



SORDID SOARAWAY
TWENTY YEARS OF BRIG
 1969-1989

BRIG WAS LAUNCHED IN 1969, two years after the first intake of students to Stirling University. In those early years, BRIG was sufficiently well-funded to cover the costs of type-setting and its own advertising agency, and therefore looked every inch the official organ of SUSA, in form if not in content. Early BRIGs carried a cover-price of around 6d, and the paper was produced in Pathfoot while the final touches were being put to the Cottrell building, and the campus was a muddy building site.



"Brig" prints exclusive pictures of 'Charities' Queen contestants in this week's issue.



Since then, in days when BRIG was held in high enough regard to head the agenda of the first ever General Meeting, BRIG has been relegated to a lower league of Association priorities, and the steady reduction in funds allocated to it sees its grant today standing at £1250 - not very much. This derisory sum is in part a reflection of the attitude of previous Association leaders towards BRIG. Since it has usually adopted an anti-establishment stance in accordance with the often inept way that SUSA postholders have gone about their duties, BRIG has come to be regarded as something of a thorn in the flesh of the bureaucrats. This fact runs contrary to the opinions expressed in the few 'independent' publications which have appeared over the years, such as ARGOS, TIN DRUM and THE ALLOA AND HILLFOOT ADVERTISER.

"ALMOST ALL OF WHAT APPEARS IN BRIG IS WRITTEN ON THE UNSTATED ASSUMPTION THAT ALL UNIVERSITY POLICY IS BAD... IT IS THE APPARENT INTENTION OF THE WRITERS THAT MOST STUDENTS SHOULD EVENTUALLY COME TO ACCEPT THIS ASSUMPTION WITHOUT QUESTION. FOR EXAMPLE, MY LETTER ASKING THE CSA NOT TO DISRUPT THE ROYAL VISIT WAS DISMISSED IN BRIG ON THE GROUNDS THAT ALL STUDENTS COULD SEE THROUGH IT. WHAT THEY COULD SEE THROUGH IT WAS NOT EXPLAINED."

T.M. COTTRELL, PRINCIPAL, 28.11.72

constitutes a wider and more representative picture of the times. The impression given by a browse through twenty years of student 'journalism' is not, as one might have been entitled to think, that fashions in student politics or outlooks have changed, but rather that things have followed a fairly consistent pattern. While clothes, hairstyles, musical tastes and the availability of drugs have ebbed and flowed as a barometer of changing times and attitudes, reflected in the pages of BRIG, we find the same old preoccupations recurring down the years.

"THERE APPEARS TO BE AN ALMOST TOTAL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING BY ITS (BRIG'S) WRITERS AND EDITORS OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS, PARTICULARLY IN RELATION TO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'FAIR COMMENT' AND 'LIBELLIOUS ABUSE'."

THE ROYAL YOUNG ENQUIRY INTO STIRLING UNIVERSITY, 1973.

Attendance at, and involvement in, such functions was evidently lacking, a fact that may go some way to exploding the myths that SUSA was once a hot-bed for like-minded revolutionary activists hatching plots by day and packing the Grange out from 'gm every single night.

"THE UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING IS IN DEBT TO THE TUNE OF £15. THEY STILL HAVE NOT PAID THE BILL FOR AN ADVERTISEMENT PLACED IN BRIG LAST YEAR ON BEHALF OF THE ROYAL YOUNG ENQUIRY."

BRIG SAYS, VOL V, NO. 5, 1973

No, it would seem that SUSA never really realised its full potential as the nerve centre of the lefty revolution, despite coming close on a few fleeting occasions. And BRIG never got the chance to become the mouthpiece of actual insurrection, although its throats were very real.

"DEAR EDITOR, WE FEEL THAT BRIG IS THE IDEAL MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH TO EXPRESS OUR TUMID DISPLEASURE WITH THE MANNER IN WHICH INTERFERENCES IS BEING HANDLED THIS SEMESTER."

LETTERS, VOL VI, NO. 2, 1974

It would appear that inordinate General Meetings, disenchantment with sabbaticals and petty internal squabbling, not to mention right-wing idiots and expensive beer, are by no means exclusively modern-day

"BRIG WAS CALLED BRIG AFTER THE BRIDGE ACROSS THE LOCH, AND THE NAME WAS SUPPOSED TO FORMALISE A LINK BETWEEN THE STUDENTS IN PATHFOOT, AND THE ADMINISTRATION IN COTTRELL."

EDITORIAL, 15.9.75

phenomena. Uh-oh. Self-seeking careerist perks have been frying the heads of anyone with even a passing interest in the welfare and potential of SUSA for over twenty years now.

Radio Airthrey, meanwhile, was always "potentially the most important medium for the campus population", while, because of "technical difficulties", broadcasting to as many people as the DJs took up to the studio at any given time. UFA remains, to this day, somewhere behind the menu in Maisie's and the stickers from the last election campaign which still adhere to doors on campus in terms of importance. But I guess the potential will always be there, and the day-trips are good.

External political campaigns have come and gone through successive Tory and Labour governments, although old favourites appear

"WELL, I THINK THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT THAT ARCHITECTURE DOES AFFECT OUR LIVES IN ALL SORTS OF SUBTLE WAYS. I DON'T KNOW THE FIGURES FOR SUICIDE OR ATTEMPTED SUICIDE OR SERIOUS MENTAL BREAKDOWN AMONG STIRLING STUDENTS, BUT I WAS TALKING TO IR GREENER YESTERDAY AND HE TOOK OUT FIGURES FOR ONE YEAR TWO OR THREE YEARS AGO. I WAS FASCINATED THAT THE FIGURES HE TOOK OUT WERE ALMOST IDENTICAL WITH FIGURES WHICH A COLLEAGUE OF MINE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO IN NEW ZEALAND TOOK OUT IN THE LATE 1960S. I WOULD SAY THAT ON THAT SMALL PIECE OF EVIDENCE STIRLING IS NO WORSE OR NO BETTER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE."

PROFESSOR GRAMMOND, 29.4.75

to be grants, University funding, disinvestment, and believe it or not, the environment (and you thought we only started fucking it up two years ago, and admitted it a year later). Ireland was referred to as 'Our Vietnam' while this was a simultaneous issue (now, presumably, it is simply 'their Ireland'), while Cuba and Zimbabwe were amongst the countries off whose struggles political points were scored, and badges sold.

"WE LIVE IN OUR PAST AND LOOK FORWARD TO A BETTER FUTURE AND PRETEND NEW IS JUST TEMPORARY."

TORSTEN SHAW, OCTOBER 1986

Perhaps most surprisingly, BRIG reported in 1972 the "difficulties for graduates in finding jobs in line with their first choice interests" shortly after the University disgorged its first batch of graduates clutching hush, roach material.

"ONE WONDERS IF THE PRINCIPAL, WHO WAS VICE-CHAIRMAN OF THE UCU, UNDERSTANDS WITH WHAT DISCRET AND EVEN HONOUR STIRLING UNIVERSITY HAS VOTED ALMOST ALL OF THE UCU'S DECISIONS, ATTITUDES AND VAGILLATIONS OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS."

AN ACADEMIC, MARCH 1987

Like the English lecturer criticised in BRIG back in '72, likened to Shakespeare's "hoor player, who struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and then is heard no more", the issues that have been raised, the speeches uttered and the political consciousness-raising of successive years, have been scattered, like the students who once believed, by the winds of time. All that remain are the diatribes, the pleas, the bad poetry, the English lecture - "told by an idiot, signifying nothing" - and the pompous clichés. Quite honestly, it's as if Punk never happened.



CHANGE? YEAH, I'LL GO FOR THAT. I NEED SOME TO PLAY 'SUPER CONTRA' IN THE LOBBY BAR."

"DEAR BRIG, I HAVE AT HOME A SMALL PLASTIC CIRCULAR OBJECT WITH A SMALL HOLE IN THE CENTRE. IF I PLACE THIS OBJECT IN A TURNABLE IT REVOLVES AT 75 RPM AND PRODUCES MUSIC. IS THIS A RECORD?"

T.M., LETTERS PAGE, 14.11.69

Perhaps the most important function of BRIG is its 'watchdog' role, and as such its autonomy within SUSA is worthy of preservation. It has not always performed effectively in this however, and was for a period of years compulsive non-reading. Standards have vastly improved in recent years, a renaissance that culminated in 1988 with the winning of the GLASGOW HERALD Student Newspaper of the Year Award, in the face of competition from the lavishly-funded type-set publications of the large city universities, each with its own sabbatical editor.

"I'VE BEEN ASKED IF I ENJOY BEING UNPOPULAR, AND IT'S JUST THAT MY DANCE IS UNPOPULAR... I MYSELF AM POPULAR."

OSWALD GEMMARTY, SUSA PRESIDENT, 1987 QUOTE OF THE WEEK, 19.3.79

The library houses an incomplete collection of BRIGs from down the years, and these make an interesting, if sometimes frustratingly piecemeal, chronicle of the short lifetime of the University.

The impression given by some of these back-issues is of a newsmagazine run and produced by a tiny group of students: those who could be bothered or who had seized control and were perhaps less energetic in their efforts to encourage a wider range of contributors than they might have been. Thankfully, BRIG NOW seems to attract more willing helpers and writers than ever before, and thus

"WHAT ONE COULD SEE WAS THAT IT BOILED DOWN TO THE VIEW THAT SOME STUDENTS HAVE AN OBSCURIOUS INTENSITUDE AND IF WE GET RID OF THEM EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE. ACADEMIC STUFF WHO HAVE CONTACT WITH STUDENTS KNOW THIS NOT TO BE A PROPER JUDGEMENT."

STAFF MEMBER, 28.11.72

So, while Wishbone Ash, Supertramp, Hawkwind and Tangerine Atmosphere thrilled the unwashed, spaced-out critics at the all-new Grange and at Pathfoot All-nighters (REAL All-nighters these, 10.30pm - 7.15am with a Mushroom Disco in J Lounge), accommodation crises and the daytime hobby horses of the more zealous undergrad hacks, in days when they could at least rest assured that some more of the campus was still to be built. And besides, who needs a bed for the night when the bar is open till 7.15am?

"I WOULD LIKE YOU TO STOP GOING TO LECTURES AND TUTORIALS IMMEDIATELY, STOP READING ANY BOOKS THAT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOUR SUBJECTS, AND SPEND NINE NIGHTS A WEEK AT THE GRANGE. THIS WAY YOU WILL WRITE LOUSY ESSAYS AND FAIL ALL YOUR EXAMS, AND WILL BE SO GRATEFULLY ASKED TO LEAVE UNIVERSITY, WITHOUT HAVING GONE THROUGH TOO MUCH ANXIETY OR PAIN."

ROY MITCHELL, AGONY AUNT (TO 'WORRIED') BRIG PROBLEM PAGE, 1973

Other 'issues' of the early days included the lobby for a sabbatical BRIG editor (a movement with roughly one active participant - the person who wanted to be it), which soon ran out of steam. Pastor Jack Glass and Tariq Ali were amongst the speakers to grace the forum of the now-defunct Political Co-ordination Group, and Elton John came to perform in the Lobby Bar (before anyone noticed just how long it actually was and it had another name). But events such as these were being reported in terms of the student apathy that they highlighted.

