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CLASSICAL SOCIETY

Dr Michael Beer, University of Exeter, "Eating with Emperors", OSRG, 28 September

Last Tuesday in the OSRG, the Classical Society welcomed Dr Michael Beer to give a talk entitled 'Sensory deception and manipulation in ancient aristocratic banquets'. Dr Beer's talk was both engaging and thought provoking. I know I am not the only one who was expecting the talk to cover something along the lines of how political discussions were carried out over dinner, but instead, Dr Beer enticed us all with a talk about the strange and wonderful traditions, and ways in which dinners were used for so much more than just a meal, such as to demonstrate power and wealth and, as Dr Beer said, for "manipulation and humiliation".

Dr Beer kicked off the talk by raising the interesting point that after the Republic had increased its power and Carthage had been destroyed in 146 BCE, the love for money and power became toxic and, with its main rival conquered, Rome began to look inwards and slide into decadence. Indeed, Sallust said that 'the objects of desire to others became a burden and a trouble'. Dr Beer then went on to show how the eating habits of emperors was a source of propaganda and could affect their image.

Using text from the historian Suetonius, Dr Beer shed some light on how these eating habits were described. While Augustus was said to be a light eater with a modest diet (which was seen as desirable, perhaps indicating how this propaganda can take form), Claudius was said to eat until he passed out; as Suetonius puts it, 'stuffed and soaked', and Vitellius was said to eat three feasts a day in addition to a 'drinking bout', showing us how the two latter emperors appeared in a bad light through their eating habits.

Dr Beer went on to draw a comparison with modern and ancient food, by using Heston Blumenthal as a contemporary example of someone who sees food as a sensory experience, as opposed to just a source of nutrition, and comparing this to the Roman elite, who saw dining in a similar light. Drawing on another example, he told us about the *Futurist Cookbook* (1932), which was focused on the sensory pleasure that is derived from food, including the use of things such as specific music and perfumes to enhance the overall experience of the meal, despite the potential toxicity of these dishes. Furthermore, he then brought in the idea of 'aerofood', a common futurist dish where the right hand is used for eating and the left hand for caressing sandpaper or silk to enhance the sensory experience. In fact, it was made apparent that one of the sole reasons behind some of these strange eating habits in the Roman times, such as Elagabalus providing artificial food, was to raise the meal to an almost magical level; for these Roman aristocrats could buy anything with their money, but feasts added something that money alone couldn't buy. Carrying on this idea of food being more than just a nutritional necessity, we see that the dinner table was also a zone of experimentation and, occasionally, borderline cruelty.

The lecture drew in many classical examples, including Caligula, Nero and Domitian - all of whom were notorious hosts. Caligula, it is said, experimented with bathing in oils of varying temperature, while saying that a man ought to be 'frugal or Caesar', hinting at this slide into decadence as mentioned previously. Furthermore, strange as this may seem, we also found out that Caligula was not alone in this, with Nero also experimenting with this strange bathing technique. With regard to the crueller side of the events, we found out that Caligula would pick female guests and invite them to his bedroom, only to later openly criticise or congratulate the woman, and review his sexual exploits with the guest, usually in front of her husband – this really opened our eyes to some of the differences between Roman society and the present day. In fact, it is also said that Caligula made senior senators run for miles in their togas – quite dissimilar from modern day politics, to say the least. Carrying on this idea of cruelty, Dr Beer told the story of Domitian's famous 'black room' dinner, where guests were in a completely black room and instead of food were given what would usually be sacrifices to spirits, leaving these guests, quite understandably, terrified. Dr Beer's telling of this showed just how far hosts would go to, arguably, terrorise their guests.

We are all immensely grateful to Dr Michael Beer for giving us such an entertaining and eye-opening talk on how the ancient elite dined, allowing all of us to have a much more clear perspective on how some things in the Roman world took place.

TREVELYAN SOCIETY

Jin Park, "The Division of Korea, and Why it Matters", 1 October

Last Thursday, the Trevelyan Society welcomed Jin Park, *The Knoll*, to present his talk about 'The Division of Korea, and Why it Matters'. Park began by highlighting the four main reasons for the division: the Joseon-American Treaty, the Russo-Japanese War, the growth of Christianity in Korea, and the work of Korean independence activists.

The Joseon-American Treaty (1882) was a treaty between Korea and the United States designed to boost relations between the respective nations. In summary, the treaty established mutual friendship and mutual assistance in case of attack, and addressed

such specific matters as extraterritorial rights for U.S. citizens in Korea and granted favoured nation trade status. However, the focus was on Article One, which stated that 'If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either government, the other will exert their good offices on being informed of the case to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings'. 'Good offices' is a legal term which refers to mediation. So, if Korea gets into difficulties with neighbouring states and informs the US, the US is obligated to offer to mediate that dispute. The issue was that there was no term in Korean for 'good offices'. When this treaty was translated into Korean, instead of 'good offices', it just read 'must help'. So it was clear, in English, that this was not a formal alliance between the USA and the Kingdom of Joseon. However, many in the court of Joseon chose to interpret it as an alliance and this caused some problems in the Russo-Japanese War.

In 1905, Russia and Japan went to war over rival imperial ambitions in Manchuria and in Korea. At the start of the war, the Japanese military told the court of Joseon that 'if you let us transit troops through Korea to fight the Russians, we will respect your independence and we will leave when the war is over'. Although highly dubious the Koreans had very little choice but to except. However, once the Japanese defeated the Russians, they began an annexation of Korea. Under the understanding of the 1882 treaty, the Koreans believe that they were entitled to help from Americans. They received none.

The rise of Christianity in Korea and the work Syngman Rhee were other factors behind the divide. In Pyongyang, a mission of hundred converts quickly tuned into 500,000. Opportunists in America took note and sensed that there was a possibility in turning a forgotten East Asian state into a strong Christian one. In the meantime, Syngman Rhee was touring America in an attempt to inspire a Korean nationalist movement from inside America. Between 1907 and 1912, Rhee records in his diary that he gave184 lectures. Rhee was a devout Christian and an advocate of Korea's independence. He understood that Americans don't care about Korea politically, but do care religiously. What Rhee was hoping to do is to create a connection between Korean Christians and American Christians, as he believed that Korean Christianity and Japanese colonialism would come into conflict and would require American intervention. The clash he was alluding to came in March 1919 in what Koreans called the March First Movement. This movement was a nationwide non-violent protest in which Koreans went out into the streets to demand their independence from the Japanese.

The aim of the movement was to raise awareness of independence at home and abroad (especially as the great powers had assembled at Versailles, focusing on self-determination). The movement created a strong response from Japan involving the imprisonment and execution of the protesters. Images were being sent from Korea to USA by missionaries, and while the missionaries did not want to become political, their motto became 'There can be no neutrality on brutality'. The Koreans created a provisional government, or a government in exile, as they realised that their lobbying opportunities would be limited if they didn't have formal representation. This movement elected Syngman Rhee to be the first president. Rhee now had a new argument and he often brought up the 1882 Joseon-American Treaty and said, 'You Americans had a treaty with Korea, and you did not abide by that treaty, and this is the result'. This rhetoric resonated strongly across America, especially considering that the cause of World War One was the treaty on Belgian neutrality. Moving forward to the end of World War Two, the fall of Japan,and the Yalta conference, Korea was to be divided at the 38th parallel, with the USSR occupying the north and the USA the south. Soon the US were unwilling and unprepared for occupation. So, in 1949 the USA withdrew their forces over ROK objections. This act laid the groundwork for the further divisive Korean War and the everlasting separation of North and South.

The results of those four factors supports the idea that the active involvement by America in the peninsula has fuelled a latent sense of anti-Americanism, polarising Korean politics. In fact, many in Korea do not see the North as the enemy (contrary to what much of the Western media suggest), but instead are empathetic. Many see the US as tyrannical, and responsible for the Korean schism.

We would like to thank Park for what was a very invigorating talk that gave that the audience an understanding of lesser known but perhaps the most important reasons for the Korean divide.

PIGOU SOCIETY

Alfred Sun, "The Economics of the NBA"
OH Room, 29 September

On Tuesday 29 September, the Pigou Society gathered in the OH Room for an eye-opening lecture from Alfred Sun, *Bradbys*, entitled 'The Economics of the NBA'. To begin, Sun examined the NBA's monopoly over the basketball industry. Before 1976, it had been a duopoly, with the NBA and lesser-known ABA (American Basketball Association) being the sole two competing companies. They merged that year, however, cementing the NBA's since unrivalled status as the dominant firm in the market.

However, the status quo is not necessarily as sinister as it may initially seem. As Sun explained, the NBA is really a natural monopoly: a mere consequence of the properties of the basketball industry. There are high barriers to entry: talented players must be recruited, expensive arenas need be sourced and the brand loyalty, exclusive contracts and sponsorships of other, established companies in the industry must somehow be circumvented. The NBA can also be considered a cartel, in that its multiple franchises have agreed to co-ordinate and maintain high prices and high barriers to entry.

So, having given a summary of the state of the industry, Sun proceeded to cover the NBA's main sources of income: ticket sales, concessions, sponsorships and media deals. The NBA operates on a revenue-sharing system, so ticket sales from games are pooled into a pot, which are then shared out between the franchises – this is done to even the playing field between big and small franchises, as some franchises, such as the New York Knicks, will inevitably earn more due to their location than other franchises, like the Memphis Grizzlies. Being a monopoly, the NBA and its franchises have consistently managed to maintain high ticket prices over consecutive years, especially for the most popular franchises. Sponsorships, media deals and concessions add to the NBA's income, and not insignificantly; to take an example, Nike and the NBA signed an eight-year, billion-dollar deal in 2015 for jersey rights.

Being a monopoly not only allows the NBA to push up ticket prices and secure exclusive deals, it also allows it to reduce its players' salaries. Salary caps, introduced primarily to even the footing between different franchises, also act to install a maximum salary – this means that top players like LeBron James are making much less than what they would be making on a free market.

The NBA's market and sources of income are not solely national, however. Sun gave a brief history lesson on the NBA's global expansion, including a story of former commissioner of the NBA David Stern's four-hour wait for a meeting with Chinese Central Television, which would eventually culminate in the introduction, to great success, of the NBA to the Chinese market. Today, 75 countries around the world regularly broadcast games.

Finally, Sun looked at the continual appreciation of NBA franchises. The value of individual franchises has been skyrocketing from year to year, with a 14% average increase from 2019 to 2020, and the average franchise is now worth more than $2 billion. This dramatic, sustained increase in value is driven by the increasing popularity of stars and the sport, which in turn allows the NBA to increase ticket prices and secure even more lucrative deals. As it makes more, the NBA can afford to increase the salary cap, making a career in basketball even more attractive and increasing the overall quality of the game, thereby bringing in more stars, which further increases the popularity of the sport and the NBA. This, in turn, means the NBA earns even more; there is a positive feedback loop at play.

Sun, after having concluded his talk with high hopes for the future of the NBA, took questions from the audience. One question pointed out that the NBA is not quite as monopolistic as appearances suggest, as it must still compete with other sports leagues: while the NFL, MLB and NBA all have monopolies over their respective sports in the US, they do not have monopolies over the sports industry, and so will still compete for the attention and money of sports fans. Sun's answer to this was mixed. While it was true that sports leagues did compete to some extent, there are also certain mitigating factors. Fans, for example, are normally quite loyal to one sport, and thus an avid basketball fan is unlikely to buy tickets to a baseball game instead of a basketball game simply because they are a few dollars cheaper. Furthermore, careful scheduling of games limits overlaps and thus competition between the different sports leagues.

All in all, thanks must go to Sun for giving such an informative lecture and the Pigou Society for organising and hosting the lecture.

SCIENCE SOCIETY

Stanley Starr, Imperial College London, "Living off the Land on Mars", 30 September

In the fourth and final instalment of an excellent series, delivered by lecturers from Imperial College London, the Scientific Society welcomed Mr Stanley Starr to give an insightful talk entitled 'Living off the Land on Mars'. Mr Starr, now a consultant at Imperial, retired from NASA in 2018 after working at the Kennedy Space Center for over 37 years. At NASA, he worked on the development of the space shuttle programme before changing his focus to developing deep space exploration technology and becoming a part of the Mars mission-planning team.

The main reason we haven't yet landed a manned mission Mars, Mr Starr explained, is because it is rather difficult. Aside from Mars' inhospitable conditions – its low-pressure, 95% CO2 atmosphere; its surface temperature of -60 degrees Celsius; its lack of easily accessible oxygen and water – there is also a plethora of other challenges.

The length of the mission – 2.5 years – and Mars' harsh conditions mean that not only does one have to worry about carrying enough propellant for the journey to compensate for the mass of the spaceship and its propellant (you need 153kg on the launchpad to bring 1kg to Mars), one also has to consider the mass of all the resources required for the crew to survive the journey and to conduct experiments when there. An estimate of the cost of landing equipment on Mars is £2 million per kilogram, and we would need to land between 20 and 30 metric tons for a manned mission. This figure, however, implies that a mission would have to bring everything they need from Earth – later on, Mr Starr would explore the idea of in situ resource exploitation (ISRU), or 'living off the land', which would entail astronauts producing fuel, oxygen etc. on Mars and thus shaving off expensive extra mass from the trip. But aside from the financial problem and the issue of the propellant-mass ratio, there are also numerous technological barriers. The problem of radiation shielding, for example, remains unsolved, and is just a part of the wider problem of keeping humans alive on Mars' surface.

Thus, before one can consider landing on Mars, one first needs a meticulously detailed plan to accommodate all the aforementioned hurdles. It was this planning effort that Mr Starr was engaged in back in 2015, when NASA was advertising a manned Mars mission by the mid-2030s. NASA's concept took the form of a segmented mission, with the first launch placing power generators, an ascent vehicle and ISRU paraphernalia on Mars, ready for a second launch carrying the crew, habitation and a laboratory. The use of ISRU would have massively reduced the cost of the mission, but would have also made it safer; take, for example, the need for O2 and inert gasses to make up the atmosphere of the crew's habitation. If one had to carry it up to Mars from Earth, the gas would have to be compressed into high-pressure bottles, which have an unfortunate habit of blowing up.

On Mars, the primary targets for ISRU would be gasses, such as carbon dioxide to make oxygen and nitrogen and argon to supplement the habitat's atmosphere; and water, which is needed directly by the crew for survival, but would also be useful for growing crops for food. As previously mentioned, carbon dioxide is abundant in the Martian atmosphere, and could be captured either by freezing, to give practically pure carbon dioxide, or via compression of atmospheric gasses. Once captured, the carbon dioxide could be used to produce oxygen via solid oxide electrolysis. The problem with solid oxide electrolysis is that the equipment must be constantly kept hot, and its efficiency is less than what had been predicted. There is an alternative; the Sabatier process involves the reaction of water and carbon dioxide to get oxygen, as well as methane and carbon monoxide as by-products. The oxygen produced could then be used for life support or as a propellant.

Then you have water, which exists on Mars but is not as easily accessible as on Earth. Most of it is locked up in the polar ice caps, buried glaciers or subterranean ponds; these huge, hidden reservoirs of water have been found with the help of radar and neutron scattering. Water has also been found in hydrated minerals scattered in the Martian surface dust, but in this case its presence has been concretely confirmed by analysis carried out on samples of Martian dust. In order to take advantage of these hydrated minerals, NASA designed excavators, from repurposed lunar designs, that can excavate 80kg worth of soil in a few minutes.

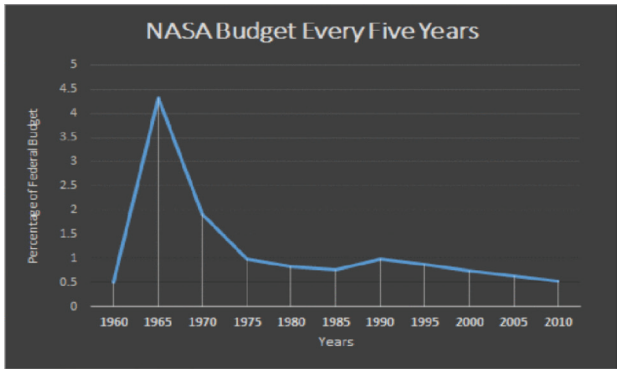
Having detailed the need for and processes of ISRU equipment, Mr Starr proceeded to give an outline of upcoming Mars missions and his expectations of them, before finishing to take questions. Many thanks must go to Mr Starr for coming to give such an insightful and comprehensive lecture.

JUNIOR PIGOU SOCIETY

Alexander Newman, Druries, and Felix Boegh-Nielsen, The Head Master's, "SpaceX and NASA: A Story of Inovation, Exploration and Adaptation", OSM, 22 September

On a cloudy night in Old Music Schools, Alexander Newman, *Druries*, and Felix Boegh-Nielsen, *The Head Master's*, gave the first Junior Pigou lecture of the term on SpaceX and Nasa: "A story of Innovation, Exploration and Adaptation". A select few keen economists gathered to listen to them talk on the rise of SpaceX and the fall of NASA. After a slight confusion whether to let those who didn't email in advance in (they did get the honour of listening in), the lecture started.

Newman started by explaining the structure of the talk and showed a moving video of the Challenger explosion. This was the explosion of a NASA rocket that was carrying seven astronauts, the first-ever teacher to fly in a spaceship, and the heart of America, who were watching from afar. This fatal moment on 28 January 1986 was a massive turning point for the credibility and trust in NASA. They had been the leader of the space scene for the previous 25 years, landing people on the Moon for the first time, and boosting America as the ones in charge of everything to do with the cosmos. However, there was a massive loss in interest after Kennedy's goal of landing a man on the Moon was achieved. This was also right at the point where the Vietnam War was heating up. Space was no longer a novel adventure for the nation, so there was a shift in funding.



After the Challenger crash, there was an inquiry into NASA which led to a slight spike in funding, Newman explained. NASA went on a 32-month hiatus and never recovered from the lost in trust. The American people were disillusioned with space. The slashes in budget led to less research, fewer launches and more errors, creating a vicious cycle. This left the massive field of space open for private companies to swoop in. And that's where Space X comes into the story.

Boegh-Nielsen then took the lead; he gave a short account of Elon Musk and the story behind his success. Known for his innovations, Musk's goal with SpaceX is to revolutionise the cost of space travel and exploration. His main idea, which is still one of SpaceX's most incredible feats, was to reuse rockets multiple times, saving landing gear, time and money. SpaceX now has more than 60% of global launch contracts and is preparing to reach the Moon and Mars. Touching further on the reusability of these spacecrafts, Boegh-Nielsen explained that the Falcon 9 rocket costs $5 million–7 million per launch compared to $150-200 million for each NASA launch. This goes to show the massive impact enough funding for research and having the guts to take risks can have. One of SpaceX's latest rockets is the Falcon Heavy, made to carry up to 20 people at one time, opening possibilities of transporting larger numbers of people to Mars at the same time. Together, Boegh-Nielsen and Newman outlined Musk's three-stage plan for SpaceX. From 2002 to 2007, the company went through its initial development, creating and researching new technology. Stage 2 was the unmanned flight period, commercial flights and the use of NASA facilities, running from 2008–19. Finally, stage 3, from 2020 onwards, we are seeing the first manned flights into space and further exploration.

SpaceX is capable of making such breakthroughs and massive improvements in technology by having substantial financial backing for their endeavours. SpaceX is valued at $46 billion and investors can envisage a future in this sector. Public perception of whether money should be spent on this no longer matters and tax-payers' money can be put towards ventures that benefit them personally. Rockets and going to the Moon alone would not be enough to draw such massive support and funding from investors. Therefore, SpaceX has another sector, where they can earn themselves and their investors money, Starlink. Starlink will be a massive collection of satellites that will support an internet connection anywhere on Earth.

However, SpaceX hasn't reached such success alone. As with every triumph, it was done with the help of others. For SpaceX this helping hand was the NASA. NASA started to realise around the 2000s that the future of space exploration could no longer be conducted by them. They also realised that they could help SpaceX for the betterment of everyone around the globe. Since 2006, SpaceX has received many government contracts and grants, increasing funding and securing their future. They even received a $2.6 billion contract for the Dragon v2 rocket. Industry is moving away from government to private corporations. NASA has realised this and has made moves to end up on the winning side of the future. A private corporation will always have more control over its capital and receive more investment and in turn have more successes. Newman gave the poignant example of Amazon being strides ahead of its government counterpart, Royal Mail. The two speakers ended with the line "The future is private", spoken in chorus.

The stage was then opened for the floor to ask questions. The speakers were asked whether the cost-benefit outweighs exploitation by big corporations. Newman responded rather cynically saying that other than with trades unions we can't stop companies doing what they're going to do. Another good question was asked about whether Musk is going for reactionary goals to gain more funding. Boegh-Nielsen explained that Starlink is enough to fund Musk's space endeavours and he will always be a crowd pleaser, giving the example of him naming his son X Æ-12. Newman and Boegh-Nielsen answered a few more questions, showing their extent of knowledge on the subject. We discovered NASA was always doomed even if the crash hadn't happened and a SpaceX IPO will probably happen eventually, but Musk will wait for the best moment as he is happy in his bubble at the moment. Thus concluded the first Junior Pigou Society lecture of the academic year.

ALEXANDER SOCIETY

Henry Farquhar, Lyon's, "The Face of Battle: Stories from the men who fought at Stalingrad", Vaughan Library, 29 September

Henry Farquhar, *Lyon's*, delivered a lecture on the Battle of Stalingrad to the Alexander Society. It incorporated both detailed historic information on the battle and its wider impact on society. The significance of the Battle of Stalingrad, as the largest and arguably the most important watershed battle in the Second World War, was underscored by the sheer size of the forces and casualties. Farquhar further highlighted the

importance of the battle as the turning point on the Eastern Front, as the seemingly unhaltable German advance was destroyed by the Soviets in the first major German defeat. This turning point not only proved to be a devastating waste of supplies and troops for the German command, but also acted as a great boost for the morale of Soviet citizens and troops and a great propaganda opportunity.

Farquhar's detailed reflection of a German soldier's account of the Battle of Stalingrad revealed the distorted and blinded German views towards the progress on the Eastern Front, and underlined the extreme deterioration in mental and physical conditions of the German soldiers, who became besieged in the flattened city. Details of German soldiers eating horses and refusing to take cover at enemy fire provided useful insight into the horrors of the war from a personal perspective of the soldiers under the tyrannies of Hitler and Stalin.

Finishing the lecture with some thought-provoking topics and questions, such as the greater impacts of the Battle of Stalingrad for the war and the role of the two dictators in the Soviet victory and the German loss, Farquhar faced some weathering questions from KAF, Ryan Cullen, *The Grove*, and Edward Kim, *Lyon's*. To end the lecture, Farquhar elaborated on the contrast between the Soviet willingness to withstand high casualty figures compared to the Western intolerance of high casualties, as well as the lasting impact of Stalingrad on Russian culture.

JUNIOR HOUSE DEBATING

Lyon's & Druries v The Park & Rendalls, "Democracy has failed.", OH Room, 23 September

The Junior House Debating Competition held the first match of its first round on 23 September. On a dark and "physically distanced" (for the chairman objected to the term "socially distanced") evening in the Old Harrovian Room, Lyon's and Druries proposed the motion that 'This house believes that democracy has failed'. They were opposed by The Park and Rendalls.

The first speaker for the proposition was Cambatta-Mistry, *Lyon's*, who started strongly, outlining the objectives of democracy. According to Lyon's, the three objectives of democracy are to give power to the majority, create a representative government, and allow for a heightened sense of accountability. The first speaker for the proposition outlined how he would prove that democracy is failing to bring power to the majority. Firstly, he cited the example of the 1951 United Kingdom general election, in which, despite winning 0.8% more of the vote, Labour lost the election. He then explained the example of the 2016 United States general election, in which the side with the majority of the votes also lost the election. Finally, he explained a multitude of times when governments had gone against popular polling, showing that decision-making power did not rest with the majority opinion. According to the speaker, both these examples showed that power was not going to the majority, and therefore democracy was failing.

The Park then fusilladed the audience with strongly presented rhetoric in defence of our proud democratic institutions. Their first speaker, Jiho Ro went on to describe how democracy was more effective than any other system of government. According to them, democracy was successful and has by definition succeeded through having stood the test of time. Moreover, democracy successfully allowed for people to have an input into government. Overall, between his meticulous manner and casual efficiency, Ro had the meticulous air of an assassin ready to effortlessly execute his target.

This was countered by Jevons, *Lyon's*, who offered a short amount of very pointed rebuttal before explaining how democracy was not representative. After firing off statistics about misrepresentation on the grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender and wealth like a brutally efficient machine gun, Jevons powerfully painted a picture of a government out of control. Across Britain, there have been countless scandals pertaining to the misspending of taxpayers' money, yet no heads have rolled. Barely any MPs have been held accountable. In a line of reasoning that connected the two Lyon's speakers, Jevons argued that democracy had failed to meet its objectives, and had therefore failed. He rounded off with a Boris-like tricolon, but instead of trying to get us to "control the virus", the second speaker seemed more enamoured with the idea that we should "vote for the proposition."

As the room drew to a hush, Ridley, *The Park*, stepped up to the plate. In the characteristically charismatic high Tory style that members of the Debating Society will by now be all too familiar with, the third speaker portrayed democracy as a benevolent fighting force that has vanquished outdated forms of government, such as feudalism or dictatorship. A fine speech came to a fine end as Ridley pointed out the high proportion of people who are passionately in love with the democratic values we know today.

The debate then reached a new height as our favourite "jack in the box", Newman, *Druries*, stepped up to the floor. In a speech that seemed to achieve the objectives of both setting a world record for number of steps walked in a day and proving that a heavy amount of research was not a pre-requisite to win a debate, we saw it all. Firstly, Newman made an emotional connection, attempting to stare down every unsuspecting Shell who believed that they would be able to sit quietly and unnoticed at the back of the debate. Then, he outlined how China, Russia and Belarus were the "model democracies" he was going to look at, tactfully ignoring the wild gesticulations of protest from the opposition bench. Despite the occasional whispered accusation of creating a circular argument, it was evident to everyone present that Newman had a commanding presence and spoke powerfully.

The next speaker was perhaps the most remarkable yet and could even be said to reinvent the art of debating for years to come. There is much to be said in favour of Gleason's, *Rendalls*, speaking, with both his Attenborough-esque tone and reasonable manner winning him the respect of the room. However, what is perhaps most remarkable about Gleason is that he gave his speech while sitting down. At the start of his speech, he walked to the front of the room and sat down, before beginning to read about Ancient Greece as Walter Cronkite once read the news.

The final speaker from Druries encapsulated the strongman tone for which populist leaders around the world have become accustomed to, talking about Tony Blair's decision to go against the will of his people in entering the Iraq war. It was clear throughout his speech that he was in command of the

floor, shouting "declined" at all those who dared infringe on his speaking time with points of information. The crux of this speaker's argument was that equality hadn't been reached by democracy and, in traditional House-debating fashion, Druries ended with a quote: "Failure is to prevent equality from rising."

Bibolat was the final speaker for Rendalls and rounded off the debate by returning to the framework that had been set out by Lyon's. He argued that "accountability was indeed present in democracy", and engaged with a short amount of rebuttal before rounding off what had been a debate of an extraordinarily high standard.

Following a vibrant floor debate in which the speakers were challenged on the material and Archie Kyd, *The Park*, attempted to declare himself as emperor of the universe, the House came to a vote. Extraordinarily, the match was decidedly a tie. The writer of this article would like to thank JEP and SMS for helping make sure that House debating survives into the COVID era, and to all the extraordinarily talented speakers who participated. The bar has certainly been set very high.

METROPOLITAN

FLORA OF HARROW

Trees on bank facing the track

From a young age I've always harboured an interest in the flora that surrounds our everyday lives. So, I've decided to start a small series in which I spout interesting and random facts about trees and bushes in specific locations around our Hill. This week, I'm going to try and research a couple of the trees growing on the bank underneath The Head Master's garden, facing the running track and wedged between the sports centre and the golf course.

Medlar (Mesphilus germanica): Facing down the hill, starting at the top left, there is a small tree. roughly 5m tall and sprawled over the grass. However, the point of interest for this tree is the unusual fruit which grips to its branches.

This fruit is named medlar, and has had an interesting role throughout history. Indigenous to Iran, south-west Asia and the Bulgarian and Turkish coasts of the Black Sea, this plant may have been cultivated for as long as 3,000 years.

It was probably introduced to Greece in around 700 BC, and subsequently to Rome in around 200 BC. Its fruit became an important addition to the average diet from Roman times to the Middle Ages, largely due to the fact that it is one of the few edible fruits available in the winter.

It has also been referenced by William Shakespeare and Geoffrey Chaucer as a symbol of prostitution or premature destitution. For example, in Geoffrey Chaucer's story 'The Reeve's Tale', a character laments his old age, comparing himself to a medlar. In doing so, he uses the old English term for the fruit: "open-arse."

White mulberry (Morus alba): To the right of the medlar, and a tad bit down the hill, stands a white mulberry tree, recognisable from its rough bark and soft, slightly warped leaves.

Native to northern China and India, white mulberry are fast-growing, medium-sized (10–20m) trees with short lifespans, – around 90 or so years – although some specimens are known to be over 250 years old.

The white mulberry is known mainly for the use of its leaves as food for silkworms all around the world. However, it's also used to feed other livestock (goats, sheep etc.) in particularly dry areas. The fruit can be made into a form of wine, and the leaves are prepared as teas in Korea. The plant has also become a characteristic ornamental installation for many gardens, due to both the shade it provides and its aesthetics.

I think the most interesting fact about this plant, however, is its ability to release pollen at super-fast speeds. The stamens act as catapults, releasing their stored elastic energy in just 25µs – resulting in movement of approximately 380mph. At around the speed of sound, this is the fastest-known movement in the plant kingdom.

Evergreen/Holy/Holm oak (Quercus ilex): top right of the bank, opposite to the sports centre. This plant engaged me due to the fact that its leaves looked nothing like the characteristic oak tree leaves, which have seven or so rounded tips. Instead, the leaves looked more like those from an olive tree: small and pointed, with a waxy texture.

The evergreen oak occupies an area from Portugal to Greece, and all along the north Mediterranean coast.

After investigation I found it to be a relatively interesting plant. As its wood is incredibly dense, it is often used for construction, tools, vessels and wine casks, as well as being used as firewood and in charcoal manufacture.

This tree is also one of the top-three trees used in truffle orchards (truffères). On top of that, it produces acorns, making it an important food source for free-range pigs reared for Spanish Ibérico ham production.

In this small article I wrote about only a few of the many trees that lay their roots in Harrow on the Hill. I would definitely encourage anyone vaguely interested in this sort of thing, or flora in general, to download the PlantNet app, a free app that allows you to identify plants through pictures taken on your phone.

OPINION

Dear Sirs,
Recently there seems to me to be a trend of getting idioms wrong. These short phrases have been one of the most interesting aspects in the English language since Anglo-Saxon times, and phrases are common across all the Ingaevonic languages, so it seems strange that people keep saying them incorrectly. It is less the disrespect of our language that annoys me, and more the fact that its so damn annoying when people throw out these phrases in haphazard ways. So, a plea: please get your phrases right. It's not rocket surgery.

Yours with respect,
Henry Ridley, The Park

Dear Sirs,
In early modern Neoplatonism, a concept entered the minds of the Christian population that had never before been recognised in the same way. No, this was not the art of bathing, but in fact the concept of the great chain of being.

For those of you who have not experienced studying *Macbeth* with TGE for their GCSE English Literature course, the great chain of being is a concept that describes a hierarchical structure for all life. Within it, God sits at the top, followed closely by the King and then the nobles, with the proletariat near the bottom, just above the mushroom. With such beliefs in society, it is only natural that institutions founded in and around that time are likely to have mimicked those hierarchical structures. Indeed, at 17th century Harrow we see a hierarchical chain with the Head Master and God at the top (though I am not sure in which order), with the lowly Shell at the bottom.

I like to think that today we are far more civilised, embracing far more egalitarian and meritocratic values. Rather than having an inherent and unmovable hierarchy, surely the 21st century demands a degree of social mobility and mutual respect in both directions of this inherent hierarchy? However, although it would be futile to pretend that we haven't made significant progress since the time of fagging and servitude, I still think that there is a small way to go before reaching the utopian future that we deserve. I believe that there are still reminiscent shadows of hierarchy that as a student population we have a responsibility to stamp out. After all, it would be terrifically disappointing for the 100m runner to stop a yard from the finish line.

For example, one only needs to look to the Shepherd Churchill Hall to see how this manifests itself on a daily basis. In the United Kingdom, one of the things we pride ourselves on is our fantastic ability to queue. Indeed, at the Post Office, one can always hum along to Rule Britannia while appreciating the mark of civilization first described by Thomas Carlyle in 1837. Unfortunately, this sentiment is not fully shared when one attempts to chase a similar pursuit in our very own dining room. You see, in a standard international queue, one tends to be served with the amount of time spent waiting as the primary variable for consideration.

However, in a "Harrow Queue", other variables tend to come into play. In the vastly overcomplicated political world of obtaining one's nutritional luncheon, an estimate for the time served can most accurately be found by using a calculation involving one's year group, and general size (as well as the standard variables of tiredness of server and quality of grub on offer that day). To me, this has always been a great injustice against other members of our School community. Why should younger boys have to wait longer than older boys to get their food? What gives an older boy the right to move to the front of the queue? Now, while this is not an instant of the man without sin casting the first stone (for, indeed, from time to time when in a foul temper and on a momentary relapse, I may have in the past been susceptible to subscribing to this malignant malpractice), I think that it is time that boys took responsibility for the ending of this terrible custom, and we wait to obtain our food in a more sensitive and considerate manner.

It is important to understand that this act in itself is not a terrible event. Even in Existing Customs, we accept and acknowledge that some concessions must be made to allow for progression through the School community. However, what bothers me is that this "rule" is unwritten. Therefore, I believe that, as a school, we have a decision to make. Either institutionalise "Harrow queuing", as several Houses have done in a civilised way since the return from lockdown, or ban it entirely with harsh consequences upon those boys and beaks who cut to the front of the line.

As ever,
Dylan Winward, Lyon's

GAFFE AND GOWN

Quips from Around the Hill

"Boys online, can you see the notes on the whiteboard?" "No, Sir, but I can see a huge tub of alcohol papers and box disposable gloves."

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SPORTS

GOLF

The School 1-3 Wellington, 1 October

Harrow golfers were eager to continue with their winning ways on a blustery autumnal day against a strong, albeit somewhat depleted, Wellington College team. The match had to be reduced to four v four and this meant that each individual game was suddenly more important. The pressure was evident as the majority of players found the water on the first hole – many thanks to JLM for sewing the seeds of doubt throughout his morning lessons.

First out was Max Shirvell, *The Head Master's*. He started off strongly with a birdie on the second hole but would give the lead away at the fourth with a bogey. On the short par five fifth, he bounced back with a birdie to regain the lead. Shirvell then went on a glorious par stretch until the 11th hole which he birdied to go 2 up and 2 under par for his round. Shirvell took a bite from his sandwich with only three holes to play and it would appear he very nearly choked, giving both shots back on 16 and 17 with silly bogeys. Going down the last he was out of position after two strokes but managed to find the surface in regulation about 15 feet from the flag. His opponent hit her approach into the water and trusty Shirvell was back to two-putt and win the last hole to win the match 1 up.

Johnny Connell, *Rendalls,* was second out and up against a keen, talented and focused young golfer from Wellington. Connell had a decent front nine, finding himself only a couple over par and all square heading into the back 9. Sadly, Connell's round started to fall apart on the back nine and he wasn't able to keep pace with his opponent.

With the match in the balance, it was up to one of the final two pairings to provide some momentum for either side. Aidan Wong, *The Park,* got off to a slow start and found himself three down after four holes. After seven steady pars to start, Wellington made a couple of mistakes and Wong found some form, birdying two holes to bring it back to one down at the turn. A lost ball on 11 shifted the momentum back to Wellington. It just didn't seem quite meant to be today and Wong was dormie four down. A solid par on 15 from Wellington sealed it, putting him level par for his round. Final score 4&3.

This meant only a draw was possibly salvageable for Harrow and the pressure was very much on Jonty Williams, *Moretons.* Williams also started off slowly, finding the water on the first and after five holes he was 4 down, but only two over par. As he entered the back nine, things had gott worse and he was now four adrift of his opponent, but he managed to bring the game back to 1 down heading onto the 14th tee with some steady play, indicative of this straight-driving fiend. Commentators curse strikes again, and Williams cruelly lost his ball in the semi-cut on the 14th hole. This was followed by a couple of bogeys and it seemed that all was lost. Williams would not lie down, however, and he managed a birdie on the next. It was all too little too late sadly, and a par from Wellington on the 17th was enough to seal the win, 3-1.

ATHLETICS

After a summer of cancelled or postponed athletics meetings, not least the Tokyo Olympic Games, athletes faced months of lonely training, with one goal being simply to try and stay motivated to continue to put in the laps, throws, jumps at whichever facilities allowed them to do so. Jack Gosden, *Lyon's,* never short of get-up-and-go, embraced the challenge and worked untiringly for six months to stay on top of his one-lap event, the 400m. He then entered an Open meeting on Saturday 3 October, with his long-term goal in mind of breaking the School record.

Returning to competitive running itself is a challenge, but setting a personal best would be all the more difficult. Many events have well-known targeted barriers (the four-minute mile, the 10-second 100m run) and the 400m Senior dream is a sub-50-second single lap.

No Harrovian had managed this yet, with the School record being originally noted as 50.8s set in 1987 (equalled in 1995), then lowered to 50.3s by Max Arzt-Jones, *Moretons,* in 2015. In spite of the poor weather (and many would add against all odds), Gosden not only broke it on Saturday, he smashed it by nearly half a second, easily dipping under the elusive 50 second mark by recording an electronic time of 49.82s.

There is more to come from this talented young man and we look hugely forward to the summer in anticipation of the record being lowered again, while witnessing an Harrovian running a sub-50 on our home track.