

Halifax students cautioned after killing protected campus wildlife

By Lauren Carter
EDITOR

A GROUP of Halifax students have been cautioned by the ir College Dean after it emerged that they had been killing protected wildlife for elaborate feasts in their campus accommodation.

The first years were discovered last Wednesday by the Dean, Carl Thompson, skinning a rabbit in front of a bemused crowd in St. Lawrence Court. Onlookers revealed that the students, all residents of House Q, were notorious for their culinary skills, having killed and plucked a pheasant in the previous week. One neighbour commented: "this is typical of that house, they're always getting into trouble."

Elise Raffray from House R defended her neighbours' antics: "All I know was it smelt really good and there isn't much else to comment on. They didn't do anything wrong; not University-wise anyway."

The University, however, prohibit students from killing campus wildlife, which includes the first year's delicacies of rabbits and pheasants. Thompson also raised his con-

cerns that the animals had been shot, and reiterated to those involved that air rifles and BB guns were banned from campus accommodation.

The students had previously boasted to nouse reporters of how they'd shot the rabbit using a BB gun in the Halifax grounds. However, Ryan Carter, who took responsibility for the group, vehemently denied shooting the animals when the Dean arrived and told him that the rabbit they were in the process of skinning had been brought from a stranger in a pub.

Thompson expressed disbelief at the story, exclaiming: "Do you really think I believe that men still come into pubs and sell dead rabbits? Maybe fifty years ago, but not now. I've lived in York for ten years and I've never seen anything like that."

The Dean decided not to search the students' house for a weapon and left them with a warning. He also advised them to continue skinning their catch inside to prevent distressing passers-by.

The House Q residents have since revealed that they continued preparing the feast in their kitchen, and were highly

impressed with the dish. Carter told nouse: "The rabbit went well with some potatoes and carrots in a stew." He also remarked: "You should have seen the pheasant... red wine and shallots!"

Some students, however, have reacted angrily to House Q's behaviour. One student has even reported the case to the RSPCA. The University have also been accused of letting the students off lightly; a former case of a student killing one of the campus ducks is reported to have resulted in their expulsion.

Chair of Halifax College, James Flinders, said "it is a worrying development and I will look into it. However, with these incidents, there's not a lot the JCR can do. The College and University have the disciplinary procedures in place to deal with these cases.

"These are the actions of a very small minority of Halifax students. We're not all gun-wielding animal killers!"

Thompson has confirmed that no further action will be taken against the students involved. He also denied claims that the acts could be in reaction to high prices in the local Costcutters store.



Students get in touch with their primitive side in Halifax. Photo by Lauren Carter

Crackdown on gun crime as replicas banned

By Elliot Taylor
DEPUTY EDITOR

NEW LEGISLATION has been passed by Parliament which bans the manufacture, import and sale of replica guns; a weapon which was used earlier this year in a gun siege involving a Costcutter employee.

The Violent Crime Reduction Bill has come in light of a sixty-six per cent increase in replica gun offences over the last year. Previously it had been illegal to carry a replica gun in public, but not to buy one.

Last November, nouse reported on the employee of a campus Costcutter store was involved in a five hour armed siege on the border of campus, highlighting the problem replica guns pose for the police. Nine armed police officers surrounded his house and after his arrest it was revealed he was brandishing a replica.

Sir Ian Blair, the Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police, said: "The police service has been pushing

for a change in the law in this direction for some time.

"We are particularly concerned for public safety in respect to the use of replica weapons. Police officers face a difficult job when they can't tell if a gun is real or not and have to make split second decisions."

The police have argued that the lack of visual difference between replica and real firearms is a serious cause for concern, and can often cause confusion. An armed police unit will be forced to take extreme action in the event of an incident involving any kind of firearm, and they are hoping that this new legislation will prevent this.

Also in the Bill was an increase in the age limit of buying a knife from 16 to 18 years of age and granting headteachers the permission to search pupils. Bars that sell drinks to minors can now be temporarily shut, and ones in binge drinking hotspots will have to pay for extra policing.

Student loses hearing in cricket bat 'happy slap'

By Heloise Wood
DEPUTY EDITOR

A SECOND YEAR student lost his hearing after being hit around the head with a cricket bat in Fulford last month.

Ben Taite feared he had been struck deaf in one ear following the attack, which occurred near the river on Friday 13th May. The assault is the latest local example of the nationwide 'slap happy' craze, where teenage gangs film themselves attacking others on their mobile phones.

"I was sitting by the river in Fulford, an area I had always considered fairly safe. It was about quarter to eight and I was engrossed in my book but there were other people about", Taite said.

"Suddenly I felt the full force of a cricket bat against my right ear. I looked up and there were eight or ten kids standing there, probably aged between twelve and fifteen. I just yelled 'what have you done?' I thought they had

deafened me."

The teenagers, who had filmed the incident on their mobiles, ran off when Taite rang the police. Because he had been in a fairly secluded spot by the river, no one else on the green had seen the attack take place.

When Taite arrived at York City Hospital, nurses told him there were three other victims of slap happy attacks in there at the same time. The other incidents had occurred when the victims were walking down the street and attacked from behind.

Ironically, Taite had read about 'happy slapping' in a newspaper that morning. The craze, which started in South London, has already led to the rape of an eleven-year old school girl, whose experience was circulated around the school. However, York Police claimed to have never heard of the craze before.

Taite suffered internal bleeding in his ear and a perforated ear drum. The specialist

couldn't be sure how much hearing would return and for some weeks he had very minimal hearing in his right ear.

Fortunately, now his hearing has almost completely returned. "I'm very thankful that I haven't lost my hearing, because I really thought it had gone. I was just so annoyed

when it happened because it was so senseless: there was no point to it whatsoever. It seems that some kids with not much sense are getting caught up in this fad and just going along with it. I still go out and enjoy the nice weather but it's sad that I am always a bit more cautious now."

Police issue warning

North Yorkshire Police have urged students to guard against violent crime when walking near campus, following a spate of attacks on the main pedestrian routes.

Spokesman Tony Lidgate stressed that York has a very low crime rate, but advised that students should take precautions, using taxis rather than walking alone at night. He cautioned against wearing things that identify you as a student, like college sweat-shirts. "Make sure your body language says I'm not afraid - I'm a capable person. If you

look vulnerable and scared you are an easier target."

Since January there have been three attacks on students on Hull Road and Tang Hall, all between 8 and 10pm. Police patrols have increased, while Community Support Officers and University Security have tightened security on campus. The descriptions of the various attackers do not concur but the University's advice is to be alert against "violently anti-social behaviour, by teenage white males" and to stay in groups where possible.