

HOUSING



FROM DODGY LANDLORDS TO DECAYING BATHROOMS AND RAMBUNCTIOUS NEW HOUSEMATES, LIVING WITH OTHER STUDENTS CAN BE A VERY STRENUOUS EXPERIENCE. MICHAEL BROWN ATTEMPTS TO GUIDE YOU THROUGH SOME OF THE PITFALLS.

It's a funny thing, this housing business. Within a scant few months, new students are expected to form tight-knit units, ready to bear each other's unique intricacies and bad habits. Below are a few words of wisdom on the subject, some of which are, rather unfortunately, from personal experience.

PEOPLE

In theory, it's very easy to find housemates: just live with those who you can "have a laugh" with, surely? Well, not always. The number one rule here is to know what kind of a dwelling you're looking for; will you provide the year's most true-lad-worthy party house? Or are you looking for a more studious environment better suited to learning – the oft-forgotten purpose of university? Whoever you decide to live with, just remember that the friend who can drink 18 pints in one sitting then projectile-vomit in a full 360 degree rotation may be hilarious on a night out, but isn't necessarily the same person you want to share your bathroom with.

ACCOMMODATION

Count yourselves lucky because South Wales has, as I am assured by friends who attend other universities, cheap housing. Unfortunately, this inevitably entails some rather less savoury options for accommodation. To avoid landing yourself with a cheap-for-a-very-good-reason dilapidated shack, try to find out as much as you can about the local housing market: which are the estate agents to use and which are the ones to avoid? How long will it take to get that unpreventable rat or slug infestation seen to? And who has the best marketing slogan or free gift incentive? (Don't fall for that last one.) Perhaps the most important thing to remember is not to rush into anything; there will always be a surplus of houses in relation to students and obtaining the perfect abode might just make that 45th viewing worthwhile. Pinnacle Letting agents are some of the good guys, and are very helpful when the stress of finding a house gets a little too much.

SURVIVING

You've got the ideal house and, hopefully, a similar-minded group of misfits ready to share it with. All that's left now is to make it through the year, but this is by no means an easy task. Prepare to be astounded at the levels of annoyance caused by even a single grain of rice lying dormant on the kitchen hob's surface. Invest in some heavy-duty earplugs as you experience more than a few disturbed nights' sleep courtesy of some no-doubt hilarious late-night "banter". Expect TVs, lights, ovens, taps and just about anything else that can be switched on to be left permanently on. Yes indeed, you're more likely to remember the annoyances over the good times with certain members of the household, but when fond memories outnumber the aggravations, you know you've found a housemate worthy of a second term. It's living with these kindred spirits, and learning to deal with those who aren't, that eases the pain and can make university house-sharing a worthwhile experience.