

The Student Union Newsletter, Link-Up, Mercury and latterly An Focal have over the years informed students of campaigns undertaken on their behalf, entertained them with tales of adventures on Co-op and Erasmus and even provided personal ads for the love lorn! Topical issues of the day such as the Divorce and Abortion Referendums have been debated in their pages and local concerns such as personal security and responsibility have been highlighted. Lively editorials have praised and admonished student behaviour and above all exhorted their readers to be involved in the determination of the quality of their University life. The changes and developments in student life and behaviour over 40 years can be charted in their pages; even the manner in which we communicate is reflected

"...All Phone Messages for students in this college are taken by the SU General Office and put on pink message slips on the SU Noticeboard in the Canteen. Please check daily for phone messages and mail list..."

'An Focal, 14 February, 1994, p.12'

"... if there had been a student of UL in our Oireachtas then we would have had cigarette machines in the canteen and urinals at the bar of the Stables, never mind an actual library or an actual repeat system, long ago..." Robin Hood, Letters to the Editor, An Focal, November 3, 1992

Beginning with the movement to establish the NIHE in the late 60s and early 70's UL students have maintained a record of pioneering protest. The "NUI NO" protests, burning of NUI matriculation forms outside the Senate and permanent sit-ins in the Department of Education in 1976 and huge parades in Limerick captured the national imagination.

Initial campaigning for better library and student services has developed into a sophisticated system of referenda and plebiscites to galvanise student opinion into action.

The continuing campaign by the Students Union fought over the issue of student progression during the 1990's was referred to as the Battle Royale. Negotiations with the University reached an impasse in 1994 when students walked out in protest and 700 of their number protested outside the White House but a mutually successful outcome was eventually achieved. Over 3000 marched against fees in 2002 and these protests were reignited in 2008.



The Class Rep system caters for the educational rights of students and improvements in services over the years can be attested to their efforts. On campus crèche facilities, Nitelink buses, better catering, Sexual and Mental Health campaigns. Improved sports facilities have been achieved in large part through student action



The first organised event by a student Society was a production of Bryan Merriman's Midnight Court in the East Room of Plassey House which was then the main lecture theatre for the University and ULSU Societies have continued to entertain, inform and challenge the University population. Maverick Societies have been embraced although the proposed Ice Cream Society received a lukewarm reception to its application for funding. Ever innovative the "Sony Walkman or Cheap Imitations" disco aka a silent disco was first suggested as an idea by the Thrill kill Cult in a letter to An Focal's editor in 1994.

Notwithstanding the wide array of Societies on offer in the University of Limerick the campus has always been known for its high level of entertainment. A lively social scene has existed since its inception and over the decades the arts have been celebrated in Arts Days, SoUL and Greek Weeks, OddFests and Brocons. The unholy alliance of Ber Angley and John Hardigan produced many memorable nights and International and local acts have played what Oscar winning Glen Hansard described as the "f\*\*\*ed up little room..." that is the Student Centre. The late Mike Sadlier was also key in creating a rich and varied cultural life in the early days of the Union. Early trips to Glastonbury were offered by the Union at the now unbelievable cost of £90 for bus, ferry and ticket.



"...Dear Sir, Please find enclosed photograph of dishwasher we bought with the £500 we got from your RAG Week. We are very grateful for this contribution and the Health Inspector was delighted to see it. All our delph is now sterilised to the delight of everyone, and thanks to you. Renewed Thanks Sr. M.Agnes, Cuan Mhuire, Bruree House, Bruree, Co. Limerick..."

A long tradition of volunteering has existed in UL and over the years students have participated in fundraising drives, sleep outs for the homeless, charitable support work through the St Vincent De Paul and outreach societies. Principal amongst organised fundraising is the annual R(aising) A(nd) G(iving) Week, variously known as Kollege Week and now Charity Week. Although ostensibly a week of high octane behaviour it must not be forgotten that its principal aim is to raise funds for nominated charities and over the years tens of thousands have been raised.

Personal responsibility has also been fostered through the campaigns of the Students Union and issues around physical, mental and sexual health have been at the forefront. In the early days some students were disciplined for handing out free but illegal condoms in the Stables Courtyard.



Out of conflict comes resolution, out of discord accord and many of the University's major projects have arisen from collaborations with the student body via the mechanism of Student's Union Referenda. The current Student Centre was campaigned for by students and an agreement reached that "...UL students approve the introduction of a special capitation fee of £30.00 per annum to initiate and provide 50% of funding for the construction of a Student Centre..." and the Union finally moved into a purpose built home in 1999. This was followed by the opening of the University Arena in 2002, an internationally recognised sports facility where students are one of the major stakeholders. Parallel with these negotiations the water based Clubs on campus were literally desperate for a central home as their equipment was being consistently vandalised and by 2002 it was agreed that once the students funded the project and it didn't impact on the University's core budget and was built in accordance with the ongoing development of the University the project could go ahead. An 86% majority Yes vote in 2003 saw the mortgage of the Student Centre being extended by a further period of 8 years and in 2009 the UL Boathouse was officially opened. 2012 heralds the exciting prospect of another Referendum to extend the University Arena, develop Maguire's Fields and create a new Student Centre.



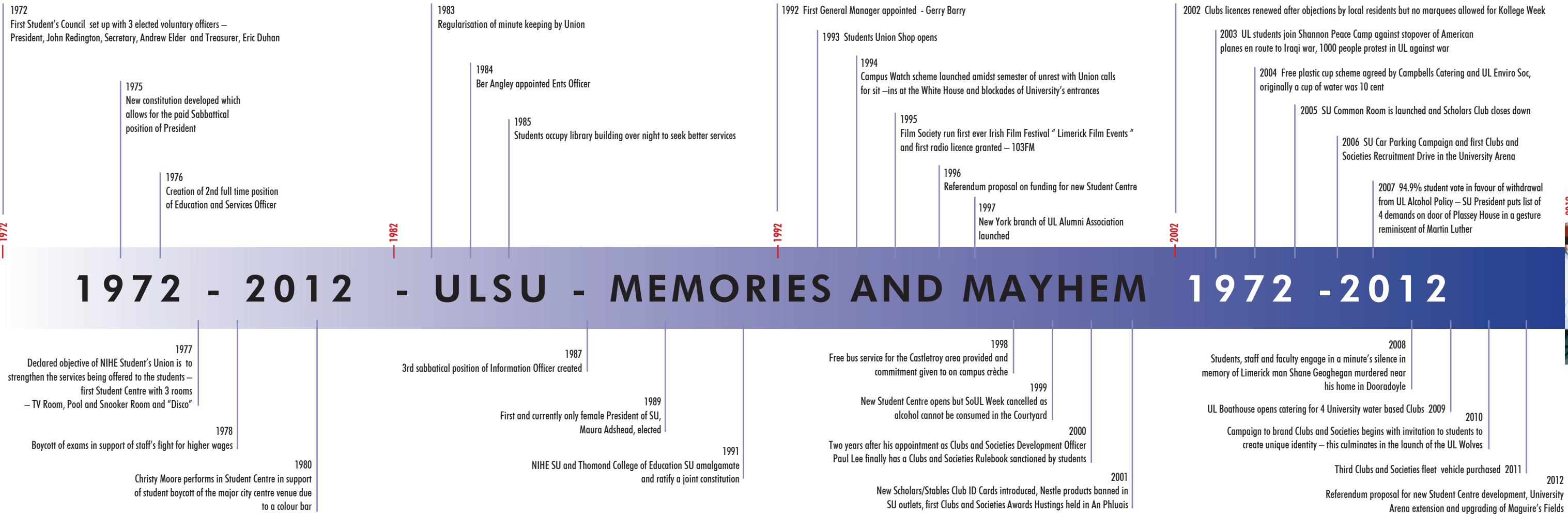
The clamour of student protest and the many debates that arise from it can have positive outcomes. When you use the pedestrian crossing at the Groody Roundabout you are experiencing a piece of recent Student Union history. Following an incident in 2007 where a student was knocked down a midnight campaign saw students painting white lines on the road resulting in their being disciplined by the University. Undeterred they lobbied until the Council installed a roundabout. Individual students have risked their own liberty in pursuit of the freedom of expression from the far north of Fasslane in Scotland to the car parks of the University. The Environmental Society brought a lengthy legal case against planning permission for Thomond Bridge, the Irish Peace Society have mobilised students to protest against war and injustice and a Minister's car had to turn back on Thomond Bridge at the official opening of the Irish Chamber Orchestra Building. Many UL students have used the practice ground of the Debating Union, Student Union Executive, Clubs and Societies Council and the Class Rep system to hone their skills of discourse and debate and improved the quality of the student experience.

## CLUBS AND SOCIETIES

UL Clubs and Societies have formed the backbone of the Student's Union over its 40 year history. In 1972 there was one Sports Club and a fledgling Drama Society in operation but by 1984 this number had risen to 15 Clubs and 13 Societies receiving approximately £16,500.00. Although it took some time to reach a consensus in 1998 a full time Clubs and Societies Development Officer, Paul Lee, was appointed. Currently there are 72 Clubs and Societies receiving a budget of €600,000.00.

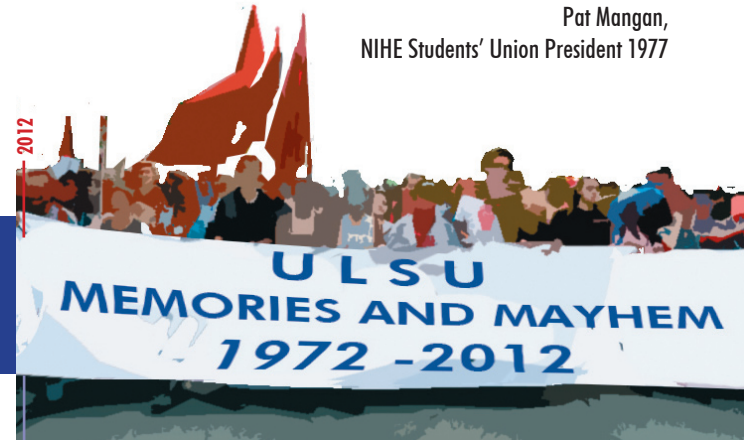
The recruitment of new members has similarly progressed from the Canteen to the first purpose built Clubs and Societies Village in 2002 to the huge numbers attending the University Arena event in Week One, Semester One. An online recruitment system has seen numbers rise significantly and in 2011 the unifying brand of UL Wolves was created to capture the spirit and philosophy of C&S. The nature of these Clubs and Societies is as disparate as the student population and over the years UL has been ably represented on national and international stages and arenas. Student Union politics have been enhanced by the drive of its C&S members and many initiatives have come from its Council meetings.

YOU ARE THE MISSING LINK please post your memories to Facebook Group ULSU 40th Celebration (40 Years of Mayhem )



" . . . Please realise the value of the students' union. When things are going well you can afford to ignore it, but its when there is a crisis that you need a strong union. Be willing to criticise its performance, but give it support and realise the value of the Union. Remember also that you are the Union and do not be afraid to use your weight if you do not like what you see happening . . . "

Pat Mangan,  
NIHE Students' Union President 1977



For 40 years the elected representatives of the student body have supported students in their academic education and personal development. Here are a few memories created out of the mayhem . . . . .