



Student Activities Zone

Tuesday 29th of November 2019, 4:30 pm

TW/107

Chair

Tim Holmes – President of the Student Union (TH)

YSJSU Staff/Officers

Jenny Marchant – President of Education (JM), Brad Ford – Bar and Events Coordinator (BF), Harriet Stainton (HS), Paul Murtough – Student Opportunities Manager (PM), Zaki Kaf Al-Ghazal – Student Voice Coordinator (ZK)

Members in attendance

51 members were in attendance

1. Welcome and Introduction
2. To receive any items for Any Other Business

Section A: items for Discussion

3. Old Johns BILLY
4. Sports and Socs dinner HARRIET
5. Societies Showcase
6. Varsity
7. SU Bar



Old Johns

Clubs/Societies represented:

- Dance
- Hockey
- Muay Thai
- MPS
- Volleyball
- Rowing
- Rugby Union
- Swimming
- Basketball
- Football
- English literature
- Netball
- Singing
- Drama
- Running



Most clubs/societies (C/S) have responsibility for contacting former students and inviting them back for old Johns, this has mixed results. C/S such as rowing, basketball and dance have typically had a good number of returning former students, although many of these alumni will only be from the last 5 years with very few alumni from before this. Other C/S have really struggled with getting former students to return, women's football have not had a single former student return in the last few years, netball had just 2 alumni come back in 2018. Other C/S societies such as English Literature and Muay Thai are quite young so it's harder to get numbers back. Others struggle due to not having good enough contact links with former students.

The consensus across most C/S is that the biggest barriers to bringing alumni back has been lack of organisation around Old Johns and lack of communication. There was a clear feeling that committee members need to be made aware of dates and plans for Old Johns much earlier – the earlier the better for most people. Many people need to make sure they have enough notice to take time off work and some clubs also need a lot of notice to make sure they can book facilities/pitches to use during old Johns where YSJ doesn't have its own facilities, such as Hockey pitches and swimming pools etc. Information about actual fixtures also needs to be communicated more clearly in terms of dates/time and venue, some of this in the past has not been directly communicated with clubs at all or has been at very short notice.

Communication with alumni is also a significant barrier, which is heavily reliant on individuals from each C/S having contact with former students. Most promotion now seems to be through word of mouth.

In terms of improving communications almost all C/S suggested that using social media was key – especially in terms of communicating with current students. Most C/S have their own presence on a platform, and if clear communication comes from the Uni/SU to each C/S then this can be relayed more clearly to C/S members via social media. Email was also suggested an important tool for communication, especially with former students who may have lost touch with their club. There was a strong feeling though that the new student app would probably not be suitable at the moment for helping to communicate with students, as not enough people are using it regularly for it have a significant impact. The app is still new however and as use of the app becomes more commonplace in future years this might change.

There was a suggestion from one of the tables about sending out physical post cards as a means of promoting Old Johns to former students could help. Perhaps this is something that could be thought about for Old Johns 2021, where something could be included when the main alumni magazine is posted out in Summer 2020? It was also suggested that more could be done to utilise the TV screens both in the SU and across the sider campus to promote old Johns to current students.

Each C/S has previously planned quite different activities around old Johns too. Many sports clubs will try and arrange fixtures where possible, but this is not always easy, especially if numbers are low. Other C/S have opted to instead plan a training session, evening meal, or night out in York. This isn't really an issue though as most C/S feel that the flexibility to plan what they think is best for their individual C/S is essential in making Old Johns feel more personal and not too regimented.

SU capacity has also been cited as problem with recent Old Johns. A few C/S explained that they have arrived at the SU over Old Johns to find long queues to get in and the venue so full that they



have had to go somewhere else. The general consensus is that we should try to keep as much of the social side of Old Johns on campus as possible, which should involve looking at the possibility of opening up pop up bars in other YSJ spaces such as Temple hall or the canteen to help cope with numbers. The upstairs of the SU should be open too and more bar staff is possibly needed to manage queues for drinks. It was also mentioned that Old Johns has in the past coincided with £1 a pint in the SU and that these should not be scheduled over the same weekend.

Most C/S felt that March is still the best time to plan Old John's. Although this does coincide with a particularly busy part of the year for third years who are writing dissertations, many felt that with plenty of notice this wouldn't be an issue, and that actually it is a welcome break from academic work during that busy period.

When asked to imagine themselves 3-4 years after leaving YSJ what would bring them back to YSJ for Old Johns most people said that the opportunity to reconnect with old friends would be the main thing that would interest them. There were plenty of suggestions from people on what the 'perfect' old Johns would look like for them, this included creating more of a buzz/atmosphere, possibly like a festival with live entertainment, perhaps like how archies feels. There were suggestions of having food stalls on campus during the day and the sports hall open with summer fair/carnival type games, and other activities that everyone could take part in. live entertainment would be a good idea too. Perhaps easter archies and Old Johns could be combined to create one big event? The day activities should be fully accessible while evening can be more 'student life' focussed.

C/S were very welcome to idea of trying to encourage wider range of alumni to return and be involved with Old Johns. Most C/S felt that what was needed in the first instance was to try and open a dialogue with former students to get an idea of what sort of activities should be planned for each individual C/S rather than try to create a set plan and then invite alumni to come and take part in that. The main feeling was there needs to be a good balance between the SU/Uni providing the infrastructure/space and general foundations for Old Johns to take place, but then to have the flexibility for each C/S to plan their own activities that can be tailored to their own members and former members. This more personal/bespoke approach is likely to have positive impact on encouraging more people to return.

Some C/S felt that the idea of incorporating a more competitive feel into Old Johns would be a positive thing, but would take a long time to implement properly and would probably have to start with just a handful of C/S who can guarantee numbers for it work. The idea of taster sessions was generally thought to not be good idea due to lack of interest for returning students, although almost all C/S societies would be open to putting sessions like on if there was enough interest. It was suggested that putting in dedicated times/space for people from specific graduation years or programmes to meet up would be good as alumni would know they have the chance to meet people from their time/programme. Names of people attending should also be public before the event so alumni can see who is attending. They will be more likely to come if they see people they know who else is going.

Key points:

- Old Johns should generally be developed to become a larger and more diverse event
- Advertising Old Johns needs to be much earlier, the earlier the better



- Communication should include better use of social media and email, both to current students and alumni
- Organisation needs to be clearer and directly communicated with clubs/societies better
- Inviting more alumni via the alumni office is good. The focus of this should be to enable alumni to directly contact their appropriate clubs/societies
- Trying to keep as much of Old Johns activity on YSJ campus is important. Using additional spaces on campus would help relive some of the pressure on the SU bar
- Each club/society should have complete flexibility for planning their own activities which should be done in dialogue with former students



Sports and Socs Dinner

A number of questions were posed by HS. They are as follows:

How do you find the running order?

- No complaints
- Good
- Keep awards at the end of the meal
- Lots of people missed out on photos because of crowds
- Works well
- Goes smoothly
- Keep awards at end of meal
- Maybe have awards spaced between courses
- Can get rowdy with people not listening to awards

What do you like/dislike?

- *LIKE* – Venue. Idea of event. Photobooth. Nice on a hot day as there's lot of shade.
- *DISLIKE* – Drink prices. Poor photography. Unaware of food choices. Portion size of food. Quite strict with where you can stand at the racecourse.

What extras would you like to see at the dinner?

- Party poppers on the tables as well as favours and gifts.
- Table wine.
- Roaming photographer.
- Balloon arch.
- Better transport to the event.
- Firewords.
- Carnival games.
- Photoboosts.
- Rodeo bull.

Would you like live music on arrival or a band instead of a DJ?

- *Slower live music whilst eating.*
- *Live band at the start, DJ towards the end.*
- *DJ with requests after.*
- *Performance societies to be involved.*
- *Live band with range of songs.*
- *Band is a waste of money*
- *DJ at the end of the night.*



Do you still want it separate in 2021?

- *Yes.*
- *Yes – awards would be too long otherwise.*
- *Yes, keep the awards list short.*
- *Yes, chaotic enough as it is and it is separate.*
- *Nice to mix so perhaps not.*
- *Maybe at a bigger venue it would be nice to mix.*
- *Yes as there are too many people.*



Societies Showcase

Various sports and societies were spoken to on the evening by TH. His conversations with them are included below:

- Women's Football: A sports group increasing in size. They don't feel as valued as bigger clubs and more could be done in terms of communication. They would like better training times and to be seen as on par with male football. A club captain meet up would be beneficial.
 - Netball: More can be done in terms of communication. Unaware of some of the SU events. They would like to see more SU updates on social media. Training times can be a problem. A club captain (and vice club captain) meet up would be beneficial. They would also like a social sec.
 - English Lit: As a new society they feel communication from the SU could be better.
 - Hockey: They would like to see more promotion of their fixtures.
 - Rowing: They suffer from a lack of funding. Transport to rivers can be an issue. Alternative funding would help. They stated that their support during varsity was better this year.
 - Swimming: They feel like they are sometimes not wanted and not taken seriously. They would like to be prioritised more and feel more supported by the SU.
 - Rugby Union: They feel that they should receive more communication from the SU. They feel that monthly catch-ups would be of benefit.
 - Drama: They feel secondary to MPS. They are not happy with room bookings and complain of poor facilities.
 - MPS: Room bookings can be an issue and would like them to be improved. Communication should be better.
 - Volleyball: Communication can be better. The bus doesn't fit everyone and they feel they are secondary to netball. Membership fees are high.
 - Singing: Would like more promotion of their events as they claim that bigger societies get more of the limelight. Would like more focus on accreditation.
 - Muay Thai: Would like a presence in Varsity. They stated that room bookings are better now than they were in the past and communication is broadly good.
 - Running: They feel broadly supported during events but feel that sport at the SU is still understaffed.
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- Everyone agrees that a committee of all club captains to update each other and interact on issues facing them would be a good idea. And perhaps a meeting for every equivalent role (vice chairs etc) to meet on a monthly basis.



Varsity

What would help the atmosphere?

Students generally felt that the SU should focus on community engagement, increasing participation from residents and students.

When did you hear about varsity?

In response to this student felt that there were delayed communications for varsity but understood that some of this was out of our own control.

What does varsity mean?

Members felt that Varsity generally reflects an opportunity for clubs to compete against a fellow institution resulting in a 'party' and presentation of results.

Did you play previous tournaments against Lincoln/Leeds?

Not all in attendance have competed against both institutions but those that had felt that Lincoln provided more competition and Leeds limits opportunities for teams to take part.

How would you encourage participation?

Club members felt that they wanted to participate in more than just their fixtures but weren't sure where and when other matches were taking place and commuting between Haxby and campus can be difficult. It was suggested that transport be organised between the venues.

What else can we do for varsity?

Students felt that it would be a good idea to revamp the SU and have the institution on board with the event. It was also discussed about time frames and potentially moving to a semester two varsity, with some considering it to be a good opportunity to be a tri-varsity.



The SU Bar

The following are the notes taken from the different groups:

Group 1

- ❖ All clubs like to use the Coffee Lounge on Wednesday evenings for socials but do so they have the space to play drinking games. Those that don't use it tend to be societies who prefer different style events for their socials e.g. English Lit Society book an exclusive space at The Habit which is less noisy so that they can read poetry.
- ❖ Coffee Lounge is an easy place to meet and a good space to use.
- ❖ Women's Football use the Coffee Lounge for things like 'Freshers Factor' – more event styled pre-drinks than drinking games
- ❖ Other spaces they use are The Graduate (because they offer deals like 4 pints for £10), House parties (for ease), Revs (sponsorship, occasional exclusivity) and The Habit for reasons already mentioned.

- ❖ They enjoy Pound a Pint and the Quiz
- ❖ Would be up for 'club' style nights at the SU but they believe that it would need a lot of advertisement so that people know it is happening.
- ❖ Would like to see the Quiz on regularly, events like Bongo's Bingo but also like to use the SU on nights where they don't want an event on, quiet nights/drinks with friends.

- ❖ Would come in on a Sunday if it was open

Group 2

- ❖ Use the space already but when they don't it is due to the fact that it's already booked and unavailable.
- ❖ Don't care if they have exclusivity of the room
- ❖ For specific socials they would like to run they would want them to be exclusive only
- ❖ Would possibly use the CL to host certain events for socials

- ❖ They enjoy Pound a Pint because of the cheap drinks deals as well as the atmosphere that is created



- ❖ In order to improve downstairs on Saturday nights they suggested introducing pool tables and social aspects but noted that some people prefer downstairs as they have the quieter chilled out atmosphere
- ❖ They enjoy the open mic nights, but they don't feel like open mic as they are not good for new people trying to get involved.
- ❖ Only use the Coffee Lounge for joint socials
- ❖ Prefer 2 for 1 pints deals on a Wednesday as opposed to doubles for singles, only really go in for socials and prefer having a greater volume of drink. They also mention that they would like more promotion of what the deals that are on are.
- ❖ Don't stay around for as long due to speed of service and lack of space, would prefer upstairs to be open as it would be on a Saturday so that there's more space.

Group 3

- ❖ Only book out the Coffee Lounge on Wednesday's for special occasions
- ❖ Only usually stay for one drink on Wednesday's because it's hard to get a seat
- ❖ Global Café love using the space, think it works really well for what they use it for
- ❖ Reasons why they don't come in/stay longer are due to speed of service and lack of seating but they would be more likely to stay on Wednesday's if the Coffee Lounge was open to everybody
- ❖ Would be open to sharing the Coffee Lounge for socials but it would be hard to share the room with some clubs due to the size/would be difficult to compete in terms of noise so organising the room/club to do things wouldn't be practical.

- ❖ Enjoy the Quiz but it hasn't been on as often as they would like
- ❖ Think Pound a Pint is a good event because it is cheap but also, they really like the environment and atmosphere on the night
- ❖ Think that the bar needs to do a better job of advertising drinks deals, still unaware of what deals are on when
- ❖ Don't like that there is a minimum spend on card – think it's weird that they can spend money everywhere else on campus on card without a minimum but when they come in to the bar they have to spend a minimum.

- ❖ Would like there to be food at the SU, they think it would make them spend more time and treat it more as a social space rather than only somewhere they can go to drink if they are going out.
- ❖ When told about all the things we can offer e.g. beer pong tables, poker tables, etc. they said that they were interested but had no idea that they could use them/that we had them in the first place.

Group 4

- ❖ Think cheap but with bigger volume cocktails would work better than 'premium' cocktails like you would get at a slug and lettuce, revs, etc.
- ❖ Max they would pay is £5

- ❖ Would be open to the idea of coming in on a Sunday to watch the sports on the TV, think that would work well with the other social space ideas such as having cards, boardgames available to play.



- ❖ If food was offered, they would like it to be sharer style food, quantity and cheap over quality
- ❖ Didn't know that we ran a weekly pub quiz, feel it needs to be promoted more
- ❖ Enjoy Pound a Pint but it can get repetitive
- ❖ Want to see more promo for drinks deals so that they know what is on offer, introduced the idea of having more promo information around the bar such as a promo board in like a pub a-board style

- ❖ Ideas for other potential events are games nights, something for quieter people.
- ❖ Speed Quizzes, like seen in other pubs. Prefer broader quizzes to themed but recognise that themes are easier to promote so would prefer a 'geek quiz' or similar where you can combine things like Harry Potter and Star Wars as opposed to quizzes with one theme. Overall, they would prefer just having it run as a normal 'pub quiz'

- ❖ All of them use the space as it is currently, primarily on socials they will use it to play drinking games but because of how they run their social nights, they wouldn't stay later as they run their pre-drinks as a pub crawl.

Group 5

- ❖ Like current events that we run, particularly the quiz but would like it to be on more regularly and others said that they didn't know we did a weekly quiz so needs more advertisement.
- ❖ Want us to contact them directly with what is going on at the SU

- ❖ Would come in on a Sunday as they would like there to be a 'social space' available to them on those days
- ❖ Would like Sports on on a Sunday but more than just football
- ❖ Sharing type foods would work well with this type of 'event' as they think they would stay around for longer – having food would definitely make them more likely to come in.

- ❖ Would like cocktails as they offer a good alternative to pints – would pay £5 for a megacup style cocktail
- ❖ Think mega cup style cocktails will work better as they want quick service & volume

- ❖ Would like Strongbow back – even if not on Pound a Pint

Section B: Items to Note

None

Section C: Any Other Business

None

