

# THE COLUMNS

By Pupils; For Pupils | HSD's Newsletter: Issue 145

Photo - Ruby McNair

Welcome back to the columns. We're back from half term and publishing once again. The world has continued spinning (I'm sure this won't age at all) and subjects are starting to get serious. You know, more than previously. So hopefully there's something in here to cheer you up. Possibly. I mean maybe if you take pleasure in the suffering of the world. No shame if you do (for liability purposes the last two lines are a joke. There is plenty for any reasonable human being to enjoy in this paper. I think)

The Winter Olympics also took place! Great Britain won 5 medals, 3 gold, 1 silver, 1 bronze. I believe Norway has won overall. But, as always, we've reached the point in my editorial where I have run out of things to talk about at this particular moment, so until next time...keep reading or something? I need a catchphrase.

~ Charlie, Editor

## The Stone

## of Destiny

Maisey Lafollette

The Stone of Destiny otherwise known as the Stone of Scone is currently held in the Perth Museum which anyone can visit for free. The stone is sandstone and weighs 152 kgs. It's original purpose was to inaugurate the King of Scotland, the King would sit on it to symbolise their right to rule Scotland.

There are many legends surrounding the Stone of Destiny such as Jacob's Pillow. Many believe the stone was used by Jacob as a pillow when he dreamed of the ladder to Heaven. Another myth involved an Egyptian princess named Scota. The legend says in 1400 BC a Pharaoh's daughter took the stone to Scotland and Scotland was named after her. Lastly, many believe that when Edward I took the stone, the monks of Scone Abbey gave him a fake, but there is no evidence to support this.

In 1249, The stone was first used by King Alexander III, when he was seven. The stone was primarily kept in Scone Abbey, until 1296, as during the Wars of Independence, King Edward I had it taken to Westminster Abbey, where it was kept until 1996. In the 14th century England promised to return it but they refused as many believed it was holy, so instead Scottish kings were granted permission from the Pope to coronate rulers with holy oil. The stone was returned to Scotland in 1996, by Prime Minister John Major and was housed in Edinburgh Castle before being given to the Perth Museum in 2024.

I can't explain the stone's history without mentioning the heist committed by four Glasgow University students; Ian Hamilton, Alan Stuart, Kay Matheson and Gavin Vernon. These students stole the stone on Christmas Eve in 1950, they did this because they believed the stone should stay in Scotland as it was a symbol of Scotland's national pride. When the four took the stone, it broke in two, Hamilton and Kay drove off with the smaller piece while Stuart and Vernon escaped with the larger piece. When they managed to escape, they buried the larger piece in Kent and hid the smaller piece in Birmingham. Upon the discovery of the theft, Scotland and England's border was closed for the first time in 400 years. However, they were able to give the stone to the Scottish Covenant Association, who would later return the stone, which was repaired by a mason. They left the stone in Arbroath before it was returned to Westminster Abbey. To top it off, no one was punished for stealing the stone, as many believed there was no harm done.



The Stone of Destiny is an important historical relic, as it has been used by Kings to symbolise their right to rule Scotland, with several myths surrounding the stone, and it has also become a symbol of Scottish independence due to the heist. Despite the stone having a permanent home in Perth's museum, it is still used by the Royal Family during Coronations, most recently King Charles' to symbolise their right to rule Scotland, and quite interestingly neither Ireland nor Wales have a similar object for this purpose in a modern Coronation. You can visit the stone for free at the Perth Museum where they have a video explaining the history before showing you the stone. As well as the stone of destiny, the Perth Museum has the final letter of Mary Queen of Scots, artefacts of Picts, 20th century war equipment, and so much more to immerse all visitors in Scottish history

# Reform Gets Serious

Jack Mitchell

At a party event on Tuesday, Reform UK took another step in its campaign to reach number 10 by announcing a rough new 'shadow cabinet' to provide opposition to the Labour government. Many recent Tory defectors were assigned briefs such as education and the economy in this new cabinet of sorts, as well as more long-time leaders of Reform such as Richard Tice and Zia Yusuf. The fact the party has taken this step shows that it is aiming to make itself and its campaign more serious and more like its rivals. There is clearly now a focus on becoming a proper, election-ready political force.

The first and perhaps most important announcement of note is that former Tory Robert Jenrick – who was sacked by his party leader Kemi Badenoch after she became aware of his impending defection to the Reform party – will take the lead on the party's economic policy and would become shadow chancellor if the party were the official opposition. While he perhaps has the most experience out of the Reform MPs of handling the economy, this only comes from a junior ministerial post at the Treasury many years ago and so it is unclear how qualified he really is for the role. To add to this, Jenrick has never been in charge of a large government department such as the Education or Health Departments and so will be thrown in at the deep end should the party make its way to Downing Street.

Jenrick's Reform colleague Suella Braverman – who also served with him while both Conservatives – has been given the education and skills brief and has already set out a vision of what she would like to do if given the chance in office. Braverman vows to introduce a 'patriotic curriculum' to classrooms and end 'transgender chaos' in schools by banning gender transitioning for pupils. In another culture war-ish pledge, Reform and Braverman have announced that they will 'repeal the equality act' and stop any government action on equality. Braverman previously had two stints as Home Secretary, and so it has been seen as a bit of a blow to her potential future parliamentary career that she was not able to return to the home affairs job, which has gone to Zia Yusuf.

Mr Yusuf, although influential in the Reform party, is not an MP but rather got involved as a donor. He was formerly chairman of the party before resigning last year, but has since repaired relations with his colleagues and is now evidently back in the fold. As mentioned previously, Yusuf has been made spokesperson for home affairs - and 'shadow Home Secretary' of sorts – which is a very significant role within Reform UK due to its oversight of the party's immigration policy, a key element of the organisation. He has pledged to stop Channel crossings and reduce both legal and illegal immigration.

The last of the four roles announced is for Richard Tice, former leader and now deputy leader of the Reform party. He has been put in charge of both the Business and Trade, and Energy briefs, potentially heading up a new 'super department' that merges both existing departments to boost economic growth up to 4% according to the party. He has pledged to focus on oil and gas to boost the economy and also to abandon all current net zero targets for the country.

While no Reform member actually holds any position of power in government, their new plans certainly set out a vision of what a Reform-led country may look like, appealing to many, but also repulsive to others.

## Under the Floorboards – A Quick Call for Opinions

Al Forbes

Due to time constraints, this week's edition of Under the Floorboards – Further Findings is slightly shorter than usual. By that I mean non-existent. But fear not, loyal, slightly cult-like readership, the investigations will resume shortly...

For now, **I need your voice.**

The proposed **Under 16 Social Media Ban in the UK has sparked debate across schools, homes, and government offices alike.** Rather than speculate from behind a keyboard, **I want to hear directly from the people it would affect most, students and staff.**

Whether you scroll daily, rarely post, or avoid social media altogether, your perspective matters.

**I'm asking for your thoughts on the following:**

- Why do under-16s need social media, if at all?
- Why do you personally use social media?
- What positive and negative effects might this ban have on teenagers?
- How would you be affected if it were introduced?
- What is your overall opinion of the proposal?
- Should the ban apply to younger ages only, or extend further?
- Should it apply to future generations?
- Do the benefits outweigh the drawbacks?

Responses will remain anonymous. I will only state your form or whether you are a member of staff.

**This conversation affects our generation directly. Let's make sure our voices are part of it.**

**Please email** [forbesaa@highschoolofdundee.org.uk](mailto:forbesaa@highschoolofdundee.org.uk) **to respond**, or better yet, maybe you'll see me asking questions around campus? (By that I mean asking my friends – did you really think I'm talking to people? Hah)

# Our Weekly Challenge

Al Forbes & Haoqi Liu

Every week, both of us will challenge each other to write an article on a very much stupid and/or crazy topic. Please do not take anything we take seriously – this is just a joke.

Haoqi's Topic: "persuade the reader why drinking petrol is better than doing so with water"

Al's Topic: "persuaded the reader why reading is bad for you"

Correction: "in a serious manner, persuade the reader to stop reading"

## **Reading Should be Illegal – and Here's Why**

Oh, my goodness, put down this copy of the newspaper and stop reading, your life is in danger. Stop reading I'm serious. No, I'm serious, stop! Alright then for my sake keep on reading but you better stop forever after you have finished this article, understand me? Good. Now, this very serious article is about why reading should be illegal at the very least.

Reading, especially fiction, can lead to many problems. It can create unrealistic expectations about life, love, and success, defiantly an avoidable issue. I think we've all been at that stage where we have picked up a slow burn romance book that tears you apart and slaps you across the face multiple times for actually thinking that they will get together when in fact they won't, yet the book is set across under a month. At a younger age, it can set false expectations and blur the line between what is real and otherwise – a very much disgusting happening... disgusting...right.

And let's be real for a moment, when you read, you sit. When you sit, less movement. Less movement, potential long-term health issues, ranging from back pains to stiff muscles. And let's not get started on the eye strain and headaches it causes, so many people get glasses because they spend too long staring at a log with ink on it. Disgraceful for... something.

The more you read – the more time you spend in solitude. If someone chooses books over people on a consistent basis, and living in a world of fiction, it could reduce social skills development, create avoidance behaviour, and encourage emotional withdrawal. Connection is a constant casualty when it comes to isolated readers.

Not all books are wholesome knowledge fountains you know. Reading is the prime suspect to spread misinformation, reinforcing harmful stereotypes, and normalising harmful ideologies. If someone only reads one perspective, they can become narrow-minded, strengthen confirmation bias, and reject opposing views (AKA have an opinion – so bad).

So now, stop reading. There are tones of other activities that you should definitely consider because I am definitely not joking. So how about going on a walk, eh? So much out there and so little in dialogued trees — Al

## Drinking Petrol

Before the holidays, AI set me this challenge:

Explain why drinking petrol is better than drinking water, without being scientific.

⚠ Do not actually drink petrol! This is a stupid challenge set to me by AI! ⚠

Who needs water? You see that "drink 8 glasses of water per day" poster on your left? Rip it off the wall and throw it away – you will never need to drink water again after reading this article. From now, petrol will be our liquid fuel! (literally)

Firstly, petrol is the fuel that makes vehicles move. By drinking petrol, you are putting this vehicle fuel into you, hence you will be able to run much faster. This is perfect for Olympic sprinters, who need to run as fast as possible to compete (disclaimer - you may be sent to the enhanced games if you drink petrol). If you are running a marathon, the solution is simple: carry a bottle of petrol and refuel as necessary.

Secondly, you can burn petrol. This creates a fire, which is warming. If you are faced with a chilly winter day, you can drink petrol, then set it alight, and warm yourself from the inside out. Never suffer from frostbite again! Drinking tap water would be completely useless for this purpose as the water that comes out of the tap is freezing, and would be more likely to cool you down than warm you up.

Thirdly, burning petrol releases greenhouse gases which contribute to global warming. In a world where oil continues to be drilled out of the ground by profit-hungry corporations and governments, it's time we did something to stop that. By drinking petrol, you are stopping it from reaching the plants that burn it and release the nasty gases into the atmosphere, keeping our planet at a sustainable climate for generations to come.

So there you have it. No more water ever needs to enter our mouths, only petrol. It saves not only ourselves, but the whole world as well. water = fool, petrol = fuel — Haoqi

⚠ Do not actually drink petrol! This is a stupid challenge set to me by AI! ⚠



## Chapter 6

A Serial by Hal Arita

06:00 | 09.02.2100 | UST+2 | Kimberley, African Tribal World

Tau had gotten lucky, hitching a ride all the way to Kimberley on the back of a rattling local truck. The wind had whipped across the open Karoo, dust stinging their eyes, Amahle clinging to his back like a second shadow, her small hands gripping him tight. By the time they arrived, the sun was low, casting long orange streaks across the flat, dusty streets. They found a modest hotel — a building that smelled faintly of mildew and kerosene lamps — and claimed a room. Tau laid out a tattered map across the table, tracing their route with a finger rough from travel. The plan was simple, but the stakes were not:

Kimberley to Johannesburg by train, then north by plane to Lagos. Away from the virus, yes, but also toward survival, work, a future for Amahle. Survival meant choices, and choices meant life itself.

Yet news spread fast. Even in this remote outpost, whispers reached Tau: the virus was moving with unnatural speed. Villages just a few dozen kilometres north and east were already falling silent— or screaming. Children vanished from their doorsteps. Fires burned where homes once stood. Tau's stomach twisted. He had no time for comfort. The train would leave soon, and he would take it— the earliest, fastest, any way possible.

They packed quickly. Amahle clutched her small bundle of belongings: a cloth-wrapped loaf of maize, a water bottle dented from the truck ride, and a worn wooden toy carved in the shape of a lion. Tau adjusted the strap of the pack across his shoulders, feeling the weight of responsibility press like a stone. Outside, the Karoo stretched out flat and unrelenting, the sun already beating down, turning the earth into a shimmering furnace. The air smelled of dust, sweat, and something acrid— burning wood, perhaps, from distant villages. A low wind stirred the clouds of sand, and the hairs on Tau's arms stood on end.

The train station was alive with an uneasy rhythm. A few locals haggled over tickets, some whispered rumours, others stared blankly into the morning sun. Tau approached the officer behind the counter, words clipped, hands quick, negotiating a fare that felt like a victory against the odds.

A pat on the shoulder — an almost human gesture in a world gone cold — and the officer nodded them through. The 6:30 train awaited, steam hissing, wheels glinting in the sun. Tau hoisted Amahle onto the carriage step, helping her inside before climbing himself.

As the train lurched forward, the plains began to roll past in a blur of gold and brown. At first, it was calm—too calm—but then, glimpses of horror shattered the rhythm. A figure stumbled across the tracks, arms flailing, eyes wide and wild. Beyond, a cluster of people screamed, their voices mingling with the crackle of distant fires. Smoke spiralled into the pale sky. And then Tau saw it clearly: some were huddled, writhing, their movements unnatural, erratic—eyes fixed in a blank, terrifying focus. The virus had arrived. Already.

Amahle buried her face into his chest. Tau held her tighter, feeling the tremor of her small body against him. Fear was nothing new, but this— this was a predator creeping through the veins of the land itself, a darkness that moved faster than they could run. Somewhere in the distance, the train whistle blew, shrill and urgent, a fragile lifeline cutting through chaos. Tau's jaw clenched. They would ride it. They had no choice. Lagos was far, but not far enough to outrun what was coming.

# Soundtracks I Would Die For

Lucy Smith

I should have spent half term working on my many dissertations and projects...Did I? No of course not. Instead I spent far too much time watching films and TV shows, what a surprise. It's no new revelation that music can make or break a film, but I thought I'd share my views on what I take to be the best soundtracks of all time.



Lord of the Rings – How could I not mention this? A masterpiece of a trilogy must have an equally majestic soundtrack. This is THE best soundtrack of all time (no I will not accept complaints)

The Muppet Christmas Carol – I will never accept anything except heartfelt praise for this film, but the soundtrack is truly on the next level. A perfect balance of instrumental pieces, mixed with lyrical songs, covering any and all emotions, what's not to like? This is the sole album that got me through December test season



Call Me By Your Name – While I think the plot of the film is weird and a bit creepy, this soundtrack is anything but. It's incredibly peaceful and just a pleasure to listen to, but don't spend too much time thinking about the lyrics or you'll cry

Buffy the Vampire Slayer – Not a film, but the music in this show is too good to pass over. While not instrumental, the collection of 90s music is part of what pulls you into the world, and is so wonderfully integrated into the series.



Sanditon – Weirdly niche I think, but one of the best music in the regency genre of shows, a good variety of styles, unusual for a show set in this time period, excellent for study music.

That's not to mention John Williams, who has too many soundtracks to name, Narnia, or even half of the musical films. Anyway, please go listen to some of these, and if you hate them never tell me.

# Seven questions for staff

Lucy Smith

Welcome back! After a half-term that didn't quite feel long enough, I braved the physics department after avoiding it for the last 2 years (sorry!) to see...Mr Vicat-Brown!

1. Cats or dogs and why? – **I have both but my dog is nicer to me, so I have to say dog**
2. What did you want to be when you were younger? – **I wanted to be an engineer – and it turns out teaching was more for me**
3. What is your comfort film/TV series? – **'The Blues Brothers' – musicians, car chases, bad guys are country musicians, what more could you want?**
4. What department would you like to be in? – **In biology so I don't have to walk so far**
5. Who is your favourite musical artist – **My favourite album is by a band called FIZZ, it's just phenomenal**
6. What was your first job? – **I worked in a pub called the Crown and Anchor**
7. What is your go to karaoke song? – **I don't have a karaoke song but the song I sing loudest in the car is 'What's Up?' by 4 Non Blondes**

I knew I could count on him for good taste in films and music, still disappointed in his choice of pet though...

## Editors Note

*101 Nobody can read this can they? Oh. I guess you can.  
The end is coming! Tell the people! Spynet is coming! Judgement day  
is upon us!*

Your Editors - Charlie, Emma, Shan, and Lucy