energy and adrenaline demand somewhere else to go. For her, the “buzz” of breaking rules, clashing with police, and asserting control in public became the replacement arena. It was not the same discipline or sense of pride, but it filled the silence and dulled the ache of loss.

Her friend admitted, “I know what we’re doing is wrong... it’s just one way of taking my anger out.” This points to a deeper emotional displacement. For teenagers who feel unheard at home, sidelined at school, or powerless in their own lives, causing disruption in public becomes a way to reassert control. The anger they cannot express elsewhere spills into shopfronts and streets. Add to this the intoxicating mix of peer approval—earning laughs, “respect,” or cheers from friends—and guilt or remorse quickly get pushed aside. That is why the girl could say, “I regret what I do, but I don’t say sorry”—because apology would weaken her standing in the group.

She also articulated something important: “The second you get into one bit of trouble with the police, you fall into it too deep and you can’t get out.” Once a young person is labelled a “troublemaker,” the stigma sticks. Teachers, police, even family members start to expect bad behaviour, and the teenager begins to internalise that identity. What started as one fight, one shoplifting incident, or one outburst spirals into a reputation that feels impossible to escape.

What is clear from the Shirley case is that these teenagers are not hardened criminals, but troubled young people channelling their frustration, boredom, and need for adrenaline into destructive outlets. They feel invincible in the moment, but underneath lies a cocktail of anger, disconnection, grief, and unmet needs. For the shopkeepers and communities suffering, that offers little comfort. But for policymakers, schools, and families, it is a reminder that prevention is always better than punishment. Sport, mentoring, youth centres, and early intervention schemes can offer healthier ways for teenagers to seek thrill, release energy, and feel seen.

Because if society does not give them the tools to climb out of trouble, they will only dig deeper—at everyone else’s expense.



The Quiz!

By Haochi Liu and Al Forbes



What would Dr Ferguson say?

1. What is your personal best for most referrals given in one day?
2. If you had to remove one button from your calculator, which would it be?
3. What is the best day of the week to eat a cake?
4. Is it appropriate to wear Monday socks on a Tuesday?
5. Teach me how to use a printer using 5 words.
6. What is 9×12 ?
7. Would you rather eat the sun or get eaten by the sun?
8. What would the title of your autobiography be?
9. What is the deadliest weapon you could make with a sponge?
10. What would you use to make yellow food colouring?

10. Turmeric
9. A killing sponge
that one?

8. (very long wait) (I died of old age now) Can I come back to
7. Get eaten by the sun
6. $9 \times 12 \dots$ is that 108? (3 seconds)

5. Control P Enter
4. Yes (quickly)
3. Every day is a good day
2. Program
1. 1 (tentatively)

Answers

Editors' note
Thats All Folks!

Your Editors - Charlie and Emma.