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Opposite: GCSE artwork by
Lottie Abrahams

SPOTLIGHTS



'SEVENOAKS SCHOOL, THIS IS HOUSTON'



In January 2011 Sevenoaks School successfully hosted a live satellite video link with the orbiting International Space Station (ISS). We were the first UK school to attempt a live video and audio link with a space vehicle of any sort.



Above: Nicholas Patrick talks to students in the Recital Room.

Right: Nicholas Patrick and Graeme Lawrie judging the poster competition.

© Julija Nikisena

Every year Sevenoaks School runs a Science Week to celebrate and encourage an understanding of science and engineering for Sevenoaks students and 3000 pupils from local schools. Science Week 2011 events ranged from a Falconry show to Brain Day where Lower Sixth students witnessed the dissection of sheep brains.

However, for the week's keynote event, Head of Science Graeme Lawrie spent the previous eight months organising a live link to the International Space Station, allowing a lucky audience of over 300 to see the six astronauts live onscreen in the Pamoja Hall for a question and answer session. For those of you unlucky enough to miss this event, a recording is available on the NASA website and also on the Sevenoaks School website.

The live link to the ISS was preceded by a fascinating presentation by Dr Nicholas Patrick PhD, NASA representative, about his experiences as an astronaut. He stressed the aesthetic beauty of the atmosphere and our great need to protect our planet. A graduate of both Cambridge and MIT, Dr Patrick made life in space and the training come alive.

'Sevenoaks School, this is Houston.' Five simple, timeless words. And then the images came onto screen. It's impossible to attempt to describe the atmosphere as the astronauts, led by Captain Scott Kelly, answered our questions, which ranged from queries about the harmful effects of radiation to how the astronauts use the toilet. Students from

Year 7 to the Lower Sixth read out their questions to the astronauts who bobbed up and down, with hair all over the place; yet it was difficult to believe that they were 238 miles above us. For 17 minutes, we glimpsed a world that was at once so similar and different from where we live.

More questions and answers followed... You can't see the Great Wall of China from space, though you can see the shuttle launch pad. However, using an IP phone it is possible to ring your loved ones from the International Space Station. And if security measures fail while you are doing work on the outside of the shuttle, letting you float off into space – yes, they do have jet packs!



For those of you who dream of the stars and walking on the moon, Dr Patrick had some statistics to share. While the vast majority of astronauts are engineering graduates (physics comes in second place), a not insubstantial proportion studied biology or economics at university. In his view, 'it's never too late' – though if you're claustrophobic, going up in a space shuttle is perhaps not for you.

It is hard to pick a word to sum up this incredible event. It was surreal, inspiring, fantastic, weird... I know that everyone present was enthralled by the experience and it is one we shall never forget. Thanks go to Mr Graeme Lawrie, Dr Nicholas Patrick, Mr Oleg Volkov (deputy for the Russian mission to the ISS who put Sevenoaks School in touch with NASA) and Captain Scott Kelly (astronaut in charge on the ISS) for making the whole event possible.

Emily Lindsay



Service to the wider community from a thriving and very busy boarding house.

Park Grange is home to 53 talented and energetic young ladies aged 13 to 18. Our aim is to provide a nurturing environment that enables them to make use of the opportunities open to them, and ultimately to fulfil their potential in whichever direction they choose.

There is a strong sense of identity and community within any boarding house and Park Grange is no different. This was made clear to us by comments from this year's leavers, one example being, 'This house and the memories I have from it will remain with me forever. I'm proud and honoured to have lived here.' The appreciation of all they have enables the girls to look outwards, and I am constantly impressed that, despite their busy lives, they are always keen to invest time and effort into helping others, whether within the framework of the school day, or simply because they feel passionate about a particular cause.

So what do we do as a house? Fundraising as a community features highly. The most notable event in our calendar is the Annual Park Grange Alternative Lunch. We are very proud that this is the biggest student-run fundraiser event and raises over £4000 every year. As the title suggests, Park Grange invites the whole school to lunch. Food options include hotdog, macaroni cheese or a baked potato with crisps, a drink and a slice of homemade cake. The event is organised by the Lower Sixth: food orders are taken, a colour-coded meal ticket issued and 1000+ portions of cake are baked; about half of these are made in Park Grange the day before the lunch, a Sunday now known as 'cake bake day'. The kitchen is full of laughter and activity from morning until 10pm and everyone mucks in, producing cakes and mess in equal measure! It is then a wonderful sight to see the games room fill up on the Sunday evening with beautifully sculpted cakes.

The next day our guests are served their lunch in the boarding house before moving to the lawn where other houses can hold stalls and a live band entertains. Every Park Grange girl is needed to ensure the event runs smoothly and each year group is allocated their own task. Whether it is



rubbish collecting, cake serving or queue controlling, every role is essential. The girls are rewarded with a great sense of achievement and quickly learn that with a bit a team effort, much can be achieved.

Despite working hard at the Park Grange lunch, the Middle School were keen to have a fundraiser they could call their own. A few years ago, therefore, The Sound of the Underground emerged: a student-run Middle School concert held with the aim of showcasing students of all musical abilities and genres. To stamp the PG mark on the event, cake features heavily and our kitchen is once more taken over by keen and careful bakers. As well as organising the concert, many of the Park Grange Middle School girls also perform and it is always

a delight to see new talents emerge in this smaller forum. This year the girls raised just under £600 for the Middle School Charity Week.

Park Grange is also the venue for the staff crèche on Thursday afternoon. Run by VSU volunteers, children under five are able to enjoy one another's company and that of the 'big girls and boys' in an hour and half of fun and play. Fortunately for us, altruistic acts can be performed as a community in a way that enhances life for all, and the life skills that the girls learn valuable whilst helping are invaluable. Most importantly, it is clear that fundraising provides them with some of their favourite memories and the greatest sense of pride from their time in Park Grange.

Liz Bassett



‘Science gives you the power to do what you otherwise couldn’t, and to understand what you otherwise wouldn’t.’

The theme of last year’s Founder’s Day was creativity. This year, it was science. Our guest speaker, Old Sennockian Dr Lars Blackmore, showed that the two need not be mutually exclusive, proving instead that the two are complementary, even necessary bedfellows when striving for success in the modern world.

Lars pursued his theme with fierce intelligence and wit, only deviating from his exploits at the jet-propulsion lab at NASA (where he is researching technology for the precision landing of a craft on Mars), to recall his schooldays as a boarder at Sevenoaks. His ingenuity and technical expertise made him popular in his dorm, with the invention of a ‘Housemaster detector’ – a device that switched off all electrical appliances, triggered by a pressure pad concealed in the carpet and sensitive to the Housemaster’s approaching footsteps after dark.

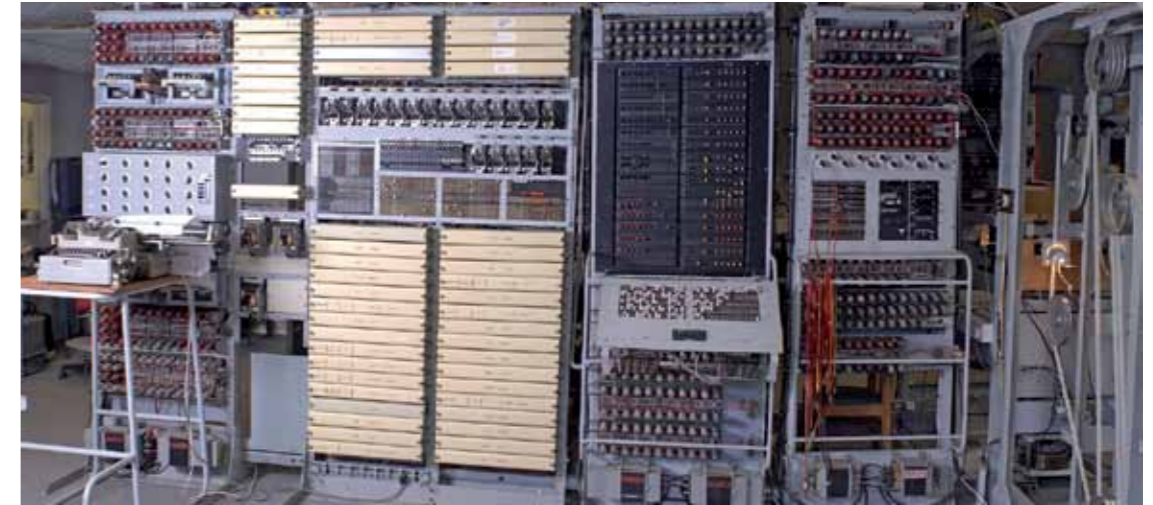
From schoolboy capers to the extraordinary ground-breaking work he has embarked upon in California, Lars’s career charts an intellectual trajectory and embodies a thirst for knowledge that is the quintessence of everything the school holds dear. Lars confessed that he was inspired in his time at Sevenoaks by his maths, science and electronics teachers, and now he in turn is inspiring a new generation of students to be similarly ambitious.

Combined with the recent live link to the International Space Station, articulated for us by Charly Solomou, and the intercontinental Group 4 Science Projects introduced by Neel Patel, it seems that the appetite for knowledge and the ability to acquire it are undiminished in our students. The message was clear: dreams are achievable, given talent and immense hard work, and it was an appropriate context for the prize-giving that followed.

It was also fitting that the musical interlude featured a suitably stellar performance by Nina del Ser, her fingers racing across the keyboard, the images projected on screens either side of the stage. She was very well supported by the orchestra under the stewardship of Chris Dyer. Guests spilled out into the July sunshine to be entertained by the gun run, which this year saw the Army section triumph.

Intellectually and culturally nourished; fortified by the Chairman’s wit and the Head’s vision of a school as a space for excellence and innovation, it was time for tutor groups to enjoy their lunches and so bring the year to a very satisfying close.

Chris Greenhalgh



The Mathematics Society inaugural trip took place on Thursday 23 June, when a group of 17 intrepid Lower Sixth students made the journey to Buckinghamshire to visit the remains of Station X, the home of Britain’s Second World War code-breakers.

The students were a ragtag mixture of Maths Society stalwarts, historians and future spies, while one came to see where his grandmother had worked during the war.

On arrival at Bletchley, a well-informed guide talked us through the history of the stately home prior to its requisition by the War Office. However, the big story was of course the triumph of human ingenuity which led to the breaking of the Enigma and Lorentz Codes during the Second World War. Full credit was given to the Polish and British mathematicians, and also to the large number of classicists, crossword enthusiasts, and amateur cryptographers who were drafted in to help. In particular the role of women was emphasised, for example the corset-stitchers and seamstresses who were retrained to wire the first electrical computers.

The highlight of the trip was undoubtedly the National Museum of Computing which housed a fully functional rebuild of the first ever programmable computer – the aptly named Colossus. It is incredible to believe that this huge machine is several million times less powerful than a microchip in the smallest mobile phone.

Photo: The National Museum of Computing

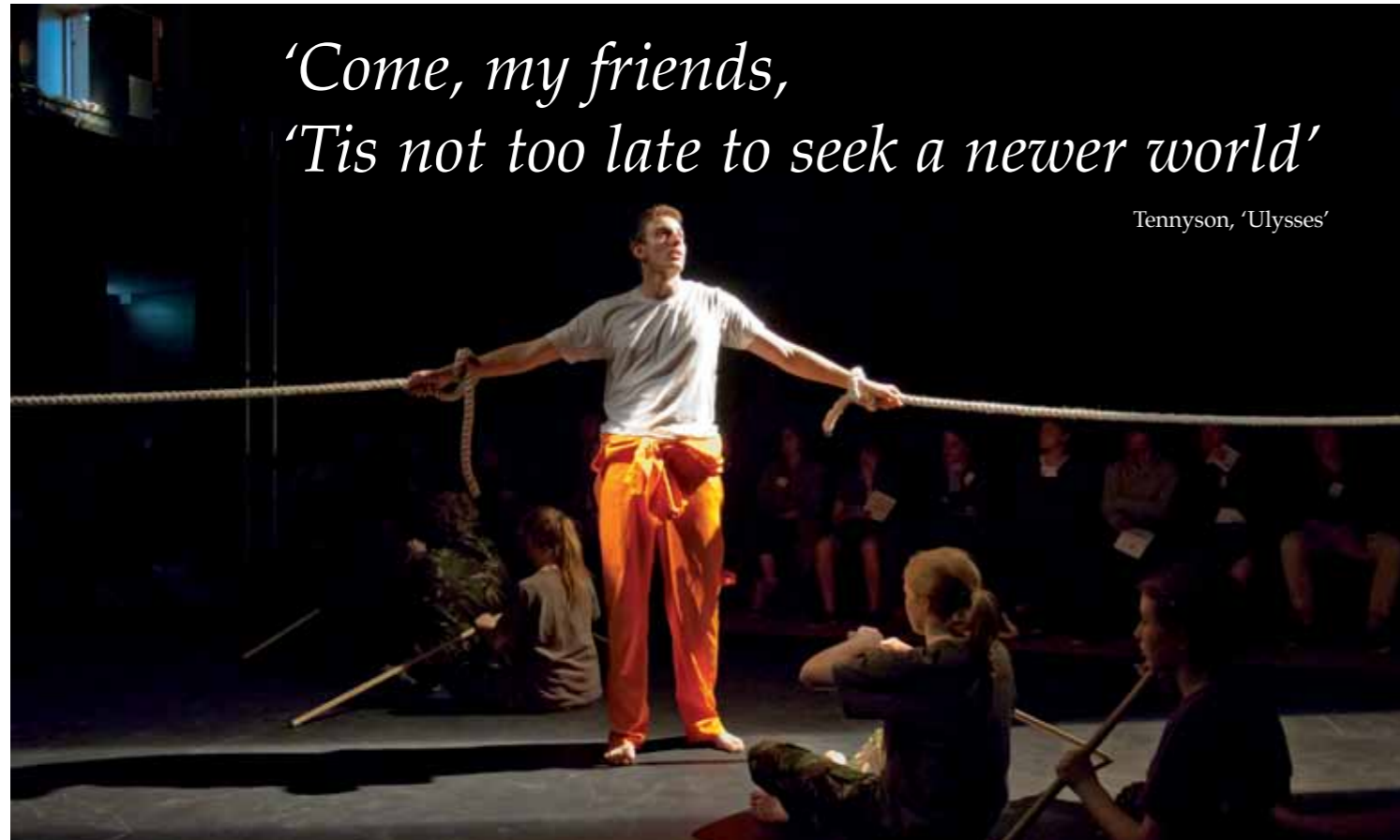
We learned how mathematician Max Newman and engineer Tommy Flowers built the machine, which was able to crack the formidable Lorentz cipher used to encrypt the messages between Hitler and his Generals. Most importantly it confirmed the fact that the Germans had been tricked by the decoy landing at Calais, information which allowed the D-Day landings to take place in Normandy on 6 June 1944.

Our guide spiced up the technical aspects of his talk with various bits and pieces of wartime slang – referring to the need of the code-breakers to get inside ‘the orderly mind of the Hun’ and explaining how a fateful error made by a tired Radio Operative, referred to throughout as ‘Fritz’, led to the discovery of the secrets behind the Lorentz code.

After the end of the tour we explored the museum, including the atmospheric half-dilapidated huts where Turing and the other code-breakers worked. A collection of genuine Enigma machines and codebooks was also housed in the main museum.

It was a fabulous day out and a wonderful demonstration of the applicability of mathematics to the real world. Several students have already been inspired to look at the various code-breaking challenges at the museum’s website, and we hope it will be the first of many successful Maths Society away days.

*David Vaccaro
www.codesandciphers.org.uk*



*'Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world'*

Tennyson, 'Ulysses'



With the first anniversary of the opening of the Sevenoaks Performing Arts Centre, what better way to celebrate than to mark the occasion with a theatrical performance which utilised the full capacity of the building? *An Odyssey*, directed by Gavin Henry, undertook an epic journey as it moved between various rooms in The Space. Based on two scripted adaptations by Simon Armitage and David Farr, this was a truly unique production for the Drama department, and an exciting event for the school. Updating the epic to modern times and combining themes of immigration, persecution and the imprisonment of refugees (particularly alluding to Guantanamo Bay), the contemporary metaphors served as poignant undertones throughout the performance.

The audience began their journey by being forcefully led inside the venue by guards.

They were assigned name badges of random identities, walked through a maze of white asylum-like walls, and were screamed at by the other prisoners (actors). They watched a video designed for tourists about the island of Great Britain, being made aware of all the famous exports (fish and chips, the London Eye, and of course *The X Factor*).

With the end of the film, the screen ascended, the lights went on, and we saw the washed up, unconscious body of Odysseus (Alex Tocili). Mistaken for an illegal immigrant, he is interrogated by the guards to reveal his original nationality. From here the famous epic tale was recounted, Odysseus desperately seeking to return to Ithaca after many years of travelling and interference by the gods.

As the audience voyaged through The Space, learning of Odysseus' travels, they not only witnessed a spectacle but became part of it too. The actors were hugely successful in incorporating the audience as an extra character. The show itself was similarly as spectacular: it employed dance, music, puppetry, mime, lighting, singing and many occasions of audience interaction. Charly Solomou stood out as a particular highlight, interjecting moments of the play with her stunning and rich vocals, which sounded all the more enchanting due to the acoustic quality of the rooms. Nor was the production static: there were moments of high tension, terror, compassion, and comedy. Hannah Sands and Harry Smith must be commended for their hysterical performance as merchants suffering the effects of the infamous 'lotus flower' drug – which threw the audience back into a 1960s heyday. Similarly, Kitty Gould and Sam Harrison,

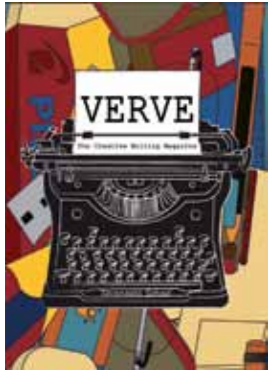
as the interrogators, managed not only to create an intimidating atmosphere through scenes of harassment, but would then go on to create moments of light relief with their humorous *Dumb & Dumber*-like interaction.

Perhaps most admirable of all was the energy and enthusiasm that the whole ensemble injected into the show. Every actor was dedicated, staying in character despite having to interact with friends and family. Alex Tocili must be recognised for carrying the play through virtually every scene, and keeping the audience captivated throughout. The quality of each individual performance ensured a fantastic overall exhibition of talent, and the adventurous use of different media made the show an aesthetic success. Congratulations to the cast and crew for all their hard work; it certainly paid off.

Kathy Stocker

WAITING

A short story by Niamh Meyer (Year 7), published in the third edition of Verve, Sevenoaks School's creative writing magazine.



Verve cover design by Christie Mok and Vicki Lau

I could feel the glass pane of the window cold against my face. My legs were growing stiff and numb, but still, I waited. I uttered a silent prayer. It would be a good half an hour more, everyone had said. But I wanted to be the first to see him, to reach and feel the soft stubble on his cheek, to feel his arms around me – to know he was real.

He was a brave one, my Pa – at least, that's what everyone was always telling me. When War was declared, the courage and bravery of men made him leave us.

Ma cried when he left, and begged him not to go; prayed to the Lord. But he did anyway. Said he had to. Said it was his Duty.

Gradually, I could hear voices, getting louder as the men moved closer to us. Soon the voices morphed into faces. Some were singing hymns. Then I saw the man at the front of crowd. He was striding down the road, whistling and laughing – the very picture of joy. In shape and stature, from a distance, he might have been my own Pa, but he stopped at the house opposite and eager arms pulled him inside.

After that, they came by the dozen: hands in pockets, smoking their tobacco, whistling, singing 'Men of Harlech', all smiling. They were met by their women and children, silently thanking God for their safe return.

Soon the stream of returning men had dwindled to a stop. But still no Pa.

I was just about to turn away from the window when I saw the last uniformed man striding down the road. I settled myself down to watch as he

walked up to our door and rang the bell. My mother yanked the door open eagerly, aeons of tortured waiting displayed openly on her taut face; but as she took in the man's appearance her face fell. The distant hum of voices enveloped me. The waiting seemed to last an eternity. Then he fished about in his pocket and handed something to my mother. He bid her goodbye, then turned and left.

The minutes passed. The road had embraced its returning heroes; smuggled them back into their families. Panic snatched at my insides like a crab grabbing its meal. A persistent roaring filled my ears, curling me up in a ball, hands over my ears to block out the noise. Tears welled up but refused to come; the inexpressible void stretched instantly in front of me.

Cold and remote, my body took me down the steep stairs. The echo of my feet marked my movement. Inside the kitchen Ma had merged with the Bible, all wet and leathery in her grasp. For once I could not touch her nor feel her pain.

Niamh Meyer

The following prizes were awarded by the English department for the best entries to this year's *Verve*:

Junior School: *Isolation* by Claire Holland

Middle School:
A Trapped Secret by Bethany Hall

Senior School:
Careers Interview by Alix Abrahams

31THIRTYONE: MATT HUMPHREY (OS 1997)

In his 31st year, photographer Matt Humphrey set himself the challenge of photographing 31 actors and directors in 31 days.



Michelle Dockery © Matt Humphrey

The aim of the project was to take 31 portraits in the 31 days of August 2010 and, through an auction of the prints, raise money for charity. I had chosen to support Crohn's and Colitis UK (NACC), which also was celebrating its 31st year.

I began by asking actors and directors with whom I had worked to be my subjects. I had been employed as a stage hand at the Old Vic following a career change from teaching, so the first person I spoke to was Kevin Spacey, artistic director of the theatre. After a cast vs crew table tennis tournament, I plucked up the courage to ask him if he would take part. He was very willing and I knew his involvement would spur the project on. It wasn't long before I had signed up Jeff Goldblum, Sam Mendes, Michelle Ryan, Lesley Manville and Sir Richard Eyre.

One of the main things I wanted to achieve artistically was to photograph each person in as organic and natural a way possible. All the photos are lit by natural or available light and this meant that I could travel quite lightly to each shoot. The list of sitters grew, as did the momentum surrounding the project. The months following were equally frenetic as I sought publicity for the project. Thankfully it was featured in the national press and we also had a gala event in London to open the auction.

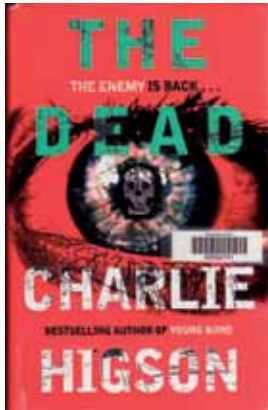
The success of last year's project means I have braved to do it again. The next one will feature 31 musicians, including Sevenoaks alumni Joe Stilgoe and the Webb Sisters. I will be raising money for African Workshop, a charity based in Mali. A limited set of signed prints will be auctioned in November, with a limited run of smaller prints sold through the project's website: www.31thirtyone.com.

Matt Humphrey

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL IN FICTION AND MEMOIR

THE DEAD BY CHARLIE HIGSON (OS 1976)

A terrible disease is striking everyone over the age of fourteen. Death walks the streets. Nowhere is safe...



I am currently writing a series of books for young adults called *The Enemy*. I wanted the second book in the series, *The Dead*, to be about a group of kids going to school outside London who have to move into town when a zombie plague strikes. As I grew up in Sevenoaks and went to school there, I initially thought of setting the opening of the book at Sevenoaks School itself. I prefer to use real locations wherever possible. It is particularly effective when you're writing about something that has a strong fantasy element to set the events firmly in the real world. In the end I, however, made up an imaginary school called Rowhurst, but very much based it on my memories of being at Sevenoaks in the 1970s. I'm sure the school has changed a great deal since then, and rather than spend days researching it, it seemed easier to project my memories of Sevenoaks onto an imaginary school. The geography is roughly the same as the real school and I'm sure any Sevenoaks pupils reading the book will find bits of it familiar. I really enjoyed my time at Sevenoaks, particularly the time I spent in the Art department under Bob White.

Charlie Higson

The Dead is published by Puffin (September 2010).



THE PLANE STORY BY KEVIN SACCO (OS 1970)

A modern-day Bildungsroman

I came to Sevenoaks School in 1965. My dad, an American ad man, had come to London to ply his trade. He intended to send me to the American School until he came across *Experiments in Education at Sevenoaks* by Kim Taylor. After reading Bob White's chapter on the Art department my dad changed his mind. I am so glad he did. In John Adams' English class I sat in wonder as the then 13-year-old Adam Curtis elegantly deconstructed Shakespeare. Ben Bradnack's drama productions hooked me on theatre. A terrible failure at rugby, I nevertheless appropriated a red and white team scarf and wore it through many New York City winters until it disintegrated! I spent most of my time in the Art department. Mr White gently guided me through A-level and on to Camberwell School of Art, and I went on to a career as a storyboard illustrator. I look back on all that in *The Plane Story*.

Kevin Sacco

The Plane Story is published by IDW Publishing.

CLASSICS STUDY TRIP TO POMPEII



At exactly twenty past five on a cold morning in May, 65 students climbed onto a bus bound for Gatwick Airport. Punctuality and early mornings were to become themes of this Year 10 trip. We couldn't wait.



Arriving in a sunny Naples, we enjoyed a delicious lunch of pizza, then walked to Naples Archaeological Museum, which contains most of the exquisite mosaics and beautiful paintings found at Pompeii. The next morning, we entered Pompeii itself. A visit to the amphitheatre was followed by a walking tour. We were amazed at how well everything had been preserved, from Apollo's temple to the deep ruts in the road made by chariots.

On Sunday, we travelled to Pozzuoli, to see an amphitheatre with amazing underground tunnels, which gave us a chance to imagine what it would have been like to walk and live there as a Roman gladiator. We travelled on to the volcano in Solfatara and then to Cumae, where we walked through a thousand-year-old tunnel. Finally, we visited Misenum, an underground cave, in which the Romans used to keep their fleet, and from where Pliny the Elder sailed in his failed attempt to rescue the people caught in the eruption of Vesuvius.

On Monday, we drove along the striking Amalfi coastline, with its scarily steep cliffs. We arrived at Paestum, another beautifully preserved settlement, with its three temples, dedicated to Poseidon, Hera and Demeter. The next day, we visited Capri and explored the villa of the Emperor Tiberius. On Wednesday, we drove to Herculaneum where we explored the underground forum, and watched men restore the mosaics. We also marvelled at the fact that Herculaneum used to be a seaside town, whereas now it is several hundred metres distant from the sea, due to the eruption of Vesuvius. Unfortunately, heavy rain meant that our excursion up Vesuvius was cancelled, much to our disappointment. Instead, we visited the impressive villa of Poppea, Emperor Nero's wife.

It was a wonderful trip, and we are very grateful to Mr de May for organising it.

Isla Stevens, Francesca Vernon and Bethany Hall



LANG LANG INSPIRES

Nina del Ser (Year 10) and Lou Warnett (Year 7), were selected to take part in the Lang Lang Inspires massed piano concert at the Southbank Centre on 22 May, which marked the finale of Young Pianists Week. Here they reflect upon the experience.



Could you explain how you were selected for the concert?

Nina: In February this year the Southbank Centre opened a website especially for its 'Lang Lang Inspires' project. Word spread that young people could upload videos onto this website, and that the best applicants would be selected for an 'event' with Lang Lang. The award winners were notified of their selection and sent music to learn at the end of March. It was also at this time that we received exciting news about the nature of the event – it was to be a massed piano concert with one hundred pianists playing simultaneously on 50 Steinway baby grand pianos at the Royal Festival Hall – the climax of the Lang Lang Inspires week. About a week later I received an email informing me that I was also going to perform a solo in the same concert.

Lou: First, we had to record ourselves playing a piece, maximum three minutes long, then submit it to the Lang Lang Inspires team, who listened to the over 500 entries and selected the worthy ones: only 100 people. That means those chosen were in the top 20 per cent of some of the finest players who live in England. I am very proud to have been chosen, and I am sure Nina is too.

Tell us about the day.

Nina: We gathered at 10am – directly at the Southbank Centre. The final rehearsal, with Lang Lang giving feedback, lasted about three hours. The concert itself started at 5pm, and from then on, I didn't really notice the time passing any more, nor can I recall much in detail because of the emotions and nerves I was experiencing.

Lou: The Friday night was a chance to meet the other players and meet Lang Lang for the first time. I was extremely excited to see him, nervous too. I had heard a lot about him, read his biography, and did not know what to expect. I was surprised to see him so cool and relaxed, more human than I had previously thought. Sunday was the concert. Surprisingly, when you're on stage the Royal Festival Hall feels smaller and friendlier than when you are in the seats.

What memories do you take away?

Nina: This day will, of course, always be a milestone for me. This was an extremely rare opportunity – meeting one of the most influential and inspiring classical musicians in the world and performing in one of the world's greatest classical music concert halls. The highlight for me was my solo performance, because of how nervous I was. Knowing that Lang Lang, sitting on a chair placed next to the Steinway grand, was following every movement of my fingers on the keyboard made me forget that there were about 2500 other people, sitting off-stage, who were also listening attentively.

Lou: The most memorable part for me was the concert itself. It was such a thrilling experience to be viewed by such a large public and to impress the audience with the result of our labour-intensive rehearsal. I saw how supportive the spectators were, and the parents, who formed a significant part of the crowd. I am proud of having performed on the stage of the Royal Festival Hall.

LOWER SIXTH BIOLOGY TRIP TO MADAGASCAR



The Biology department is famous for their audacious trips and this year proved no exception.

Our group of 27 are still surprised at how lucky we were to explore the wonders of Madagascar.

Travelling into the unknown, we arrived in the capital Antananarivo (Tana) for a night before heading down south to Fort Dauphin, a port town on the southern coast. After a seven-hour experience on a truck we finally arrived at Ifotaka and the camp where we would spend the next week. The conditions of the camp were basic with tents, bucket showers and a hole in the ground, and rice was our staple diet.

We worked with scientists and PhD students on preserving five different sections of the Mandray Valley: birds, lemurs, herps, vegetation and invasive plants. The data we helped gather is going towards a report for UNESCO to make the Mandray Valley a protected biosphere. In each section we helped collect data through different methods such as mist netting for the birds and transits for the invasive plants, which involved walking in a straight line through the vegetation. We won't miss the 5.30 wake-up calls in the cold and dark, but walking barefooted across the Mandrare River at dawn and dusk is something we are not likely to forget.

One of the most rewarding moments of the trip was visiting the village of Ifotaka to see the new classroom built with the money we had raised during the quiz night and junior school disco. The gratitude shown by the headmaster touched us all. After saying a sad goodbye to the camp and the Madagascan students, we headed all the way up north to Nosy Be, an island off the north-east coast. The camp we stayed in was in an idyllic spot on a quieter side of the island.

The next week included snorkelling or completing our PADI dive course around Madagascar's astonishing variety of coral and fish. Through lectures during the day our knowledge on reef ecology expanded hugely. The sun and the beach proved a completely different experience to our time down south, with both being equally unforgettable. Mrs Pitcher, Mrs Watson, Miss Cardon and Mr Vincent admirably organised and looked after us all, and we are truly thankful to them for taking us on this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Fleur Nash

WATCH THIS SPACE!

The Space, Sevenoaks School's Performing Arts Centre, has won three prestigious architectural awards this academic year.

Designed by Tim Ronalds Architects and opened in April 2010, The Space triumphed in the Commercial & Public Access category in the 2010 Wood Awards and the Best Education Building category at the Brick Awards. It also received a 2011 RIBA award from the Royal Institute of British Architects.

The Wood Awards, now in its eighth year, is the UK's premier architecture and furniture competition celebrating excellence in design in wood. The criteria for these awards are based on design, craftsmanship and quality of installation. As regards The Space, the judges 'were instantly overwhelmed by the magnificence and grandeur of the building'. They added, 'The roof of the concert hall is outstanding. The high standard of workmanship is evident in every aspect of this

project, from the beautifully crafted handrails to the asymmetric pyramid roof in the recital room.'

The Brick Awards is one of the longest established and most widely respected design awards in the UK, and recognises excellence in design and construction using brick. The Brick Awards judges noted that The Space 'exploits the topography of the site and therefore creates a number of external spaces and internal volumes that combine to make a satisfying composition'.

For the 2011 RIBA Awards, six exceptional buildings in the South East region were recognised for their architectural excellence. Judged on a regional basis and approved by a national awards jury, the South East region buildings are among 97 buildings in the UK and Europe which received RIBA Awards this year.

Navaneethan Kunaratnam

YOUNGSOX TRIP TO TOLO, GREECE



Sixty Year 7 pupils participated in the annual trip to Greece in early July, and enjoyed alternate days on the beach and on study trips to the ancient sites of Epidaurus and Corinth.

DAY 1

After a three-hour flight we touched down in Athens, hopped on a double-decker bus and set off. We stopped at the Corinth Canal and walked across. It was dark when we arrived at the Kleoni Club in Tolo. We had a quick dinner, went to our rooms and within 15 minutes we were all asleep, exhausted from the day's travel.

DAY 2

The beach was clean and although there weren't many waves, the water was fantastic, cool and refreshing... and there were banana boat rides to go on! We were very well monitored but had a degree of freedom which allowed us to venture into the small local village and really experience Greece first hand.



DAY 3

We set off to the neighbouring town of Napflion. We climbed the 1000 steps in the scorching heat. We went on then to Epidaurus, an ancient Greek health spa, which is famous for its gigantic theatre. We had fun exploring it and climbed to the very highest of the 14,000 seats. We experimented with the acoustics of the site, and then took a boat ride back to Tolo.

DAY 4

At the beach we got to ride on the flats, which are rubber rafts being towed by a motorboat. They are lighter than banana boats and far closer to the water, so the experience felt significantly faster and even more thrilling. We accelerated out to sea, bumping over waves and into each other, some of us toppling into the water.

DAY 5

Today we travelled by coach to the Ancient Corinth. This magnificent Roman sites dates from 44BC and was destroyed by an earthquake in 1858. This evening there was great excitement as the disco ran ten minutes over!

DAY 6

We took a boat to a deserted beach where we were allowed to dive into the sea. The owner of the boat set up a barbecue and roasted the most delicious kebabs. The water was beautifully crystal clear, but not a fish in sight!

DAY 7

After dinner we took our seats for our little show 'Tolo's Got Talent'. Around ten people took part and there was magic, singing, dancing and all sorts of strange acts.

DAY 8

We reached Athens early and went to the museum of the Acropolis. We saw some fantastic artefacts and statues but sadly we weren't able to see the Parthenon up close. We had a wonderful time, one which I'll never forget, and I owe a huge thank you to all the teachers that accompanied us on the trip.

Hamish Thomas