

# Comment & Analysis

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## A campus culture of drinking is at serious risk of extinction

Our current tabloid climate sensationalises and ruins events that are not without their merits

Finally, we have our own miniature Carnage to fret over. Not content with letting, first, *The Sun* (and shortly after every single other news outlet seeking some easy yellow journalism) dominate the stakes of questionable student drinking habits, the otherwise unheard of Langwith Punch is the perfect time for our University the chance to shine. "What a mess!" we'll say. Anybody over the age of forty will label the whole thing and anyone caught with an Apple VK in their hand a disgrace. At some point, someone will surely vomit on something dramatic. Maybe that Buddha statue. Central Hall has definitely been done.

But that'd be irresponsible: while he is required to strike a somewhat diplomatic tone, Langwith Chair Sam Ashfani still makes a good point in admitting that if people really want to drink to excess, they'll end up doing it outside of campus anyway. While there are undoubtedly welfare issues to contend with on campus, it is a relatively safe place regardless. A welfare issue on a quiet residential street is far more likely to lead to a night in the cells.

It is of course understandable that the University must protect itself. There is a careful balance that they must strike between operating a bar and operating a legal hazard. If the Langwith Punch event is indeed "threatening" the credibility of the license of The Courtyard then steps must be taken to protect itself.

As an idea, banning the event in order to protect the interests of the wider Langwith community is

questionable. As a college, it is not exactly famous in its modern incarnation for having a college spirit. If it takes an enormous college-wide social so as to keep it ticking by in some scant fashion, then perhaps the ugly side of a few drunks need be tolerated.

Criticism has even been levelled at Langwith JCRC members for being involved. YUSU Welfare Officer Ben Humphrys labelled the event as "irresponsible drinking" and pointed out the involvement of the committee members in it. These students are not paid for their JCR work and are charged with the unenviable task of keeping colleges viable at a time when many question the viability of the whole college system. It would be unreasonable for them to shove bottles in throats and demand they

drink, but situations are always far more complex than simplistic stereotypes of socials.

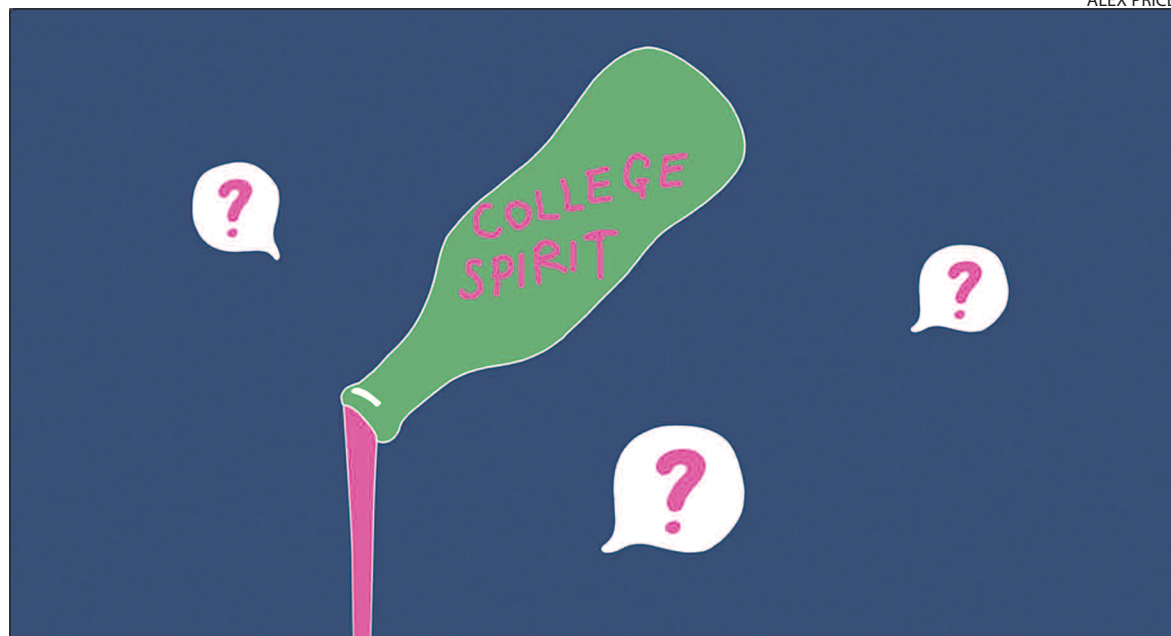
It seems unfair on the majority, that presumably do not lie face first in their own stomach contents post-punch, for the event to be banned. After managing to persist for 26 years it feels like a particular shame that an event could be cancelled. Will John Issitt, Langwith Provost, assist in replacing the event with something equally as good for promoting college unity, or has he made a snap decision in the aftermath of a bad one?

Langwith is not the only college that faces the potential of losing their traditions. Goodricke is in an entirely different location than six months ago, now more akin to a fancy Halifax than the

former site of accommodation dubbed as some of the worst on campus. While the University tried and failed to close Derwent Bar over summer, the future of an eternally hilarious campus perennial, Club D, was certainly not safe while things were more uncertain.

Unfortunately it is now far easier to stigmatise binge drinking in our current climate of sensationalism. When the tabloids found out that a student urinated on a war memorial, a reactionary public demanded those responsible for organising the event be immediately punished and we must be careful of avoiding the same fate. Langwith Punch held 26 years of tradition for the college, and the decision to kill it based on a climate of condescension for drinking is a shame.

ALEX PRICE



Hannah Brearley



## University diligence is severely lacking

Whichever way you look at it, £2.4 million is a lot of money to be throwing about. It seems even more when you're not getting the results you were paying so much for.

With all the time, money and effort being invested in the Hes East campus expansion, you'd think the University would investigate companies entrusted with contracts, particularly in the current financial climate. Instead, as contractor UCS Civils, charged with producing new roads and car parking, has gone into administration, we are left wondering if this is the case. Considering the amount of money at stake and the

inconvenience caused, the University has seriously neglected a responsibility to several thousand students and locals by failing to look into the company's background before taking them on.

So now construction is left in a state of limbo; work has halted while the University searches for a new contractor, resulting in increased and prolonged inconvenience for everyone in the area. Temporary roadworks disliked by students and locals will remain longer than anyone hoped, and once again, Heslington East risks being more trouble than it's worth.

Thankfully, the money has not been lost; the University wisely

protected itself in the contract with the defunct company.

Time is being wasted due to congestion and incomplete works.

"spending money without checking what you're getting is thoughtless"

It may not be a critical issue compared with global warming, but this situation could have been

avoided by a few checks into the company's background. Would they employ a lecturer without looking into their academic credentials or employment history? Hopefully not. Therefore, why didn't they ask a few simple questions of UCS Civils?

Such information is not difficult to find, and sheds considerable light on the company's financial trouble. For example, 2008 was the first year UCS Civils had made a profit since 2003, while their parent company failed in even this. If the University had known, would they still have done business with them?

The facts do not inspire con-

fidence, and perhaps would have led the University to look elsewhere. Due to poor planning, we are stuck with incomplete roads causing delays and traffic.

I'm sure that when the new roads are eventually finished they will be extremely useful. However, spending money without checking what you're getting is thoughtless; spending money like that when the project will cause significant disruption is neglectful.

Hopefully, the University has learned a lesson in this. Perhaps the next contractor hired will be of sounder financial footing, and will gladly complete a frustratingly unfinished job.