

Peter Rook

Memoirs of a MADman*



*Middle Aged & Divorced

I'm going to start this week's column with a gag. I don't usually do punchline jokes, so please don't take this as an invitation to stop me in the street and tell me one.

Here goes.

Q: What can a man do while his wife is going through the menopause?

A: Keep busy. If you're handy with tools, you can finish the basement. When you are done, you will have a place to live.

The menopause. Yes, just when you thought you were safe to go dating and finding new exciting relationships with new exciting suitors, along comes the biological ticking time bomb that is the menopause.

It occurred to me that after last week's column, I may have been a tiny bit premature in stating that the single greatest thing about being a single-ton reborn was not living with someone who was living with "that time of the month".

This is because I was overlooking the menopause.

The monthly neurosis that is the hallmark of the "period" pales when compared to the devastating destruction that is the menopause.

Take cover in that basement you have constructed.

'I'm fully aware that this column is unlikely to win me too many female fans after last week'

At this particularly fraught time, you will need a bit of your own HRT (Humour Replacement Therapy).

I'm fully aware that this column is unlikely to win me too many female fans - especially after a reader expressed "shock" that *The Evening Telegraph* had given oxygen to my misogynistic ramblings of last week.

"I can't believe *The ET* have allowed this to be printed - I know everyone is entitled to their own opinion etc, but this is just someone being petty and narrow-minded," wrote one website blogger.

Another stated, "Not all women turn into 'raging vengeful, vicious, gun-toting psychopaths' - most of us are quite normal and have no episodes of hormonal imbalances as his ex obviously did - or had she just had enough of his patronising male chauvinistic ways?"

It wasn't all one-sided, I'm pleased to report. The "period" is clearly a subject that polarises views. One blogger wrote, "I think this is possibly the greatest piece of journalism I have EVER READ IN MY LIFE."

Well, I wouldn't go as far as to say that, but thank you all the same... and I'll see you next week mum.

Just when I was beginning to think I could be a patronising male chauvinist, a blogger by the name of Very Bad Man leapt to my defence. Although with sentiments like his, I'm not sure he did my cause much good.

"Just about every woman I've encountered is a raving loony, whatever time of the month it is. There's only so much rabbit stew a man can eat." Blooming heck. And I thought I had issues.

Fantastic new facility will help students make the headlines in the future

WHEN television star Ralf Little officially opened Peterborough Regional College's new Media and Journalism Centre in Broadway, he was amazed at the hi-tech facilities. Features editor JULIA OGDEN went along to meet some of the students and tutors to find out what the centre can offer.

"THIS is better than some of the studios at the BBC," said actor Ralf Little, as he was shown around Peterborough Regional College's new Media and Journalism Centre.

"I am very impressed." And I would have to say I agree with Mr Little's views - this is an amazing facility for our city, and we should be very proud of it. Only a year ago, the building in Broadway was just an empty shell, but nine months and £750,000 later, it has been transformed into a state-of-the-art facility helping to train budding media stars of the future.

Curriculum director of arts and sciences Liz Knight said: "Initially, it might seem strange for a small city like ours to have a facility such as this, but if you really think about it, it isn't really that odd.

"Peterborough has a lot of publishing businesses here, particularly on the magazine front with Bauer, and this will provide them with a place to train their journalists.

"There is also a lot of investment being put into the city from organisations such as the East Midlands Development Agency. Peterborough is no longer the cultural desert it once was."

The media centre is currently bidding for dual accreditation from the National Training Council for Journalists (NCTJ) and the Periodical Training Council (PTC), and should find out by the summer whether it has achieved this.

This will mean students will be completing industry standard courses which will increase their chance of finding work once they leave.

At the moment, many newspapers and magazines send trainees to colleges around the country to take these courses, but in the future they could be able to stay closer to home.

One person who is already taking advantage of the course's location is 29-year-old Angela Weld, from Deeping St James, near Market Deeping.

Angela suffers from Lupus - a disease which affects a person's immune system, causing extreme fatigue, joint pain, muscle aches and anaemia - and has not been well enough to attempt a higher education course, until now.

"I have always been interested in journalism and had hoped to go to university, but I have never been well enough," she said. "It is fantastic for me to have a course like this on my doorstep, because it enables me to get a qualification without having to go too far from home."

Angela says the journalism degree course she is taking, under the guidance of tutor Peter Rook - a former features



ON AIR: Students at work in the college's radio studios. (RGM0331066) Pictures: GEORGI MABEE and PAUL FRANKS

editor at *The Evening Telegraph* - is great fun.

"I am really enjoying it," she said. "This is only my first year, but it is already giving me a great insight into the profession."

Peter was delighted to hear Angela's assessment adding: "At the end of the day, you do not need a lot of equipment to teach journalism, just a room full of computers, but the environment at High Trees (where the centre used to be based) was pretty cramped and equipment was quite basic.

"The new centre gives us the space and technology to build on the courses' successes and to improve what we do."

Peter is in charge of the SXPRESS student magazine at the college, which is produced every four months. He is currently working on launching a breaking news website under the SXPRESS brand.

"Although the magazine gives the students the chance to see their work published, the stories in it are often out of date. The website will enable us to break stories online and use the magazine for feature pieces which are not so time-sensitive," he said. "We hope the website will be up and running by the summer and this will give the journalism students another string to their bow."

Photography lecturer Steve Campbell is currently teaching an A-level course at the college, although from next year the course will be replaced with a BTEC one, and is delighted with the new facilities.

"We are very lucky because we now have a proper, fully functioning dark room which enables us to teach the students the basics of photography before they get hooked into the digital age," he said. "It is important they learn about composition and lighting and the processes behind

it."

Excited: Curriculum director Liz Knight.



SCREEN STARS: Students try out the new TV studio gallery. (RGM0331067)

photography before they go digital." Amy Hills (19), from Bretton, Peterborough, is just one of the A-level photography students who has taken full advantage of the new facilities.

"What we have now is much better than what we had before," she said. "It has really helped broaden my horizons and given me a lot of experience to enable me to set up my own freelance business when I finish."

What struck me, as a working journalist, walking around the new centre is just how true to life the facilities are. The television studio and radio booths look just like the real thing, in fact they may be even better. Matt Kaylor, a media lecturer specialising in television, said the aim of the centre is to mirror real life, as far as possible.

Matt worked for 15 years in the television industry as a cameraman for Channel 4, ITV and the BBC.

"I cut my teeth on game shows," he said. "So I am teaching the students how to film in this sort of format at the minute."

"They have really risen to the challenge and have been working very hard. The fact the facilities we have here now are as close to the real thing as you can get has obviously helped us, and we are very excited by it all."

Student Martyn Tallon (19) agreed, saying: "The facilities here are amazing, they have really helped bring the theory to life, and we have all grown in confidence since the centre opened."

John Bradley, the tutor in charge of radio and audio at the college, worked in the radio industry for 25 years - 20 years at Hereward FM, three years at Lite FM and the rest of the time at BBC Radio Cambridgeshire. He said the new facilities had helped him show the students what it was really like to work in radio.

"It is fair to say that what we had before was pretty antiquated," he said. "But the new facilities are exceptional."

Once a year the college has a temporary licence to give live broadcasts, around the clock, for a month. All the students get involved, including the drama students, who perform plays, the journalism students, who write the news bulletins, and the music students, who write and perform the jingles.

"It is a real collaborative effort," said Tanis Paulin, curriculum team manager for media at the college.

"And everyone works really hard on it. The new facilities will make it even more exciting this year."

"The location of the centre is perfect, as it is so close to the city centre, and the £750,000 we spent on it has been well worth it in providing Peterborough with a fantastic facility to help train media stars of the future."

julia.ogden@peterboroughtoday.co.uk



RED CARPET TREATMENT: TV star Ralf Little gets the paparazzi treatment outside the new centre. (RPF0326418)



IN THE PICTURE: Student photographer Nathan Wilson with model Charlie Havis and twin sister make-up artist Abbi, above. (RPF0326404) Left, the new centre. (RPF0326414)



STATE-OF-THE-ART: The new TV studio gallery. (RGM0331064)



QUESTIONING: Nathaniel Hammond interviews college principal Don Lawson. (RPF0326415)



LESSON: Journalism tutor Peter Rook takes a class. (RGM0331022)

Courses available at the new centre

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Part-time ■ Access Diploma (covering media / journalism options) ■ Photography (NCFE Level 1 Certificate) ■ Photography (C&G Level 2 Certificate) ■ Journalism (C&G 7500 Diploma) ■ BA (Hons) Journalism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BA (Hons) Media Studies ■ Full-time: ■ Higher Diploma in Creative & Media ■ Advanced Diploma in Creative & Media ■ BTEC First Diploma in Media ■ BTEC National Award / Diploma in Journalism / Publishing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BTEC National Award / Diploma in Media Production ■ BTEC National Award / Diploma in TV / Film Production ■ BTEC National Award / Diploma in Photography ■ Access Diploma (covering media / journalism options) ■ BA (Hons) Journalism |
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