



The QM Observer

Autumn Term Newsletter

Friday 18th December 2015

New records & great heights at QMGs!



Project Horizon:
Sunchaser

China trip



Mr Sepede writes: 1.55am on 10 July saw the Horizon team complete the final launch of Sun Chaser to capture the sunrise from the stratosphere. The team seamlessly released the helium-filled balloon, carrying the Sun Chaser payloads into the night, which burst at an altitude of 36,309m after the longest Horizon flight to date. A swift recovery ensued at the



was magnificently captured with spectacular views of the sunrise. I wish to express congratulations and immense gratitude to the entire team.



Sai & Kush Nathwani: On 8 July 2015, 24 students alongside Mr Fawson, Miss Timmins and Mrs Wang travelled from Birmingham Airport, to our first destination, Beijing. Over the next 15 days, we experienced an insight into Chinese culture and lifestyle, spending time in Beijing, Xi'an & Chengdu. In Chengdu we were hosted by Sichuan Bright Foreign Language School, where we spent nine days with Chinese pupils experiencing school life and culture in China. On behalf of the students, we would like to thank Mrs. Wang for the organisation of such an incredible trip that we won't forget!

Tanzania expedition

Isaac Walker reports: For a month in the summer, 20 QM students had an amazing opportunity to travel to Tanzania. After beginning the expedition with acclimatisation walks through forests of the Kilimanjaro region, we then began our ascent of Mt Meru (4562m), which offered spectacular scenery (such as an amazing sunrise over Kilimanjaro) and wildlife as diverse as giraffes, water buffalo and blue monkeys. After a rest day our six-day ascent of Mt Kilimanjaro commenced, which, albeit being challenging, served as the most rewarding experience for many, especially upon reaching the summit following a 20-hour final day trek. A particular highlight was attaining Uhuru Peak - the highest point in Africa at 5895m - where our guide team treated us to a native musical performance. Following our descent and celebratory meal, the Project phase opened at the Light in Africa children's home at Tudor Village. Here, following division into small groups, we were able to undertake tasks at the home such as painting, planting banana trees and building paths, which were later followed by the chance to swim in a local hot spring and to learn about Maasai dancing and fighting techniques in a Maasai village. The next day, we journeyed in 4x4s across unpaved roads to the poverty and crime-stricken mining town of Mirerani, serving meals to nearby street children. The expedition concluded with a safari to Ngorongoro Crater and Lake Manyara. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed a successful, once-in-a-lifetime experience, and I would encourage anyone to partake in similar expeditions in the future.

GCSE results



2015 proved to be a sterling year for the School, with 78% of all GCSE grades at A* or A: a new record and 7% increase on that set previously. As Mr Swain reflected: "We always knew that this was an exceptional cohort; I am very proud of them all. They have put a Walsall School on the map: congratulations are definitely the order of the day."



Geography

UK Youth Parliament



Samuel Darby: On Tuesday 10th November, six Year 7-10 boys left, with Mr Larvin, for the Worldwise Geography Quiz at KECH. We didn't know what to expect; the competition was new to us. After being divided into two teams, we faced rounds on capitals, fieldwork, UK landmarks and general geographical knowledge. Our 'A Team' finished in 10th place (out of 16); the 'B Team' finished in 2nd place.

In October, the A level Geographers undertook fieldwork in London (left), taking in Canary Wharf, the Olympic site, the Crystal and the O2 arena as part of studies. Sixth form geographers have also been working with Birmingham City University on the development of town planning resources.



Donna Ricketts (Walsall Youth Support Services): From August to October, young people across the UK had the opportunity to cast their vote for the top issue for debate in the House of Commons, as part of the Make Your Mark Scheme: 968,091 votes were collected nationwide. A total of 8,619 - a 30.29% turnout of 11-18 year olds in the borough - were collected by Members of Walsall Youth Parliament, which identified the top five topics as being the Living Wage; a Curriculum to prepare students for life; tackling racial discrimination (particularly against those of Muslim and Jewish backgrounds); transport; and mental health. On 13 November 2015, Namir Chowdhury of Year 13 (pictured above) partook in the annual debate in the House of Commons chamber, chaired by Speaker John Bercow, introducing the debate in favour of mental health being the UK Youth Parliament national campaign for 2016. All MYPs are congratulated for their role in the debate, which was broadcast on BBC Democracy Live.

Senior Maths Team



Mr Litchfield writes: In November, four 6th Formers (Shayan Ahmed, Liam O'Connor, George Benbow & Gaurav Bhalla) competed against 12 schools in the Regional Heat of the Senior Maths Team Competition at Wolverhampton University. A close second to Concord College in 2014 made the team keen to taste victory this year. A strong performance in the first 2 rounds resulted in full marks on both the Group Round & Crossnumber. This put the team in a commanding position prior to the particularly fiendish final Relay round, which resulted in the first loss of marks & an overall score of 174/180. However, in the end, the QM team (above) were announced as the victors and will now progress to the National Final in London.

RSC trip

Adam Murdoch writes: On the 19 October 2015 40 members of year 8 visited Stratford. It was a fantastic day for all involved, which comprised of a visit to Shakespeare's birth place, a drama skills workshop about Henry V, and a backstage tour of the RSC. Thank you to the English department who chaperoned, the tour guides, the people who ran the workshop and most importantly Miss Timmins who organised the event.



D&T update



Robert Elkington: October saw 6.2 students visit the JCB factory and National Memorial Arboretum. Following the "Story of JCB" exhibition, we then had an exciting, insightful private tour of the production line for the Backhoe Loader machine: JCB's flagship vehicle. From the delivery of sheet steel, to profiling and large-scale welding, we gained real world industry knowledge that builds on what is studied in the workshop - an invaluable insight for the A2 exam. Later, at the NMA, a case study was conducted on the thought-provoking Armed Forces Memorial by Liam O'Connor and Ian Rank-Broadley's bronze statues. Thanks to Mr Hughes for organising the trip.

Bilal Saleem: On 3 October, 28 boys and 3 staff travelled to Jaguar Land Rover as part of their GCSE DT course. During their time at the factory, we had a tour of the factory and experienced design processes and then partook in production and robotics challenges to wrap up a hugely enjoyable day; thanks must go to all accompanying staff.

CCF

Autumn Term

James Miller writes: This term has been typically busy for the CCF. From the summer Army Camp in Crowborough (above), Field Day at Nesscliffe, several days flying, and the annual Walsall Civic Remembrance Parade in November, the cadets have been pushing themselves and experiencing new activities. Outward Bound and Arctic Training weekends at Farchynys were joined by a new First Aid weekend. Finally, at the end of term, the Contingent is saying goodbye to a living legend, WO2 O'Mara, who has been a vital member of the Contingent team; his commitment and character will be truly missed by all.

ACIC & SCIC Courses

Alex Blundell: Across this summer, a small number of cadets gained places on the prestigious Air Cadet Leadership Course at RAF Cranwell, designed to test and develop the skills of leadership and teamwork. Throughout the week, all enjoyed and improved these important skills during a highly rewarding, if challenging experience. Shortly after, cadets from both sections participated in the Senior Cadet Instructor Cadre, an instructional improving course that successfully coupled focussed learning and skill development with the excitement of large scale exercises over a prolonged period; both courses offered cadets thoroughly enjoyable, worthwhile and edifying experiences.

English - Henry V

Alex Storey Reports: This year a group of Year 8 English students and 6.2 History students found themselves entranced by arguably one of Shakespeare's greatest historical plays. For the Year 8s involved in the screening, the performance provided an insightful experience into the play, allowing them to appreciate the work off the page and onto the stage. The History students are using the play as a source of historiography for their studies of 'The War of the Roses', as Shakespeare can be seen as a great contemporary source for insight into the period and views and opinions expressed towards Monarchs.

Year 7 History



Gabriel Stewart-Barry writes: It has been an exciting start to History at QM. We had to solve the 'Mystery of the Skeleton'. Led into the squash courts where a skeleton and historical artefacts awaited, the Year 7s used their own hypotheses as to what may have happened to it in its past life. Over half-term, we were asked to make full scale replicas of Roman shields. This was quite a difficult task involving research, choosing materials and construction. This was beneficial as it gave us insights into the Roman war machine and its ruthless tactics. Taking part in the re-enactment of Roman tactics in the field helped us appreciate the strength and sophistication of the Roman army - the reason that Rome was able to conquer and control such a huge empire. In December, we also took part in a 'Romans day', where an external group provided insights into what life would have been like, including a 'gladiator school' and 'Roman medical school'! From all the Year 7s, I would like to thank the History department for all their enthusiasm and support.

Drama

Mr Fawson Writes: Fourteen Year 11-13 students are already in rehearsal for a very challenging dramatic production of a contemporary play that is being produced in conjunction with the National Theatre. The play, 'Bassett', which examines the effects of the Iraqi war on a group of Year 11 pupils, will be performed at QM during the first week in March and then will transfer to the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry in mid-April.

Music



Mr Vause writes: In September we embarked on an exciting new joint venture with QMHS & welcomed Miss Sullivan to the Music department. We have a new joint orchestra (75+) & choir (120+) which will perform for the first time at this year's Carol Service in Walsall Town Hall on 16th December. We have also replicated our highly successful Year 7 instrumental project now at QMHS, which means we have 240 Year 7s learning across the 2 schools! This is amazing & will mean even more pupils playing in our bands & orchestras in the future.

The QMGs band has performed twice this term, once at the Open Evening back in September and then again with the school choir at the QMGs Speech day in October. Over 110 pupils are having individual instrumental lessons at school and many have passed grade exams this term. It's been one of the craziest and busiest terms ever, but definitely worth it. The future of music looks brighter than ever, with a new Jazz band starting in January, a spring concert to look forward to and a brand new Music department to move into next year.

Studio School Mentoring



Mr Langton reports: This term has seen the beginning of a project with Walsall Studio School, which will see over 50 Sixth Form students involved in mentoring KS4 pupils in English, Maths and Science. This has coincided with the re-launch of mentoring across the school (co-ordinated by Mrs S Swain), which is involving a large number of students across all subject areas.

Debating

Alex Storey Writes: The Debating Society this year has grown considerably in size and ambition with external trips and internal competitions taking place. A trip to The University of Birmingham for a national competition was an insightful experience for all involved and has highlighted the importance of oral skills both in formal and informal walks of life. The internal competitions are now in full swing with debates becoming hotly contested and bringing to attention key issues, proving to be both challenging and eye opening for all involved. Credit must be given to Miss Richards for her continuous passion and dedication to the society.

Economics London trip



Rohan Sharma Reports: The Economics students went on a trip to London to enhance our wider understanding of our subject. The trip involved a visit to the Crystal and the Bank of England. The Crystal was to teach students about sustainability and the viable resources available to us in the future, followed by the Bank of England, which was insightful and relevant to our studies. I'd like to thank Mr Sunley for organising the trip and Mr Rendu for accompanying us.

Bar Mock Trial

Denise Hombiro reports: On 21 November, a group of 14 students went to the Birmingham Crown Court for a school competition where each team had to act out a court scene. The Queen Mary's Grammar School team placed third overall: an excellent achievement. However, it did not reflect the hard work and determination of the team over the past few months. On the whole it was an amazing experience and on behalf of the team we have Mr Bryars to thank for organising and coaching us in preparation for the competition as it was a great experience.

The QM Observer

Sport

Rugby

Mr Collins writes: The rugby season before Christmas was finished off in style by the Year 7 A team, winning 45-10 against KE Aston (below) and the B team surpassing this by winning 45-0! The Year 7 A team have remained unbeaten and scored 39 tries this season, with the leading try scorer being Dominic Smith with a whopping 13 tries! There has been huge improvement in all of the Year 7 boys and even in the final game 2 players got their caps for the A team highlighting this improvement.



Mr Gibbons reports: A rather unsettled Year 8 team, due to various injuries and crucially an injury to their captain, Taran Sander, started the season with a few early defeats. However as the season has progressed there have been signs of promise with quality performances from Chancel Cyriac showing his competence as an all round rugby player and the ever agile scrum half Jai Verma. In recent weeks, the team has been in good form, proving the early defeats were merely an adjustment period for the Year 8 team. With wins over Wolverhampton Grammar school, beating them 31-5, and an impressive 41-0 victory over Aldridge in the Staffordshire Cup, the team await news of their opponents in the next round.

In Year 9 we have suddenly seen a development of our Rugby team, with a positive start to the season for our A team (below) with wins against Old Swinford Hospital School and Wolverhampton Grammar school. Credit goes to Zach Elliot, Gabriel Ekpa and Joseph Popple for three consistently strong performances thus far. All three are the top try scorers for the team. We hope the team sees continued growth and success. Mr Francis



Rohit Suglani writes: The Year 10 team started with a fantastic win against Derby Grammar School, then some sloppy performances led to defeats. A great bounce-back against OSH saw a return to winning ways. We lost in the Natwest cup against Fairfax, but have high hopes in the Staffordshire competition in the new year, after a morale boosting victory over KE Aston recently.

Ethan Walker writes: The season got off to the right start for the 1st XV, with a dominant victory over Derby Grammar School. The first real challenge for our side was against King Edward's Lichfield in the first round of the Natwest Cup. The game was intense from the off with neither side willing to give up easily. This proved to be true as a strong QM defence held onto a three point lead to advance onto the next round.

Unfortunately this was as far as we would progress in this particular competition with back-to-back losses against Solihull School and KE Aston. Despite an early exit the side proved that they can compete with a much larger and more alert opposition. This year the side will be staying and travelling around Farchynys and Wales, playing local school sides, something for everyone involved to look forward to. As this is our last season of rugby at the school the Upper Sixth would like to thank Mr G Taylor, the PE department and Mr Collins for their time and hard work over these past seven years.

Editorial Team Editor: Mr R Langton; Sub-Editors: Alex Storey, Glen Foster; Contributors: Mr Sepede, Sai Nathwani, Kush Natwani, Isaac Walker, Mr Swain, Sam Darby, Mr Litchfield, Adam Murdoch, James Miller, Alex Blundell, Robert Elkington, Bilal Saleem, Mr Fawson, Gabriel Stewart-Barry, Mr Vause, Denise Hombiro, Rohan Sharma, Mr Gibbons, Mr Collins, Rohit Suglani, Ethan Walker, Kareeyce Samuels, Mr Francis

Girls' games

Abigail G & Kareeyce Samuels write: The new QMGS girls intake travelled to Boulder Central for an induction in rock-climbing. From climbing up walls and over structures to defying physics by climbing upside down, we can all say that we had an enjoyable time developing skills in a new sport. Thanks to all staff involved on this hugely successful trip and the girls look forward to returning soon. Also, a group of girls visited Farchynys for a mountain biking weekend. Based at Coed y Brenin, the morning was spent learning skills before using them on the MinorTaur trail. It was obvious that both Emily Pitt and Tara McGuirk were naturals but Kathryn Reid and Abigail G quickly caught them up both literally and in terms of confidence. No comments are made about the proficiency of the staff on the trip, but a big thanks to them for organising it!



Cross Country

Alex Storey Reports: Cross country has got off to a roaring start this year. The senior team have once again impressed with Ben Boulter as usual putting in some stellar performances and winning the individual competition in the Birmingham league for the second year running. Also William Cooper finished first by half a lap in his Year 8 race, and a special mention to all of the House representatives, who displayed great team spirit and desire to win.



Karate

Congratulations to Sukhjeevan Dhillon of 6.2 (right) for achieving 2nd and 3rd places in the individual and team competitions respectively at the European Karate Championships in Budapest.