



The QM Observer

Autumn Term Newsletter

Friday 16th December 2016

Success in a time of change

Glen Foster reports: The last academic year witnessed some exciting advancements in the life of the School; some of which are already noticeable, although others are still undergoing development behind the scenes. At the end of November, I interviewed Mr Swain to find out more:



Throughout 2015-16 and into this year, the Headmaster and colleagues from Senior Leadership across the borough have been dedicated to the formation of a new Multi Academy Trust (MAT), comprising QMGS, QMHS, the Studio School, Shire Oak Academy and Aldridge School. Visible indicators of the MAT thus far have included a diversification of the A-Level curriculum from September 2017 – encompassing the deliverance of subjects such as Psychology and Politics, which will be taught at other partner schools within the Trust. Despite the fact there are still “a lot of complicated legal and financial matters needing to be sorted out,” Mr Swain recently received a first draft of a national case study on the MAT, produced by the DfE. In the report, the Mercian Trust is described “as an exemplary model of the evolving educational landscape in England,” and “supporting the government’s vision to provide more good school places in schools that work for everyone.” A staunch advocate of the benefits of collaborative autonomy, Mr Swain was eager to stress that the partner schools will not become “clones” and will retain their individual character and traditions, stating: “We’re not doing that [cloning], and we’re enshrining that principle in our legal documentation. Each school, has the right to maintain its own ethos and identity.”

Following the fiftieth anniversary of Farchynys in 2013, the Headmaster was also pleased that the School’s Welsh Centre will continue to flourish in serving as a resource for future generations of Marians, as a result of the purchase of two new properties. The first of these is the Barn – formerly an operational barn – that was a residential property, freeing up expansive flexible space for visitors to Farchynys in the form of work and conference facilities. The Barn also comprises some additional bedrooms and dormitories downstairs, helping to facilitate mixed groups at Farchynys. Secondly, the Cottage will be made available as a property to let, in order to aid the funding of the entire Farchynys estate. Meanwhile, the existing Coach House could potentially develop into a bunkhouse and a cookhouse, providing predominately catering and accommodative facilities, whereas the Barn will likely be the location for activities. Extra headland has also been acquired within the estate, mainly a venture to improve field courses and CCF-related excursions. Above all, Mr Swain was grateful for the donations raised to enable expansion beyond the Coach House, particularly as it safeguards the future of the facility for forthcoming students. He said, “I was very worried, because with 150 in Year 7, we wouldn’t have been able to have used just the Coach House. Just in the nick of time, we’ve managed to do something for the future.”

As part of the increased drive for Mandarin teaching in the School, pupils in Year 7 are now being offered the Mandarin Excellence Programme, a demanding but rewarding commitment to learning Chinese. The course – intended to run until 2020 and will generate £100,000 for the School – is perceived by Mr Swain to be a key asset in plans to form a Midlands powerhouse of Mandarin. Only fourteen schools nationally (including just four north of London) have been selected to offer the programme; the Headmaster met with the Head of one of these schools in Coventry just prior to the end of term. In spite of recognising the fact that “China’s strategy on business acquisition across the world is a cause of real anxiety,” Mr Swain believes that “opening doors into this new culture, and into this new language, is a way of really promoting better understanding, and influencing for good.”





Maths Competitions

Mr Litchfield writes: In November, the senior Maths team travelled to Wolverhampton university to compete in the regional heat of the senior Maths team competition. Gaurav Bhalla, George Benbow, Amanraj Garewal and Stuart Kirk took on 17 other schools from across Walsall, Wolverhampton and Shropshire, tackling some fiendish problems. The difficulty of the questions had been increased this year, but despite a few mistakes in the relay round, the team's excellent cross number and group round scores resulted in an excellent 2nd place. It was really pleasing to see the team being challenged and stretched out of their comfort zone.



DT Updates

Gurjivan Sohal: On a fine autumn day in October 2016, GCSE 10DT sets had the opportunity to visit Jaguar Land Rover's plant in Solihull. The branch was in full swing so we got a glimpse at future vehicles to be delivered. Whilst there, we were treated to a factory tour where we could see first-hand the production of these vehicles. It was a very interesting day which included a full team production challenge, robotics challenges and design process knowledge and skill. I must express my thanks to all accompanying staff and organisers. On 3rd November the Sixth Form DT students travelled for a day of study at the JCB World Headquarters in Staffordshire. We were all given a tour around the factory and museum which was very relevant to our studies, allowing us to witness processes not available in the school environment. Secondly we travelled to the National Memorial Arboretum for a memorial service to QM Old Boys and to look at architecture and memorial design.

Music Report

Keval Nathwani writes: This last term has been a maelstrom of musical activity, in which the choir and orchestra played significant roles. This includes the accompaniment of the Speech Day festivities as well as the forthcoming Carol Concert in Walsall Town Hall. The Choir, conducted by Miss Sullivan, sang John Rutter's 'For the Beauty of the Earth' with aplomb. The Orchestra, conducted by Mr. Vause, played a medley of three pieces which included, The Star Wars Theme, Aztec Fire and Lord of the Dance as well as accompanying the National Anthem and the School Song. 2016 marks the genesis of a new epoch for the School, however with the music department in the safe hands of Mr. Vause and Miss Sullivan we can be confident that the musical triumphs of the past will be replicated in concerts to come.

CCF updates

Cadet Infantry Battle Camp 2016:

Kodi Beveridge-Smith writes: Four cadets (Kodi Beveridge-Smith, Sam Hart, Sam Jephcott and Shaun Connolly) made the long journey to Sennybridge Training Area unsure of what to expect. Swiftly, the week began in earnest as cadets were plunged into command appointments designed to test their leadership and allow them to enhance their leadership potential. From training in woods and forests, performing casualty evacuations under fire, to dealing with and ensuring we had impeccable drills and skills expected of senior cadets. Each segment culminated in an overnight exercise. The cadets swiftly progressed into fighting in built up areas and dealing with anti-armour tactics. Certainly challenging, engaging, purposeful and exhausting 'stuff'. The experience provided us with an invaluable insight into the armed forces.

Sam Shackleton: In July, Cadet Corporals Sam Shackleton and Toby Harrington travelled to Royal Air Force College Cranwell to participate in the 112th Air Cadet Leadership Course, a prestigious achievement for which we were selected from several thousand applications from the Air Cadet Organisation. We were representing QMGS among Cadets from across the country and even some from Hong Kong. We were taught leadership qualities and mentored through 3 Phases of increasingly difficult situations throughout the week, testing both leadership and teamwork skills. We were challenged with additional responsibilities such as being Flight Leader, and also put through a three day field deployment in tents and bivvy shelters. The week concluded with passing out before the infamous College Hall Officers Mess, where we are the only people, apart from graduating officers, allowed to parade. With friends and family watching, inspection and presentations were carried out by the Station Commander, Air Commodore Chris J Luck, who himself said all of the cadets "went home a little taller, not just in height but in personality, pride, confidence and skills". Overall we have benefited hugely from the week, gaining skills that will help towards our own futures and hopefully cascade down through our whole Contingent.

Art



Francesca Adams reports: On Tuesday November 28th, 18 art students (left) and 3 teachers ventured into inner London to visit galleries to support on-going school projects. Visits were made to The National Portrait Gallery, the Tate Modern and the newly built House of Illustration. Even after trouble with the trains and some minor navigational issues the trip allowed many to explore artists and their work and gain inspiration for projects at A level.

GIS day

Samuel Shackleton writes: On 16th November, nine Year 12 geography students travelled to KEVI Camp Hill School to take part in a day of talks and activities organised by the Birmingham Geographical Association to coincide with World GIS Day. This involved investigating the use of Geographical Information Systems in a number of roles and careers; including National Disaster Management, Civil Engineering, the development of Smart Cities with Newcastle University's Urban Observatory and Remote Sensing using drones. Overall, an extremely useful and enjoyable event. We would like to thank Mr Larvin and Mr Collins for making the trip possible.



Luke Curtiss reports: On the 4th of July a small group of students accompanied by Mrs Franklin and Mr Rushworth woke up early for the journey to Birmingham Airport for what would be a fun week of developing our Spanish language skills in Granada. Activities for the week included a visit to the historic and impressive Alhambra, the house of Federico Garcia Lorca and the beautiful town of Granada. Students had a fantastic experience, complimented nicely by the scorching weather. We would like to thank the members of staff for accompanying the trip.

Target 2.0



In early December, a team of 6.2 students (above) participated in the Bank of England's Target 2.0 challenge, in which they were tasked with taking on the role of the bank's Monetary Policy Committee. This included assessing economic conditions & setting interest rates. Well done to Nayan Bhagvaker, Connor Butler, Karthik Selvan & Chris Lines for their 2nd place finish.
Ethan Moore

Mind Society

Do you ever wonder what it is that *you* are? Do you want to know what it means to claim one has a mind? Or are you simply interested in what makes a man mistake his wife for a hat? If so, then you may be interested in Mr Bradley's MindSoc, in which a group of Year 11s host discussions and talks - all in the pursuit of understanding what the mind truly is.
Ethan Moore

Roman invasion

Mr Reynolds writes: Over the half term holiday, Year 7s put down their pens, picked up their tools and became craftsmen, building replica Roman shields! Tailored to their studies of the Roman army's effectiveness, our boys produced some fantastic shields. Overall winner was Ranjodh Athwal with Taran Chana in second and Joseph Mitchell in third.

Granada trip

Battlefields trip

Mr Reynolds reports: In June 2016 a group of forty five QM students and five staff went to visit the First World War Battlefields sites in Belgium and France, organised by the History Department. We visited iconic sites of the Great War such as The Somme in France, staying in the Ypres Salient in Belgium where the battle of Passchendale was fought. The Last Post act of homage at The Menin Gate was particularly emotive. The trip was a brilliant experience, offering an insight into what Wilfred Owen meant in the line '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*'.

Poetry competition

Ethan Moore: For National Poetry Day this year, students were asked to write a poem containing a message. These poems were then marked by Mr Clay-Croome (Head of English) and finally by Mr Swain (Headmaster). Winners in each age category were awarded amazon vouchers (1st £15, 2nd £10 and 3rd £5) and house points. Mr Swain was proud to announce the winners for each age category in the end of term assembly:

Years 7, 8 and 9

1st Place - Zachariah Ahmed (9G)
2nd Place - Gurtaj Sangha (8D)
3rd Place - Dylan Sahajpal (9P)

Years 10 and 11

1st Place - Rohith Mukkapati (11P)
2nd Place - Aaron Ashton (10G)
3rd Place - Rohan Rashoda (11P)

Years 12 and 13

1st Place - Bronwen Armstrong (6HD)
2nd Place - Callum Long (6HB)
3rd Place - Hannah Watts (6HB)

History Society

Ethan Moore writes: The winter term of 2016 has seen a resurged interest in the School's oldest student-coordinated group - the History Society. Having elected a chairperson and committee, the society has hosted talks, debates and presentations on everything from Donald Trump to black history, Marxism and Fidel Castro. The society has struck popularity with both the higher and lower years, and we hope that it will return next term with equally widespread enthusiasm.

Children in Need

Kian Cushman writes: In November, students took part in fundraising for Children in Need. Activities included a penalty shoot-out, staff car wash, bottle-flipping competition and fancy dress football. All events were fun and staff gave great feedback on how enthusiastic the Year 7s were. The amount raised is yet to be confirmed but we would like to thank Mrs McPhee, who coordinated the entire project.

Trip to Oxford

Ethan Moore reports: On 6th December, philosophy and RS students arrived at Oxford University's Faculty of Mathematics to take part in a philosophy masterclass, during which renowned professors gave talks on issues such as theodicy, theology and philosophy of the mind. Students (right) had the opportunity to discuss complex problems with academic experts and gain a valuable insight into the subject as a whole. Thank you to Mr Bradley and Ms Roberts-Gawen for making the trip possible.



Geographers in London

Luke Curtiss writes: On the 14th October, the 6.2 geographers made an early start to travel down to London for a day of field work. The stops included London Docklands, Stratford, the Olympic Park and Velodrome, all relevant to the A2 course - the highlights being a trip across the Thames on the Emirates Air Line and a trip to the Westfield Centre. Thanks to all staff who made the trip possible.

Rugby

Rohit Suglani: In July, a group of students went to watch the World U20's Rugby Championship as well as taking part in a 7s tournament. We started the long trek to Manchester early. We started the first game with a full strength team but could not break down the opposition's defence until the second half when the tries rolled in for a win. This was followed up with an unbeaten run to the final and an overall victory. In high spirits we headed to the AJ Bell Stadium. We arrived to watch the 2nd half of the Argentina v Japan game - a very convincing win and performance by Argentina. Then it was Wales v New Zealand with the Haka making for a great start to the match. Although Wales led for most of the game a last second penalty meant the All Blacks were victors.



Tom Aston: The 1st XV (above) have played 8 games, winning 5 and losing 3. A surprising but pleasing NatWest Vase run saw us beat Shrewsbury 15-12 and KE Five Ways 20-19. However, having reached the last 32 in the country the run came to an end against a strong Hereford VI Form College side. The encouraging start to the season also finally saw a victory over KE Lichfield. This has all been achieved despite a long-term injury to our influential centre Isaac Saa. This has meant a number of players playing out of position and being given their debuts. This season our performances have been built on a strong forward base with dominance in rucks and mauls over many of our opponents which has allowed us to utilise the pace and elusiveness of our backs. Top try scorers are Lemarl Grossett & Tom Aston. We are all hoping that the fantastic start to the season continues with Staffordshire silverware up for grabs in both the 15 and 7-a-side versions!

Mr Taylor: The U13A side have lost only one game so far this season, competing well also in the Staffs festival. Jacob Clarke & Noah Bailey-Stewart have been consistent performers. The B/C teams have also had a good range of games, with Matthew James & Aleksander Reimus worth a mention for their respective teams for man of the match performances.

In the U12s, the boys have enjoyed their first team of rugby and have been involved in a number of high scoring encounters. The A team have won every game since an initial loss against OSH, with the highlight being a 50-5 victory over KE Camp Hill. The other sides have also made good progress, with a highlight being the 24 tries scored by the D team in 3 matches! Additionally, in the junior age categories, we have been indebted to a number of senior players who have assisted in coaching.

Joe Popple: This season for the U15s has seen much improvement individually as well as collectively. The results have been much improved. Whilst the top try scorers have been Zac Elliott and Gabriel Ekpa it has also been an exceptional season for our No.8 Sukcharan Singh and the Captain, Joe Popple. Overall there is still much to be done but it has been a very positive season for all concerned.

Anoop Padda: This has been a tough season for the U15B Team but the team has persevered and in return we have improved our ability and understanding of the game. Whilst our skills have improved there have also been a number of debuts given to previously unseen players, adding to the strength of the squad - Oliver Gibbons, Wayne Painter, Jaramraj Garewal and Sukhraj Jhangura. The key players this season have been Robert Davidson, with some excellent tackling (often against much bigger opponents), and Rohaan Khayani with his 'flash' runs and 'lucky' tries. This leaves me feeling confident that the team can get better and next season should see further improvements in ability and results.

Joe Christoffersen: At the beginning of the season the U14 side was struggling to keep up with the opposition. After several games we came up against a strong Old Swinford Hospital team and expected nothing more than a brave loss. To our surprise we won 26-25! After that astonishing victory there was a 'mind set' change in the whole squad and we began to improve match by match, beating strong sides such as King Henry VIII by over 40 points.

Cricket

Mr Gibbons: Year 7 Cricket Trials have been taking place this term and there have been some very promising cricketers on show! I have been grateful to students in Y10/Y11 and the Sixth Form who have been completing volunteering hours to contribute towards the completion of their ECB Young Activators Course. Thanks to Usamah Iqbal, Daniel Bishop, Musa Iqbal and Faaris Aqbal for their assistance so far.



Futsal

Mr Gibbons writes: It has been pleasing to be able to organise friendly Futsal fixtures this year in preparation for the U12, U14 & U16 Black Country Futsal Championships which take place after Christmas. After suffering a 6-2 defeat in their first fixture versus Aldridge, the Y7s have been impressive with 10-6 and 12-2 victories over Hydesville and Barr Beacon respectively. An inexperienced Y8/Y9 side have suffered defeats versus Aldridge & Barr Beacon whilst the Y10/Y11 team remain unbeaten after 9-4 and 20-5 wins against the same schools.

Cross Country

Mr Larvin writes: After last year's podium finish, the Cross Country squad has endured a frustrating start to the year, with three results seeing QM miss out on victory by a narrow margin. As a result, the QM A-team is in the bottom half of the table for the first time in a number of years. The highlight of the season so far was the QM Relay, with over 120 runners in attendance. QM were able to field three teams, but it was Nottingham High School who retained the title, with an impressive team performance. The XC team has gone into the winter break with the opportunity to recover ready for the demanding second half of the season.

Sixth Form Outdoor Activities weekend

The Farchynys activities weekend started on Friday 4th November, all the students loading their bags into a minibus in the morning. At lunch the Sixth Formers joined by Ms Roberts-Gawen, Mr Clements, Mr Rendu, Mr Monier and Mrs Wang departed from School on their way to Wales. Upon arriving at Farchynys we faced the first walk of the weekend, the route led to a scenic lake where the teachers played hide and seek. Once back inside the group had dinner and then had downtime for the remainder of that night.

The next day the Sixth Formers and teachers split in half; Mr Rendu along with Mr Monier and Mrs Wang were in charge of the hikers, and Mr Clements and Ms Roberts-Gawen were with the mountain bikers. The two groups split off to their separate locations, the walkers reaching a jaw dropping 907 meters vertically upwards, climbing up the tallest mountain in Wales outside the Snowdonia area. The bikers didn't have a much easier job as some students had never been mountain biking before. The students were exhausted when they got back so were given time to relax before dinner.

On Sunday, most still hadn't recovered so when it started raining on the last walk, it was abandoned much to the students' delight. After a quick stop to sight-see in the local town the group were on their way back to School, arriving back mid afternoon. It was, overall an amazing trip and great bonding experience for all Sixth Formers.

Editorial Team Editor: Mr R Langton;
Sub-Editors: Glen Foster, Vincent Jordan, Ethan Moore, Pavandeep Josan

Years 7, 8 & 9 Winner: Zachariah Ahmed (9G)

False Light

Sky darkens and waves crack.
Angry snarling bands of white and grey
Froth and foam like a rabid wolf pack.
Rocks get lashed with furious might,
Gulls scatter in alarm, crying
Helpless, screeching, distressed with fright.

Hunched and hooded, I traverse the beach.
Cold, wet, worn and weathered,
But steadfast - my goal within reach.
Up and down I walk that day,
With my nag and my lure - my 'False Light' -
Tempting the unwary that sail this way.

A dastardly deed, with daring abound:
Deviously imitating vessels at rest,
Urging foolish ships to run aground.
My 'False Light' message leads to disaster,
Wakes, wrecks, widows and plunders.
Where there is no crew, there is no master.

A force of nature, brutal yet sublime.
Cunning, calculating, cruel - without remorse.
What once was yours is now mine.
The message to heed is bright and clear:
Though the night is cloaked in shadow and dark,
It is I that you should really fear.

Years 10 & 11 Winner: Rohith Mukkapati (11P)

Time

You ...
You can heave boulders upon boulders,
You can level mountains upon Your will -
Revered are You, the Creator
of art, music and all that is beauty,
yet Feared, for You are the End of Civilisation -
the End of All -
a glass dove is placed in Your hand;
in the other You hold its hammer -
You are Everything ...
yet You are Nothing that is "real".

they ...
they crave to control You, tame You, hold You;
they wish to imprison you
to the mere capabilities of a clock,
as though You were a mere trinket.
Still, You elude them, as grains of sand
would elude the fingers of a child.

If only they realised Your Mass Expanse,
Your Unlimited Power, Your Limitless Capabilities,
maybe they would stop running
this foolish race against You,
and instead walk, with You by their side -
if only they realised,
maybe they would appreciate You
for what You are!

For *You* ...
You can heave boulders upon boulders,
You can level mountains upon Your will ...

Years 12 & 13 Winner: Bronwen Armstrong (6HD)

Femininity

We get the message
We don't matter.
Flatter
Us and validate us -
I'm not fussed.
We feign contempt because it's all we know:
The boot in the face or the glass ceiling -
The feeling
Is always never enough.
So let's change the conversation.
You don't have to wear the mask of masculinity to be considered human.