

The next chapter

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Final year Political Science student Raphael Sheridan is following in the footsteps of alumnus Brian Whitaker (BA Latin, 1968) as the current editor of *Redbrick*, the University's student newspaper, a role Brian completed more than 40 years ago and one which catapulted him into a successful journalism career.

'I was rather lucky during my time as editor as I didn't have to look very hard for front page news,' remembers Brian Whitaker, who was *Redbrick* editor during his second year in 1967. 'The government had just announced an increase in fees for overseas students and we were very much involved in a campaign against this.'



Redbrick 2013: A recent front cover of the student newspaper

Whilst fees are still high on the political agenda for students today, Raphael points to an altogether more controversial piece as his proudest moment during this year. 'One of our writers landed an exclusive interview with an Iraqi war veteran and whistleblower and *The Guardian* have picked it up and will be running it themselves, which is fantastic.'

The political agenda isn't the only thing which has changed in *Redbrick* over the years. Brian remembers having to sell each issue on a Wednesday in the Guild. 'We sold about 3,000 copies a week ourselves which was often scary as if somebody saw something they didn't like in print, they knew exactly where to find you,' he says.

As well as selling the copies, Brian also had to find a driver to take him to the printers in Derbyshire to collect the paper each week. Thankfully, Raphael's printing company delivers straight to his door on a Friday and he even has his own team of student helpers to distribute them. His challenges are much more digital in nature to accommodate the changing face of journalism.

'My first challenge was changing *Redbrick*'s identity. I wanted something that was more in-keeping with the digital age and an icon that we can use on social media. The paper is only half of it though, with the website (www.redbrick.me (<http://www.redbrick.me/>)), it's a 24/7 pursuit and we have had some great success with our online journalism this year too, for example we managed to beat the BBC by being the first to report last winter's Selly Oak blackout,' he says.

Overcoming these challenges will prove invaluable for Raphael's future if Brian's track record is anything to go by. He credits his success with *Redbrick* for landing a place on a graduate trainee scheme with the *Liverpool Daily Post and Echo* following graduation and he has since worked for a number of national publications including the *Sunday Times*, *Daily Mirror* and a long spell as Managing Editor for *The Guardian*.

'My dad was a dentist, which sounded utterly boring to me. I wanted a career that I found exciting and *Redbrick* gave me a real taste for journalism. I've been fortunate enough to travel around and see some really interesting things and I have *Redbrick* to thank for that,' Brian says.

Raphael's plans differ slightly, although he has already secured a job following graduation. 'I really like whisky and am going to work for an exclusive whisky shop in Soho, London. Journalism is one of the most difficult areas to get into these days and my blog on whisky helped secure this role which I'm really excited about and who knows where it might take me in the future!'

One thing they both agree on is how rewarding their experience with the paper was in their personal and professional development, showcasing the impact student societies can have on your live and your future.

Learn more

Raphael's whisky blog is www.casktales.com (<http://www.casktales.com/>) and Brian, now a freelance writer and international relations blogger, is blogging at www.al-bab.com/blog (<http://www.al-bab.com/blog/>)