

OUSGG – Another
year gone



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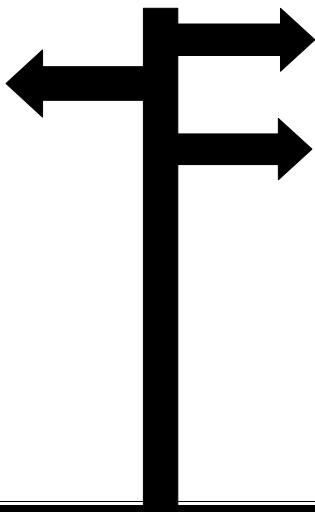
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What else do you need?
- Half Marathon
With a difference

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Trinity term

Welcome back to this bang on time second week issue!

Since last time, Annual Dinner has been and gone and other things may have happened. Or they might not have.

Apologies for the delay to this issue, but as I haven't even seen Dr. Who yet at least my excuses seem to hold up!

For any old members reading, the name of the Old Members rep has been replaced below, so do be sure to get in touch.

It's also worth pointing out that although Annual Dinner has occurred, its currently secret [under the 1989 Official Secrets Act] and so there is very little info on it in here.

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All items received will be presumed for publication unless otherwise notified. The editor reserves the right to modify contributions.

Contributions should be received by the Friday preceding the date of publication. Articles received after this time may be included or included in a later publication.

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Chair's Report

Hello,

I am a chair and I live in Shell and Luke's flat. I've heard its been a good term so far and that despite best attempts, no-one has died. I would have come to the meetings but I have no arms or feet and neither Shell nor Luke will take me with them when they go. I miss having meetings in their flat. At least I've turned up to every NnN though. I've written a poem for you all:

There once was a Chair named Lizzy,
Who was always so awfully busy,
She wrote no report,
As she wasn't the sort,
So Geoff threw a gigantic tizzy.

Yours,
A chair



What's On?

- Monday 1st Week – Aunt Sally
 - 19:30, Folly Bridge Inn
- Monday 2nd Week – Playstation and Pizza Night
 - 19:00, Daubeny Building, Magdalen College
- Monday 3rd Week – Obscure Scientific Minutiae
 - 19:30, Morley-Fletcher Room, Worcester College
- Monday 4th Week – Punting
 - 19:00, Magdalen Bridge
- Monday 5th Week – Sporing
 - 19:00, Magdalen College
- Monday 6th Week – Rocky Horror Show
 - 19:00, New Theatre
- Monday 7th Week – Icecream Crawl
 - 19:00, TBC
- Monday 8th Week – TGM and BBQ
 - 19:00, Angel & Greyhound Meadow
- Monday 9th Week – Film night
 - 19:00, Cheney Common Room

Silverstone Half-marathon - 14 March 2010

Phil Alderton

'If a man wants to know what it is to have every bone in his body ache with fatigue, every muscle sore and exhausted, and his whole body ready to sink to the ground, let him diet on a common soldier's fare till he has only the strength that imparts, and then let him shoulder his knapsack, haversack, gun and equipments, and make one of our forced marches, and I will warrant him to be satisfied that the duties of war are stern and severe, whether we march or face the enemy on the field of battle'

Private Wilbur Fisk, 2nd Vermont, June 1864

13.1 miles? Easy. I've done hikes with OUSGG that were longer than that, and on far more difficult terrain than a smooth tarmac racetrack. What, I thought, would it matter that I wouldn't be wearing my trusted outdoor kit and comfortable hiking boots, but instead have on layers of heavy wool, Victorian style boots, and carrying just under 4.5 kilos' worth of 1853 pattern Enfield musket? It turned out to be one of the toughest challenges I've done.

We arrived at Silverstone early and after getting our packs and accoutrements (belts, cartridge and cap boxes, the canteen and the haversack) on we set off to the 'paddock' area where all the 10,000 or so runners and their supporters were to wait until the start of the half-marathon. One side was full of stalls advertising fitness stuff, group warm-up sessions, and suchlike, whilst the other contained healthier fare such as burger vans.

We spent around an hour hanging around near the 'two hours or longer' gate, occasionally posing for photographs from bemused passers-by. We seemed to attract some attention and we even received a mention on the track's public address system with the people manning it playing 'When Two Tribes Go to War' in our honour (I tried not to visibly cringe). A woman asked me why we 'had a civil war theme'. My unhelpful response was that we were a troop of American Civil War re-enactors.

Eventually the time came for us to wander over to the lane leading to Silverstone's famous starting grids. We were to be right at the back, and after ten thousand or so runners had disappeared we proudly set off in formation. We kept step for the first mile or so, with the drums and fife playing loudly. We must have looked impressive. For most of the time we were in formation but not required to keep step or ('route step') though occasionally we would reform and march a little way to get the group back together. We spent the entire half-marathon around 700 yards behind a man dressed as a giraffe: we never caught up with him.

Although the team had got together for a training event in late January, in the run-up to the event I undertook a couple of long hikes in full kit (without the musket and bayonet, for tedious reasons). I'm glad I did so as I realised that I had to adjust the straps on the accoutrements and it was good get a feel for how the brogans and uniform feels over a long distance. More importantly, I also tried different ways of packing the knapsack to ensure it was comfortable on my shoulders: the secret, I found, was to move the blanket to the large pocket closest to the back, as that provided extra padding.

For the record, I was carrying the issue blanket, my rubber poncho, spare shirts,

drawers, and socks (the latter a gift from a kind officer at an event in Kentucky who had decided that there was no wool in England and presented them to me during a full inspection), a deck of cards, a period handbook for the US volunteer, and a copy of a period newspaper. I now appreciate why the men would ditch the packs at the first opportunity and take only what they could carry. I thought I had got my kit down to the essentials, but most of the stuff probably could have been chucked. I haven't weighed it, but it felt like the usual size pack I would take on a normal hike, although it lacked the comfort of modern designs.

I had plenty of rations in my haversack, but they tended to drop to the bottom and it became a bit of a faff to reach them. I kept slugging from the canteen and was glad for the water and energy drinks thrust into our hands at various points on the route. The only thing that was bothering me throughout the trek, other than the unavoidable sensation of blisters, was that I didn't really know what to do with the musket. I tried slinging it or going to the various positions, even port arms, but never really settled down with one except when required to. It wasn't too heavy (it was an Enfield) but just a bit awkward.

The charity had provided us with a serving Army PT sergeant to accompany us along the way. We were all really impressed by his fitness: at some points during the march he was not only carrying a full bergen but one or two people's muskets and kit. He would also tend to blisters and generally could be seen running up and down our line ensuring that everyone was well. When he got bored of us he would shift his attention to any runners who happened to be nearby. I don't know what they made of him, but we certainly couldn't have done it without his encouragement.

From time to time he would have us going at the double-quick or making short shuffle-like movements (called the Brecon shuffle) to get the leg muscles working again. As the miles went by, these short bursts became more and more painful to do but they seemed to do the trick. I think he appreciated our cursing him. He told us that he always tells his recruits that 'love or hate' him, they will always remember him. We certainly will.

Around the nine mile mark, when most of us were hurting and feeling miserable, the PT sergeant suggested we start singing, so I started yelling out the 'Battle Cry of Freedom' and everyone joined in, at least for the chorus. Encouraged, we also went through 'Marching through Georgia' and 'Goober Peas', with everyone yelling out their unit's name in the third verse (I muttered "13th Oxford!" at that point).

As the finish line approached we hastily formed a somewhat flaky line of battle and proudly crossed the finish 3 hours 37 minutes after we set off. Relieved that it was finally over, we put on our medals, posed for photographs, relaxed, and built ourselves up for a slow mile long trek back to the car park.

It was the aftermath of the half-marathon, however, that none of us had prepared for. Although we were wearing heavy wool uniforms, we all felt a sudden, rapid, loss of body heat as a result of finishing. I now understand why marathon runners wrap themselves up in shiny foil blankets upon finishing. None of us had packed extra clothing with us, so we shivered our way back to our base at the Stratford Armouries, where a full lamb

roast was laid on in our honour.

Has this 13.1 mile march improved my understanding of the life of a Union infantryman? Frankly, no. A crisp English spring day is not the baking Southern summer, and we were marching on a full stomach, knowing that we would not be thrown into battle at the end of it. Moreover, we were on hard tarmac and not a small muddy trail. Having said that, however, I now appreciate why knapsacks were emptied out and then disposed of, and why men would drop out, take a break, and then dash to rejoin their company. I'd read about that in books, but now I realise why: a rest or a change of pace helps alleviate the pain on the legs. I just kept on going and felt awful at the end; other members of the team took short breaks and looked happier as a result.

It's the toughest thing I've done for a few years. It was not, as I had imagined it would be, just a decent-length hike in different clothes to my usual hiking kit. On the OUSGG standard measure of misery, it scores around 0.96 *Tour-de-Trigs*. We kept up a fair pace, we were, for the most part, roughly in line, the various straps for my packs and accoutrements chafed like hell, and most of us were wearing stiff brogans which weren't really suited to tarmac. The soles of my new pair are looking pretty worn already. We were all physically exhausted afterwards, all our feet were steaming from blisters, and even with a decent meal and generous tab at the bar it was an effort to stay awake. But we succeeded in completing the half-marathon, and we've raised around £6,800 for the Army Benevolent Fund. All of us in the team are justly proud of what we've accomplished.

Finally, eternal thanks to the many OUSGGers who generously donated: it was excellent to have see so many familiar names on the list!



QuoteScript

Maddy: "I'm just one of those women who takes their clothes off".

Lizzy: "You're the person I slept with".

Sarah C: "I do animals".

Geoff: "I'm sure stuff will come up at some point".

$\langle \psi | \text{Beer} | \psi \rangle$

By James Baker

Quantum Physics is famously a hard thing to grasp. As Richard Feynman said, "I think I can safely say that nobody understands quantum mechanics." Or, in the words of PZ Myers, "Quantum as a prefix is almost universally used to signify that the noun it modifies is about to be made crazy stupid".

So I thought I'd take some time to try and explain Quantum Physics through the medium of beer. And yes, this article was conceived in a pub. And yes, I have tested this theory. Extensively. Though I believe ongoing research into the matter is a necessity.

One of the key results of Quantum Physics is that, until you know for certain what state something is in, it exists in all possible states. I'm sure you've all heard of Schrödinger's cat - who is both alive and dead whilst it's hidden in the box; and only by opening the box do we know for sure whether we should bother nipping down to Tesco to pick up some more cat litter.

Beer in a tankard (or a can) can be thought of in much the same way. Until you've observed how much beer is left, there is both no beer and a whole tankard full. But, of course, observing the beer in a tankard isn't that easy because you can't see through a tankard. Instead, we have to find a different way of observing it - the most logical of which is to try drinking it.

Upon drinking the beer, we discover instantly whether or not there is still beer in the tankard. For a fleeting moment, we know for certain whether or not we need to find our wallets and buy the next round. But, the certainty only lasts briefly.

Once the beer is no longer in contact with your lips, the tankard reverts to being both at once empty and full. The only way of establishing whether there is still beer left in the tankard once it's parted your lips, is to once again bring it back to your lips and "observe" the beer once more.

And what happens if you find the tankard is actually empty? Well, put the tankard back on the table, and once again there's a chance there is beer in it (commonly this situation

is fully realised when it's someone else's round).

Still struggling to get your head round all of this? I recommend heading down to your local and trying it out for yourselves. It can take a bit of getting used to, so be prepared to spend many hours there pondering over it. And I recommend going as soon as possible, because unless you're actually there drinking the beer, there's a chance the pub doesn't actually have any beer!

So, there we have it. Quantum Physics and Beer - the perfect combination. And I think I can safely say that still nobody understands Quantum Mechanics.

Disclaimer: Claiming that there might still be beer left in the tankard does not count as an excuse for not buying your round. Such behaviour is likely to result in a mob of angry Physicists descending on you and continually observing the lack of beer by bashing the tankard over your head.

Constitutional Amendment

Proposed by: James Baker

Seconded by: Luke Cartey

We propose to add the following to the constitution:

1.c. The activities of the Society will at all times be conducted in accordance with the following university policies and codes of practice in force from time to time: Integrated Equality Policy, Code of Practice on Harassment and Bullying, and Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

This is being added to meet the requests of the Proctors, who, from Michaelmas 2010, require our constitution to include this clause if we want to be registered with the University.

Annual Dinner



This is proof it happened – more details and Flossy to follow next issue!