Welcome to my second attempt at the Li(n)es.

Somewhat surprisingly, there is very little in the form of made-up stuff in this issue, and I wonder if the brackets around the ‘n’ are necessary. Do not let this apparent seriousness dissuade you, however, as there is still plenty to amuse as well as educate (thanks especially to the inspired genius of the great Paul Douglas Pennington for his contribution to the ‘amusement’ category...) .

I was hoping that finding people to write stuff the second time would be much easier. I’d had the practice at nagging people from last time, and they were so accustomed to being nagged that it becomes sufficient just for me to look at someone and they start to apologise for not having written their article yet. Alas, t’was not to be. I did come up with a new way of finding articles, though - I found Kendra’s article still sitting in my Inbox having been stupidly overlooked by me last term....

Then there was the issue of the theme....

Thankfully Christina, Angela and Lydia did end up contributing something water-based, and once more I didn’t feel too stupid putting Lucy’s really impressive cover on.

There are also some articles that I wanted to have here, but could not find an author for. There have been loads of great social events laid on for us this term, and I was hoping that occasions such as the Fellows vs. Students Quiz (we’ll get them next time...) would have inspired some budding journalist to write some witty yet insightful reflection of the evening to join these pages. Once more, t’was not to be.

I will take this opportunity, though, to mention the Linacre Sports Festival. Mariana and Chris did an excellent job organising everything - and in eventually persuading enough people that it would be fun to take part! My ulterior motive for mentioning this, of course, is that I found myself on the winning team and thought that I would take the opportunity to display our proud team photo.

Have a good summer!

Daniel Gallichan :o)
Kendra Strauss spends a while thinking about

**How the WEATHER Used to Be**

“We’ll pass around the easy lie of absolutely no regrets, and later maybe you could try to let your losses dangle off the sharp edge of a century, and talk about the weather or, how the weather used to be.”

From “Plea From A Cat Named Virtute” on Reconstruction Site (2003)

People have always talked about the weather and in fact, where the English are concerned, it’s a stereotype masquerading as a joke. The first time I listened to the song ‘Plea from a cat named Virtute’ by a Canadian band called The WeakerThans, however, I had to laugh at their invocation of such an obvious truism. We don’t just talk about the weather anymore. In the countries I’m from and have lived in longest and most recently – Canada, the US, Scotland - we talk about the weather we remember: the snowstorms of childhood; the cold winters and late, balmy springs; and Indian summers that were glorious and celebrated exceptions rather than portentous norms.

These seasonal rhythms give shape to our experiences and celebrations. Our memories are not only visual, pictorial; they are imbued with and incredible range of sensory experiences. Southern California summers are evoked by the gasoline smell of hot tarmac, smog and swimming pool chlorine, and by the sensation of sandy skin on crisp bed sheets. To me, the air always smells clean during the first snowfall in Montreal, even downtown where the neon peep show signs blink through the silent flakes. When our experiences jar with the memories that live under our skin, we feel unnerved, like a jet-lagged traveller in a foreign city. Last year I travelled from Scotland to Canada to the Cook Islands to New Zealand to Australia and back again, always chasing summer. Christmas in Melbourne was grey and cool but not wintery, and to my partner James and me the celebrations we planned seemed like some kind of dress rehearsal for the real day. Although this is my first year in Oxford, I talk to my housemates about how early the blossoms are this year, not the mention the daffodils. We are unnerved again, and wonder if the summer will be hotter again than last year. Will the salmon be able to spawn in Scotland’s shallower, warmer rivers? Will we be able to barbeque on the back lawn of our house and camp without fear of rain?

This all sounds intentionally familiar. No one can escape the discourses of global warming (alarmists and deniers and all of those in between). Kyoto flounders, experts produce models, and the rest of us live our lives from day to day, the way we always have, although time itself, like space, folds and flows in new ways and according to new regimes of demarcation and measurement. In the ‘new geography’, academics write about scalar reconfigurations, about the annihilation of space by time (Marx seem increasingly prescient rather than less so, despite the denouement of the Cold War), and about hybridity. Increasingly we are defined by new rhythms (machinic, virtual, biological, representational) and the ways in which we order and reconfigure existence of the old with the new, the foreign with the familiar, the Other with the Self. There is nothing contradictory about the fact that we will continue to revel in ridiculously cheap, blatantly unsustainable short-haul flights that cost less than a café lunch and yet feel a curious prickling, a visceral discomfort when we witness lightening during a snowstorm. That is to say, such contradictions are inherent in the choices we make and the ways in which we order our experiences. These same contradictions inhabit the predictions about global warming: species loss may coexist with new diversity; extreme weather with generally pleasanter temperatures in countries like England and Scotland; wetter weather with droughts. And the same old social contradictions will likely persist. Money will be pumped into adaptation measures for the areas that already have the resources to adapt (will the residents of Malibu be out of pocket if their homes are destroyed — again — by fires, landslides, or flooding?) while the poor in both the economically developed and developing countries will suffer disproportionately. Society, too, has its persistent rhythms.

Kendra is taking an MSC in Nature, Society and Environment. As you might have noticed, there are a few references to last term’s theme of ‘rhythm’. This is because somehow I messed up and forgot this article last time. Sorry Kendra!
It was the week running up to May Day Eve, and the air of anticipation was reaching an electrifying point. How many tickets were left? What were people going to wear? How would we manage to transform Linacre into multiple European holiday destinations? And what on earth was a vodka luge, anyway? By Friday all these queries and more had been answered: Cruise 2004 was ready for boarding.

The cruise theme of this year’s Linacre Ball certainly had something to offer all-comers, for wannabe ballroom dancers to budding space-hopper racers, from the serious gamblers to those preferring to relax over a puff on a shisha pipe, and from lovers of chilled out jazz or energetic salsa music to….. Munkey-lovers?? (You know who you are…) Not to mention the beautiful Russian winter wonderland and much-awaited penguin vodka luge, an ice sculpture centrepiece with a hole through which to serve vodka.

French crepes and mountains of pizza went down very well, but the crowning glory was the chocolate cascade (“It’s so aimed at all the girls” said a male friend of mine, tucking decadently into a Belgian choc-dipped strawberry).

Cruise-guests were so caught up in the theme that familiar college places lost their usual identities (“Have you seen Helen? Last I saw she was in Russia.” “Will you come to Spain with me?”), and the mysterious palm reader also strangely exchanged identities mid-evening, becoming even more extraordinarily accurate. A fantastic time really did seem to be had by all, and even the environmental health inspector commented that Linacre’s was “the best ball in Oxford” on the night!

The cruise finally docked at dawn when, after breakfasting on fruit and danishes, everyone, including the penguin, went down to hear the choir at Magdalen.

Many thanks go to the College, Captain Dan and my fellow Ball Committee members for all the preparations that made everything run so smoothly, and I would encourage anyone who is interested in organizing next year’s ball to get involved. This is a great opportunity to transform Linacre into the party venue of your dreams, and although it’s hard work it is definitely worth seeing it all come together in the end.

Lucy is in her first year of a DPhil in Plant Sciences

Below: Common Room President Helen Haworth and Domestic Bursar Patrick Heffernan make use of the chocolate cascade at the ball.
BRINGING BACK DINOSAURS
(OR NOT...)

Simon Ho investigates why the real ‘Jurassic Park’ hasn’t opened yet...

Jurassic Park showed us some of the potential applications of bringing extinct creatures back to life using their DNA. The story was inspired by the concept that it might be possible to recover DNA from mosquitoes preserved for millions of years in amber. If the mosquitoes had been feeding on dinosaur blood, then we might also be able to recover dinosaur DNA. Unfortunately, the molecular biologists, Michael Crichton, and the fictional scientists in the movie (and book) got it horribly wrong...

The field of ancient DNA research is notorious for spectacular claims that were later discredited, such as those of DNA being recovered from a 100-million-year-old dinosaur bone and from a 120-million-year-old weevil in amber. In all of these cases, it turned out that the DNA was actually fungal, microbial, or human in origin. Some of the published ‘ancient’ DNA sequences are probably those of the lab worker who extracted them from the specimens, which can be pretty embarrassing (but ironically appropriate) when they are submitted to journals as ‘Neanderthal DNA’. These studies had seriously underestimated the extent of contamination.

After an initial period of excitement, during which the leading scientific journals (Nature and Science) would eagerly pounce on any DNA sequences obtained from ancient specimens, claims of successful ancient DNA projects are now treated very cautiously. A positive by-product of this scepticism has been a marked increase in standards of laboratory hygiene and the establishment of rigorous procedures for the verification of results.

Despite all of these problems, there has been some reassuring success in recent years, with the publication of DNA sequences from the quagga (an extinct zebra-like beast), woolly mammoth, and other really old, frozen or mummified critters. In the Ancient Biomolecules Centre in Oxford, for example, DNA has been successfully extracted from the dodo, moa (large New Zealand bird), cave lions, and extinct horses. These days, ancient DNA is being extracted from all sorts of specimens, even from animal cells lodged in dirt and preserved faeces. DNA sequences from mummies, Neanderthals, and other human remains have also proved invaluable for archaeological and anthropological studies. However, these specimens are only up to about 50,000 years old. At the moment, the oldest accepted ancient DNA sequences are about 400,000 years old, depressingly short of the 65 million years since dinosaurs were last frolicking around on the earth.

Now for more bad news: Even if we are able to find authentic ancient DNA in the remains of extinct animals, there are still numerous obstacles that need to be overcome before a living, breathing, organism can be produced. Firstly, ancient DNA is almost always highly fragmented and badly damaged. To recreate one of these animals, we would need a complete, undamaged genome, which would be at least 10 million times as long as the DNA fragments that are normally extracted from preserved animals. Add this problem to the fact that we need to insert the DNA into an appropriate host to produce a viable creature, and it seems even more unlikely that we’ll ever be able to bring back creatures from prehistory, or even animals that have become extinct in the past few hundred years.

So put aside all hopes of bringing back the dodo or the dinornis, let alone dinosaurs. Australia will have to shelve all plans of resurrecting its precious Tasmanian tiger (thylacine), and the Japanese should probably forget their dreams of bringing back the mammoth. Unfortunately, it looks like the only things we will be able to bring back are things have died in the past couple of decades, such as the recently extinct red colobus monkey, dead pets, and Elvis.

Simon is a first-year DPhil student at the Ancient Biomolecules Centre (Department of Zoology).
The roads are drenched with leaves. They reside by the gutters and kerbs bloated from the recent rain. They are decadent leaves, too heavy to be thrown adolescently in the air, and are stained with the filth of car fumes and spilt oil. These leaves sit in their deathbeds and refuse to disappear respectfully.

So I sweep them. Before I only cleared my driveway and the pavement outside but recently my rake has moved onto foreign territories. The neighbours seem not to notice the outdoor residue of leaves, so I clear them alone, once a week, always in the morning, and all for free.

The street stretches through the eye of an elongated avenue of sycamores and chestnuts and ends at the small mound adjacent to my house. The leaves are thickest here from piling up to either side of the mound where they give off a weak scent that attracts dogs. This is where I start, gradually filling each plastic bag until my rake announces the reappearance of the road with a metallic screech. I look down. A few leaves fossilised to the ground refuse to move in a stubborn display of inertia.

It had not always been like this. Once the leaves had lain delicately upon the street, dry and colourful and crisp to touch. They had humbly dropped from their branches in an attempt to spread the empire. Withering into curvy embryos, each seemed to possess the power to do something magnificent. Father a butterfly, perhaps. And why not? How could such a tapestry hide any claims to fertility?

The rains came. I had seen the clouds pass across my bedroom window. They had been talked about for weeks. The greatest rains for sixty years, the radio had forecast, creeping westerly from Russia where the front had formed. Regardless of the voices the leaves continued to fall. And when they landed they still curled-up inside themselves, storing their energies for a glorious explosion into renewal.

I look at the full bags and realise that this part of the road is clear. A little damp and still lined by a thin surface of mud but nevertheless it is as if the leaves had never been here. A neighbour walks by, preceded by a stupid dog, and beams his approval. ‘Hard work?’ ‘Yes, of course.’ ‘You’re sure you don’t want any help?’ ‘No not at all, but thanks all the same.’

The leaves fall as a group as I open the bags, which are dead weight, onto a slab at the end of the street. I return to collect the raking tools. A few leaves have fallen with the recent gusts of wind and nestled themselves between the spokes of the rake. Shaking the rake clean I cross to a pile of leaves that I swept last week, covered with a transparent plastic sheet. These leaves have dried, and as I throw the sheet to one side I grab a handful and let them fall crisply between my fingers. Each lands delicately upon the pile with a hollow tap.

I fumble at the box of matches in my trouser pocket. The cardboard of the box is moist and crumbles with my touch. I place the box between my teeth and shuffle the pile of leaves into two new bags.

With a bag in each hand I walk to the site where I open the bags and scatter the leaves, insuring they are fully aerated. They are a blessing compared to the heavy leaves from before.

The wind lifts the leaves into spirals before letting them come down to the ground in new tapestries of autumnal colours.

The box of matches has crumbled even more. I take them from my teeth and kneel down to the stretch of leaves.

I tie my shoelace and light a cigarette. Walking back to my house the street looks replenished. Why shouldn’t butterflies suddenly burst from my tapestry of leaves?

BY STEPHEN BARDLE, WHO STUDIED FOR AN MSc IN ENGLISH AT LINACRE LAST YEAR

— LINACRE Li(n)es — TRINITY TERM 2004 — PAGE 6 —
My relationship with the sea and water in general was not always the best. That is partially because my mother has a water phobia. Because of this I have not still sent my family any pictures of me rowing. If I do, they will realise that we are not actually wearing life-vests while rowing and make me stop! I don’t know why my mother has this phobia. Apparently she doesn’t trust the sea, she doesn’t like the thought that below the surface there is more sea! Her recurring nightmare is drowning. (Mine is being lost in space and then knocking on a floating door where I am greeted by my 2nd grade schoolteacher who thought I needed a psychologist because I used to eat the paint off the wall of our class.)

My mother’s phobia is particularly difficult since we leave on an island. You just cannot avoid the sea in Cyprus, it’s everywhere. In the summer, sea is the only salvation from the heat wave – that is for people like me whose father doesn’t believe in air-conditioning because it is “unnatural” (This is the same father who insisted that my sister had caught a computer virus because she was using the internet too much).

Growing up with a mother who considers being in the sea with water deeper than your shoulder height “living on the edge” it took a bit of time for me to be able to experiment in the water. I remember at 14 when I used to tell my parents that I was going to the cinema but actually I was going to the beach. The only small flaw of my master-plan was the fact that massive tan-lines could be considered by some people (including my parents) as a giveaway!

It was when I was 15 in the sea that for the first time in my life I saw a man’s “member” (a friend showed it to me “just for the fun of it”). Being quite innocent at the time I can confess it was a truly traumatic experience and for the first time in my life I started swimming really fast to get away from it!

Water sports are very big in Cyprus. A very popular one is called the “banana”. Before allowing your thoughts to travel in the wrong direction let me explain what this is. A massive blow-up banana with 8 people riding it (again your mind is travelling…) is carried around by a speedboat. My first and last experience of riding this ended with me losing my bikini bottoms while on the banana (it goes really fast).

Two years ago I tried riding a jet ski for the first time. I jumped on it with a friend and started riding the ocean. Things were going great and I was really proud of my accomplishment. That was until we were passing next to a small boat that was peacefully sitting in the middle of the sea. In our effort to wave to a group of German tourists we managed to catch and subsequently take with us the fishing rod of an old British man who was sitting on the boat (thankfully the guy stayed on the boat)!

As an islander, my relationship with the sea will be one of a lifetime. Boyfriends come and go (don’t tell my dad) but the sea, like good friends, is always there providing fun, support and adventure, as well as the occasional tantrum. I cannot imagine my life without the sea. Even with all the watermelon skins, nappies and actual poo I occasionally find in the sea waters of my town, the sea always makes me feel like home!

CHRISTINA IS TAKING A DPhil in Mathematics. You probably know her better as the DJ at most Linacre parties...
Erica Charters tries to pin down just what makes artists different from scientists...

Having never attended a college-structured university before coming to Oxford, my experience of science students was extremely limited. In my undergraduate arts programme, no science students ever appeared in my courses. My 'science for art students' course was held in a science building, and so I passed by studious-looking students in their mysterious 'labs' on my way to my completely arts-attended science lectures. It was rumoured that science students worked long hours, even getting up very early in the morning, lacked style, and didn't socialize much. I believed the last part, as I had never met a science student at any of the coffee shops I frequented, or even at any of the parties I went to. During exams, we were sat beside science students, as it made copying off each other's exams impossible. This was the closest I had ever been to a science student, as we eyed each other nervously in the few minutes before the exam began, convinced that the other had it easier than oneself.

Upon my arrival at Linacre college, I soon realized that the overwhelming number of science students was going to force me out of my arts bubble. Trying to overcome my prejudices against these 'others,' I soon discovered that the other had similar beliefs. The art student, I was told, drinks too much coffee, smokes too many cigarettes, and sleeps in until noon, rising only to wrap an arty scarf around her neck and head down to a coffee shop. Once there, she languidly reads a book only remotely connected to her research, then retires to do a few hours work. Her evenings are usually debauched, involving drunken poetry recitations, and captured perfectly by Evelyn Waugh.

While I can’t claim that these characterizations, on either side, are entirely groundless, I am happy to confess that my enforced socialization with science students has opened my mind to their redeeming qualities, if not convincing me somewhat that we might be similar. Indeed, now some of my best friends are science students.

The distinction between arts and sciences was not always as firm as it is now. Science was once considered to be knowledge, whereas art was the practical application of that knowledge, or its skill. Fifteenth and sixteenth century universities taught the seven liberal arts or sciences, now enshrined in the quadrangle entrance to the Bodleian library. They could be called either arts or sciences, as these terms were interchangeable when referring to scholarship and learning. Renaissance painters - the original Renaissance men - considered themselves as much concerned with science as with art, as they struggled with formulae for exact perspective and realistic light and shadows. North American undergraduate curricula still encourage this broad education, often requiring science students to take a few arts courses before completing their degree, and offering 'science-light' courses for arts students. Countless individuals also break down this barrier on their own; as Einstein had his violin, so it seems that the most gifted intellectuals can dabble in both sides.

But we believe that there are fundamental differences between an art and a science. Sciences are supposed to be purely rational, demonstrable, and based on the lofty scientific method. Their papers are short on words, long on appendices and diagrams, and incomprehensible to anyone outside of their field. Arts research, on the other hand, is to be drawn from profound thinking and years of reading other people's work, and should be understood by, if not aesthetically pleasing to, the general public. Even more telling, it is a slur to claim that the work of one area belongs in the other. In...
a television programme explaining current debates in physics to the general public, physicists pointed out that string theory has little or insufficient data to support it, and so derided it as ‘philosophy.’ On the other hand, the recent field of analysis is often sneered at by more traditional philosophers, who consider it the mere lackey of science and therefore lacking in substance.

Science is also thought capable of solving many of the world’s ills. While activists and young people may question some aspects of scientific research, we are happy to believe in the fruits that scientific progress will reap for society and happy to trust scientific researchers when they proclaim such progress. Not only does there seem to be far more funding available for scientific research, but also a life in science makes perfect sense to uncles and aunts asking what one is doing with one’s life. A D.Phil in philosophy, on the other hand, isn’t usually regarded as a respectable career choice. Sadly, I find that this sometimes results in not only incomprehension regarding what arts students do, but also occasionally even disparagement of arts research. What do we do, sitting in our rooms all day long? Is it much of an accomplishment if ordinary people can understand it? How do we know if we are right? And isn’t it all just a little too wishy-washy?

We in arts can be just as dismissive, if not more hostile. Surely inputting numbers into computer programmes doesn’t deserve much praise, and can’t be all that taxing. And although our uncles and aunts may be impressed, we are not as convinced by so-called scientific progress. Isn’t more of it luck? Is it really progress? Didn’t we think we could identify all of society’s ills through the scientific method in the nineteenth century, and didn’t we find out we were wrong? In the discipline of history of science and medicine, this challenge to claims of scientific progress can be even more ruthless. Since the 1960s and 1970s, historians have argued that scientific progress resembles more of a struggle among competing paradigms of thought, and not a linear movement towards enlightenment. Even worse, historians maintain that the victorious paradigm may not have won because of objective logic or experiments, but because of political and financial backing.

But to suggest that scientific research is not solely governed by rational inquiry is not necessarily criticism. The Nobel prize-winning physicist, Subrahmanyan Chandrasekhar, believes not only that scientific theories can be evaluated according to aesthetic criteria (as he does to Einstein’s general theory of relativity), but also that what he calls ‘the quest for beauty’ plays a significant role in scientific research. He has delivered a number of provocative lectures on this topic, collected and published in his book Truth and Beauty: Aesthetics and Motivations in Science. In his lectures, Chandrasekhar plays with two conceptions of beauty. The first equates beauty with truth, and hence takes the model of a watchmaker understanding the order and logic of the watch, and therefore appreciating its beauty. Scientists see beauty in their research when they can comprehend the order of nature, and make others understand that order through their theories and formulae.

His second conception of beauty is as something instinctively understood and aesthetically appreciated, and thus the opposite of the traditional scientific method. In writings by and discussions with great scientists, however, Chandrasekhar has found ample evidence to argue that it was frequently an illogical, and aesthetic, inclination that led them to their great discoveries. The great mathematician Ramanujan, for example, recorded a large number of formulae in notebooks that were not discovered until after his death. What fascinates Chandrasekhar about these formulae, however, is that at the time he wrote them down, Ramanujan could not have proven them. In other words, Ramanujan evaluated these formulae according to criteria other than logic and rational understanding. Chandrasekhar cites the German physicist Hermann Weyl as saying that he worked on a beautiful theory even when he knew it was false. Yet, Weyl’s beautiful but incorrect theory was later shown to be right according to quantum mechanics.

Leaving aside the more abstruse complications that can arise from Chandrasekhar’s discussion of science and beauty (does a scientific theory later proved wrong become ugly?), his central argument that science is not just rational research is an appealing and convincing one. Just as arts research is not immune to the rigours of the scientific method, surely scientists aren’t the cold, calculating beings we assume them to be. Even more promising, this suggests that art and science students can get along, and even understand each other’s work. As I write, research investigating the textual transmission of a classical work of literature (the Aeneid), using techniques usually applied to the evolution of DNA sequence, is almost complete. And, I am overjoyed to report, the work is being conducted by one student from science (a zoologist) and one student from arts (a classicist and linguist). Perhaps it is such collaborations that will give us the best of both worlds.

Erica Charters

“...this suggests that art and science students can get along.”

Erica is in her first year of a D.Phil in History of Medicine.
Angela Cohen investigates why so many of us are prepared to pay so much money for bottled water...

Dasani. It has kind of an Eastern, mystical, yogic ring to it. You can almost feel the wellness seeping into your veins as the cool, clear nectar trickles down your throat. According to Coca-Cola who bottle and distribute this wonder product, “Dasani complements all the good things: confidence, spontaneity, style, passion and joy. As basic as breathing, Dasani quenches thirst naturally and deliciously”. Need more spontaneity in your life? Lacking in confidence and style? And who amongst us couldn’t do with a bit more passion and joy? And the best thing about this gift to civilization? Let those swamis from Coke spell it out in their own inimitable style: “Dasani is vitally refreshing and abundantly available”. Well, they’re right about that...

It comes out of the taps in your home.

There was a bit of a hue and cry about this not long ago. Turns out that the original soft drink people were taking Thames Water’s finest, straight from the taps in their bottling factory, filtering it, and then, to improve the taste, reintroducing all the minerals that they’d just taken out. Oh, along with some highly toxic chemical derivatives. Oops. The product has since been withdrawn from the British market, and the folks of this fair isle are now deprived of the benefits of paying 95p per litre for tap water.

Of course, to be fair to Coke, they had also kindly removed all the bacteria, the cryptosporidium, the nitrates, the organic pollutants, the pesticides, and the heavy metals. Funny, you’d think that Thames water would have thought of that. Strikes me as quite a good marketing ploy, really. Drink our water folks – it won’t make you sick! I reckon people’d be prepared to pay for that. They do? Water rates, you say? Gosh, who knew.

So why is the bottled water market estimated to be worth over £12 billion worldwide, per year? Is there any point in forking out for the stuff off the shelves? Well first it pays to remember that not all bottled waters are created equal. Some come from springs, some are filtered through mineral deposits, the more beautiful the better, it seems, and some are just tap water, dolled up to a greater or lesser extent. So bearing all this in mind, I decided to put my scientific training to the test and find out if the stuff you pay for is...
worth the money, with the help of a handful of non-randomly selected volunteers found wandering the corridors in the Abraham building and a selection of non-randomly selected samples from Tesco’s. My intrepid testers braved extreme bladder strain to bring you folks the answers once and for all.

**The Results**

Overall, I hate to say it, but the Frenchies came out on top. Oh, well, at least we’ll always have Agincourt. But the big question, I know you’ve all been wondering … could our testers tell the difference between tap water and bottled? Well, actually, yes. In fact, the only thing that came out consistently worse than tap water, was Brita-filtered tap water, although one taster did rate both of these better than the bottled stuff. Of the also-rans, the Scots and the Cotswolds had their fans, and the stuff that’s been filtered through volcanoes, well, let’s just say, it tastes like it.

Was there a pattern with mineral content and taste, or are they all pretty much of a muchness? Well, another surprise here (although not to Coke), the higher the dry residue – the mineral content – the better the taste. Evian and Vittel have around 300 and 400 milligrams per litre, respectively, Volvic 130 mg, and the others somewhere in between.

So what’s the take home message here then? Well, if you’re keen on that real ‘pure’ flavour, a little less purity might be worth paying a bit extra for – between 30p and 70p a litre (depending on the size of the bottle) and look for a high ‘dry residue’ content.

On the other hand, if you like to think of yourself as a bit of a greenie, consider this: every year, 1.5 million tonnes of plastic is used to bottle the stuff, and 89 billion litres of bottled water worldwide are consumed outside their country of origin – think toxic chemicals, landfill, fossil fuels, emissions of greenhouse gases, you get the picture.

Finally, if you’re worried about the safety of your drinking water, remember this: there are more standards under European law that are applied to regulating tap water than there are aimed at the bottled water market. The water companies of England and Wales carried out 2.9 million tests on drinking water samples in 2002, of which 99.87% passed. And according to the Drinking Water Inspectorate, our very own Thames Water comes out of the list quite well. Personally, I reckon if it’s good enough for Coca-Cola…

**The Contenders**

2. *Volvic Natural Mineral Water.* “Fuels your volcanicity”
5. *Vittel Natural Mineral Water.* Filtered through “the beautiful protected Vosges region of France”
6. *Brita filtered water.* “Brita, it’s clear from the taste”
7. *Straight from the tap*
Lydia Mason takes a look at
The Meaning of Water

Beyond its obvious use for sustaining life through the physical and chemical processes of living things, water has many different meanings for different people at different times.

Throughout history, water has been both worshipped and feared. The Romans believed in the healing qualities of bathing in hot springs and mineralised water. The ancient Greeks made the first clocks not based on the observation of celestial bodies but by controlling the rate of water dripping through a hole (simple and effective but didn’t the sound of dripping water used to be a form of torture??). In the Muslim faith water is tied to the washing of hands and feet before entering a temple; in the Christian faith water is linked to the washing away of sins through baptism; for the Shuswap nation from British Columbia, Canada water is considered to have a spirit with which the elders converse and pray. But for many people water carries with it connotations of disease and impurity, since rivers and lakes are some of the best breeding grounds for harmful bacteria and viruses and likewise. The Thames in London, for example, was the source of some of the greatest outbreaks of cholera in Europe which killed thousands of people during the nineteenth century. Lack of access to sanitary water in economically developing countries is still one of the biggest killers, especially for children under the age of five. Water is also feared for its great power and unpredictability; sailors are particularly aware of the need to respect the sea. Likewise, the force of a tsunami (a fictionalised version can be seen in the new film “The Day After Tomorrow”...) is greatly feared in some vulnerable coastal areas.

But water means more to us than this. Water must be the single most ‘gazed-upon’ environment due to its mesmerising qualities: how many of us have been drawn in by the sheer power of a waterfall, amazed at the volume of water being forced off the edge of a cliff? How many of us have stared at a parched landscape and wondered what life it might support if only there was a larger source of water? And how many of us have been captivated by the stillness of a lake with a glassy surface mirroring the landscape surrounding it? Indeed, it was Narcissus of Greek mythology fame who fell in love with the beauty of his own reflection, only to see his image fracture and dissipate when he reached out to touch his mirror image. Various writers from Conrad to Schama have used rivers and water systems as an analogy for the lifeblood of man; they run through the heart of man and the world sustaining and breathing life into an otherwise parched environment.
But we do seem to have a special relationship with water – maybe it’s because we consume so much of it, or maybe it’s because thirst is a much more compelling state of need than hunger, or deprivation. Our bodies are, after all, composed mainly of water. Or maybe it’s because we drink so much of it, and we have such particular and individual opinions on the taste of water. There are even water tasting societies (imagine wine tasting, only without the cheese, and with different sources of water as opposed to different vintages or grapes) and believe it or not, there are even competitions where different bottlers compete for the title of ‘Best Water of the Year.’ Strange? Maybe so. But even stranger (especially when you consider that so many of us complain about the taste of our local water supply) is that municipal tap water suppliers also compete. And often win.

In fact, it is interesting that we automatically think bottled water is somehow better than tap water. Because in our minds water is this great, pure, refreshing thing, we are happy to trust the advertising since it reinforces our impressions and makes us enjoy consuming the product more. But bottled water labelling can be very misleading. For example, in the USA a case was brought against a bottled water company for advertising its product as ‘Spring Water’ with pictures of mountains and a lake on the label, when the water actually came from an industrial parking lot next to a hazardous waste site. However, the labelling was allowed because the water occasionally bubbled to the surface in an unpaved area next to the parking lot, and this fell into the definition of ‘spring water’. In many cases, bottled water is just bottled tap water, and even when it is mineral or spring water, it can often be no better for you than your average glass of tap water. Furthermore, water filters (such as the ubiquitous Brita filters) are advertised as a means of turning dirty old tap water into water suitable for drinking (indeed in North America, Brita filters are advertised as “turning tap water into drinking water”). The result is that the meanings we attach to different kinds of water under these circumstances are often engineered and controlled by the advertising companies.

So next time you’re at Dinacre or Lunchacre filling your little plastic cup with that cool refreshing liquid, take a few moments to ponder on the source and meaning of water...

LYDIA IS STUDYING FOR A DPHIL IN WATER POLITICS
To some the sky is a vast open space where the birds and the planes fly by. But to me, and many others, the sky is instead a giant playground and a place of much adventure.

And why is that? How come? You may ask. Well let me try to explain.

“So are you up to much this weekend?”

“I’m going gliding”

“What hang-gliding?”

“No, gliding. In gliders: they’re like a plane without an engine.”

Some are amazed, intrigued, curious, some even have tried it. Others are more scared or wary of what is to them unknown. But I love the sky and gliding through it. It is my escape. I would like you too to share in my adventure, so please read on and let me tell you about gliding!

Let me start by saying that gliding is so much more than just flying. Of course at first learning to fly is the main objective, but when the day comes and you fly for the first time on your own, there is still so much to learn. You have opened to door to a bigger adventure. Gliding is about understanding the sky and the weather around you and using it to climb, climb high in the sky and then using this height to travel forward crossing the countryside, maybe near, maybe far, going wherever you want to go.

The gliders themselves (the aircraft that is, not the person that is the glider pilot) come in a whole range of types. Some old, some new, some small, gliders with two seat and those with just one. From our lovely uni owned K8 - an old wood and fabric glider, climbs like a dream, easy to fly and forgiving. Ideal for the less experienced pilot. To the top of the range all-singing-all-dancing, brand new, gleaming white sailplanes. With their smooth and contoured design they will go for miles losing the minimum of height, sometimes you’d think they could go forever. They have gadgets and levers for all sorts of things; from showing the way to removing the splattered bugs from the wings! The one thing they all have in common is quietness: with no noisy engine gliding is quietest way to fly.

But having no engine the glider needs help to get into the sky and to stay there. Launching involves being towed by a light aircraft or by a winch. Being launched by a winch is an experience I can only compare to being on a rollercoaster. You climb about 1000 feet in under 30 seconds at an angle of 45 degrees! From there the glider loses height as it travels through the air eventually landing when all the height is gone. The aim of the glider pilot is not just to descend slowly but to find rising air, lift, in which we can soar and gain height so lengthen the flight. It is surprisingly easy to find rising air if you know where to look. All year round if there are hills nearby whenever the wind blow there is lift. When the wind comes to an obstacle such as a hill the air is pushed
up over it. If you fly in this rising air you climb, simple! After rising over the hill the air can also oscillate to give a wave-like pattern. In this wave lift gliders have climbed to great heights. But here in not very hilly Oxfordshire (in Bicester to be precise) this kind of lift is rare. What we dream of is what we have now: summer. The sun is our friend and we love summer because in the summer (and sometimes in the spring and autumn too) there are thermals. When the sun heats the ground it causes pockets of warm air to rise. This is a thermal. Soaring in thermals lets us to gain height so we stay flying for longer.

So to water? Do we like it? You probably think not. Rain is certainly our enemy and hail is even worse. All those little balls of ice hitting the glider can cause damage. But there is one form of water we love to see; clouds. Our favourite are those little fluffy ones, cumulus clouds. To the glider pilot clouds tell the story of the sky. They are the signposts to fun and adventure.

Remember the thermals I told you about? Frequently they are topped by little fluffy cumulus clouds telling us where to search for the much sort rising air. Using the cumulus to tell us where the rising air may be we can climb high, high into the sky and then this height can be converted into distance. Distance means we can travel across the country many hundreds of kilometres in a day, viewing the world from a whole new perspective. From up there the view is quite different. The houses and cars look like a child’s toys and the fields look like a patchwork quilt. It is a wonderful thing to see.

Having mastered the art of soaring and climbing and using the height to travel forward it is time to compete, to pit your skills against your fellow pilots. It is a race, a race around the sky. The course is set using landmark as turning points and after the gliders are all launched the race begins. For a race is what it is, but it is not the first one home who wins but the fastest! Racing round courses of several hundreds of kilometres speeds often average more than 100kph. With the final glide home often being at more than 200kph this really is racing!

With a DPhil to finish I’ve stopped looking out of the window up at the sky, but next time you do and you see small fluffy clouds look hard and you may see something flickering in the sun. For this maybe a glider soaring, off on its journey around the sky. And should you ever see someone just staring, longingly, into the sky, you will know what in their head they can see.

For I can say it no better than it has been said before:

__________________________

When once you have tasted flight, you will forever walk the earth with your eyes turned skyward, for there you have been, and there you will always long to return.

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Leonardo da Vinci (1452 - 1519)

Anne is in her third year of a DPhil in Plant Sciences. She is also the OU Gliding Club Captain.

Below: OU Gliding Club’s Astir taking a winch launch at the varsity match 2003
Linacre Hockey

As the red mist slowly lifts from the end of another hockey season, it’s time for Oxford’s groundsmen to nurse their scarred pitches into luscious cricket out fields; it’s time for players to bandage sticks adorned with more nocks than Richard Whitely’s bed post, and it’s time for captains to reflect on the past 9 months before descending into the annual summer spiral of Red Stripe and ennui.

The season has been one of rapid improvement as we have progressed from enthusiastically awful to swaggeringly stylish... well almost. An indication of this improvement can be seen in the results against a useful Balliol team, who topped our division, and in the first game of the season thrashed us 5-0, but who in our final game of the season, the first round of mixed cuppers, only managed to avoid penalty flicks by scoring from a very dubiously awarded last minute short corner to make the game 2-1.

As we haven’t won a game this season, I won’t bore you with the details of every hard-fought, out-numbered defeat. But I would, if I may, like to say a few words in tribute to the Jim Bowies and Davy Crocketts of our Alamo (or, perhaps more aptly, the Custers of our Little Bighorn); the men and women who’s determination against all the odds has moved me Cool Runnings, at which I regularly mew like a newborn. I can’t name you all by name but thanks to everyone who has played this season. The hard work and pain of the early games has paid off in the performances at the end, and, hopefully, we’ll cash in with a few victories next season.

I can’t wait.

By Dan Woollaston, who is taking a DPhil in Chemistry

Capoeira at Linacre

We started nervously. Nobody knew what they were doing, and nobody wanted to do anything that might annoy that really big and scary-looking black guy.

Fortunately, the aforementioned black guy is actually a very nice chap, and it wasn’t long before we were getting an idea of what Capoeira is all about, and everyone was willing to have a go.

Capoeira is a form of dance developed by African slaves in Brazil in the 18th Century. It is believed that the slaves were forbidden from practising martial arts, so in order to train their fighting skills they incorporated kicks and punches into their dance. Capoeira has now become popular world-wide as an alternative to other more ‘plain’ martial arts - with Capoeira, you get the music too!

By Daniel Gallichan. If you want to try Capoeira for yourself, Luis runs a class several times a week in Cowley (just behind Tesco’s). For more info, see www.abolicao.co.uk
Why go to the expense of buying brand new lingerie for a fad that will be over by Autumn?

Be part of the BIGGEST fashion craze this summer!

Simply cut round the dotted edges, slip down the rear of your trousers, and show off your fashionable garmenture!

Colour it in to your own taste*

- Crisp White
- Sensuous Noir
- Naughty Red
- Mucky Off-white
- Pretty in Pink?

*Serving suggestion