



The Elizabethan

SPRING 2017



THE HEARD BUILDING: After the half-term holiday, pupils and staff began using the extensively refurbished and extended block, which is now the base for QE's English department. Turn to p3.

From the Headmaster

Dear Parents,

This has been a good term, punctuated in the middle by the significant event of our English department moving into the refurbished and extended Heard Building. This building is especially important in the recent history of our School. In the late 1990s, its construction was one of the very first capital projects to be funded through the Friends of Queen Elizabeth's. Now, in the latest stage of our Estates Strategy, it has been not merely repurposed but thoroughly modernised and upgraded. And once again, the work has been entirely funded through FQE.

I am delighted at the success of this project and I would like to commence this letter by placing on record my gratitude to all the parents, old boys and supporters of the School who have contributed. Without their generosity, whether in the form of one-off gifts or in regular donations, our pupils and staff simply would not be enjoying the benefits afforded by these impressive new facilities.

Last summer's very strong examination results have continued to reverberate at the School this term. January brought the publication of the annual Government league tables, which confirmed QE's position in the foremost rank of all schools across both the independent and state sectors. QE was named the top boys' school nationally for GCSE results, while at A-level, ranked in the tables by average point score per entry, we were the second-ranked state school in the country.

This month, I was pleased to receive a letter from the Minister of State for School Standards, Nick Gibb, congratulating us on our "high standards...hard work and professionalism". The letter



concentrated on the School's performance at GCSE against the Government's new 'Progress 8' measure. Progress 8 measures the progress pupils make over eight key subjects, including English and Mathematics, between Key Stage 2 and the end of Key Stage 4. Queen Elizabeth's School, Mr Gibb wrote, is among the top five per cent of schools nationally.

Following the recent Government announcement on the funding of new, selective free schools, I re-iterate my contention that it is essential that state-maintained education caters for the most able students and, furthermore, that the system enables social mobility. These are priorities that are absolutely core to our values at Queen Elizabeth's School.

Our new School Development Plan, introduced this academic year, attaches considerable importance to providing challenge for all our very able pupils, so that they continue to make academic progress throughout their time at the School. The plan highlights the need for teachers to direct and inspire pupils to develop habits that will be useful to them in their learning. One of the habits I am especially keen for our boys to cultivate is that of asking questions. I would urge pupils not to be embarrassed but always to adopt an interrogative approach if they do not understand something: this is a sign of strength, not weakness. By persevering in asking good questions, boys will find they can readily eliminate any academic difficulties they face in the classroom.

But while that is valuable, the benefits of asking questions extend well beyond such a utilitarian outcome. You can read elsewhere in this newsletter about our burgeoning lecture programme. One of the purposes of inviting inspirational

speakers into the School is to give boys opportunities to ask questions of those who have great expertise and experience in fields that extend far outside our normal curriculum. We thus seek to nurture a culture of intellectual curiosity. To ask good questions in such a context means that boys must first cultivate good analytical and listening skills so that they can understand what the speaker is saying and, perhaps, identify any flaws in his or her argument. At these events, I have been encouraged to hear boys refusing to take things at face value, but instead respectfully questioning our distinguished visitors.

“high standards, hard work and professionalism”

I was interested to read recently about what Google looks for in its new employees. Among the qualities it seeks is 'high cognitive ability' – those who are not only bright, but intellectually curious and able to learn. Google values role-related knowledge, but not deep specialisation in a narrow area: even when employing staff in a technical role, although the company assesses expertise in computer science thoroughly, it nonetheless prefers those with an extensive general understanding of computer science rather than a narrowly specialised knowledge of one field. The company has also coined a neologism – 'Googleyness' – to sum up a package of related qualities that it looks for when recruiting. These include enjoying fun, intellectual humility, conscientiousness, being comfortable with ambiguity (Google acknowledges that it does not know how the business will evolve) and evidence that applicants have taken some courageous or interesting paths in their lives.

All this is highly instructive for us as teachers, for you as parents, and for the boys themselves as they prepare



for university and future careers. The School's own equivalent of Googleyness – 'QE Qualities', perhaps – would certainly include intellectual curiosity, alongside grit and resilience. Since QE is a selective school, our pupils are naturally endowed with intelligence. It gives them a valuable head start in life, but no more than that. In fact, a strong academic record on its own is recognised by employers as a poor predictor of performance. Employees who thrive eschew complacency and instead actively seek fresh challenges, embracing any failures as opportunities for growth.

As we adapt to a fast-changing world, it has been interesting to have contact in recent months with three Old Elizabethans – Kam Taj, Jay Shetty and Aaron Tan – who are all, in their various ways, following unconventional career paths. Fired by a desire to help others, Aaron (OE 1996–2003) has recently started training others in public speaking, having discovered that public speaking was the number one fear among adults. Kamran Tajbakhsh (OE 2004–2011) has embarked on a career as a performance coach and motivational speaker little more than a year

after graduating from Cambridge. And Jay (OE 1999–2006) was named in the media category of Forbes magazine's influential *European 30 under 30* list. Having spent time as a monk and wanting to make a difference in the world, Jay now has a global reputation as a vlogger, filmmaker and online personality with a daily show on *HuffPost Live*. All three are exemplars of those demonstrating a willingness to ask questions and then act courageously on the answers they receive.

I extend my best wishes to all our families for the Easter holiday.

Neil Enright



Heard Building project completed, thanks to FQE

Staff and pupils took possession of the refurbished and extended Heard Building during the term and have been enjoying the improved facilities in the English department's new base.

The project is the latest major development in the School's Estates Strategy: since the summer, the building has been entirely reorganised and structurally strengthened, with a new link added to the adjacent Fern Building. The block provides self-contained accommodation for English, including eight classrooms and offices. It has been decorated with enlarged photographs of recent

School drama productions. The project was completed on time and on budget, its costs, totalling more than £1m, being met entirely by charitable giving through the Friends of Queen Elizabeth's.

The building was first opened in May 1997 and was one of the very first projects to be supported by FQE. It is named after Luxton Robert 'George' Heard (OE 1927–1936). Mr Heard, who died in 2009, was School Captain in his final year as a pupil. He later became QE's Chairman of Governors, preceding the current Chairman, Barrie Martin, who took over in 1999.



On their mettle: robotics club's golden start

After setting records and taking prizes, at the time of writing QE's new robotics club was due to compete at the VEX IQ National Championships at Birmingham's NEC.

Two QE teams – HYBRID and Gearsquad – successfully took on 29 other VEX IQ teams at a regional round at The Henrietta Barnett School and then just days later achieved similar success at the City of London School for Girls. VEX IQ is an international snap-together robotics system. The School's VEX club draws boys from Years 8 & 9.

Head of Technology Michael Noonan said: "These are quite remarkable achievements, considering this is the first year that VEX robotics of any kind have been attempted at the School."

At Henrietta Barnett, HYBRID took the Judges' Award. After the two rounds, HYBRID is the UK's top-ranked team in the Robot Skills Challenge, with Gearsquad second, while in the Teamwork Challenge, the teams are joint-first.



The School play: powerful, innovative and dystopian

QE's young actors brought H G Wells' powerful and dystopian visions of the future alive in this year's major drama production.

The performance, entitled, *Out of Time: A Wellsian Trilogy*, featured a cast from Years 7–10 staging three of Wells' best-known works, *The Time Machine*, *The Invisible Man* and *The War of the Worlds*, which were adapted and directed by Year 12 pupils Keenan Dieobi, Mark Thomas and Nicholas Pirabakaran. Mark also composed some of the original music: other compositions were by fellow sixth-formers Abbas

Adejonwo, Himal Bulathsinhala, Alfie Clarke and Joshua Wong. Director of Music Cheryl Horne conducted the 12 musicians.

The audience in the Shearly Hall became delegates at the *71st Annual Wellsian Symposium of Future Sciences*. And in another innovative feature, pre-recorded film was used for the first time in a QE play to complement the action on stage. Drama Director Elaine White said: "The cast engaged enthusiastically with Wells' imaginative, dark themes. Our vision had a deliberately 'retro' feel, harking back to early cinema."

You only have to ask: the importance of intellectual curiosity

The School's burgeoning lecture programmes provide valuable opportunities for boys not only to hear from visiting experts, but also, importantly, to ask them questions, the Headmaster says.

“Education, rightly understood, is a complex process that should involve dialogue as well as the transmission of information and ideas.

We encourage questions from pupils because, at the most basic level, we recognise that not all of them learn in the same way and at the same speed, and because, of course, not all teachers communicate in a manner that suits every boy equally. Quite simply, pupils do not always understand. It is therefore essential that they ask questions until they do.

Asking questions has many benefits beyond the obvious one of generating answers. It fosters skills in analytical thinking, boosts self-confidence,

develops spoken communication skills and can spark lively and productive discussions. If cultivated as a habit, asking questions will inculcate an attribute that will stand boys in good stead for their future, namely intellectual curiosity.

To this end, we have been keen to expand the opportunities for our boys to hear from external speakers with something worthwhile to say, whether because of their outstanding careers or because they are recognised as experts in a particular field.

This term's speakers included:

- Sir Bernard Hogan-Howe, who retired as Metropolitan Police Commissioner last month, gave Year 10 a wide-ranging and frank talk on his own story and on the challenges of policing
- Sir Christopher Hum, former British Ambassador to China and Master of Gonville and Gaius College, Cambridge from 2006–2012, looked at China past, present and future in his address to our formal Year 12 Luncheon (pictured)
- Andrew Copson, Chief Executive

of the British Humanist Association, whose talk to the younger boys covered fundamental areas such as the nature of reality, morality and the meaning of life

- Roger Delves, Professor of Leadership Practice at Ashridge Executive Education, Berkhamsted, who urged on our senior boys the importance of starting to develop their personal branding early
- Tony Joseph, father of Old Elizabethan Guy Joseph (1998–2003), who died in a paragliding accident in 2011. The Joseph family established a charity, Guy's Trust, to support education and marine conservation overseas. Mr Joseph encouraged Year 11 boys to emulate his son's spirit of adventure and concern for good causes
- Dr Charlie Easmon, who provides occupational health and mental health services to many FTSE 100 companies, spoke to Year 8 and 10

boys about mental health and wellbeing.

In each case, it was apparent that our speakers were accustomed themselves to asking questions and to challenging established

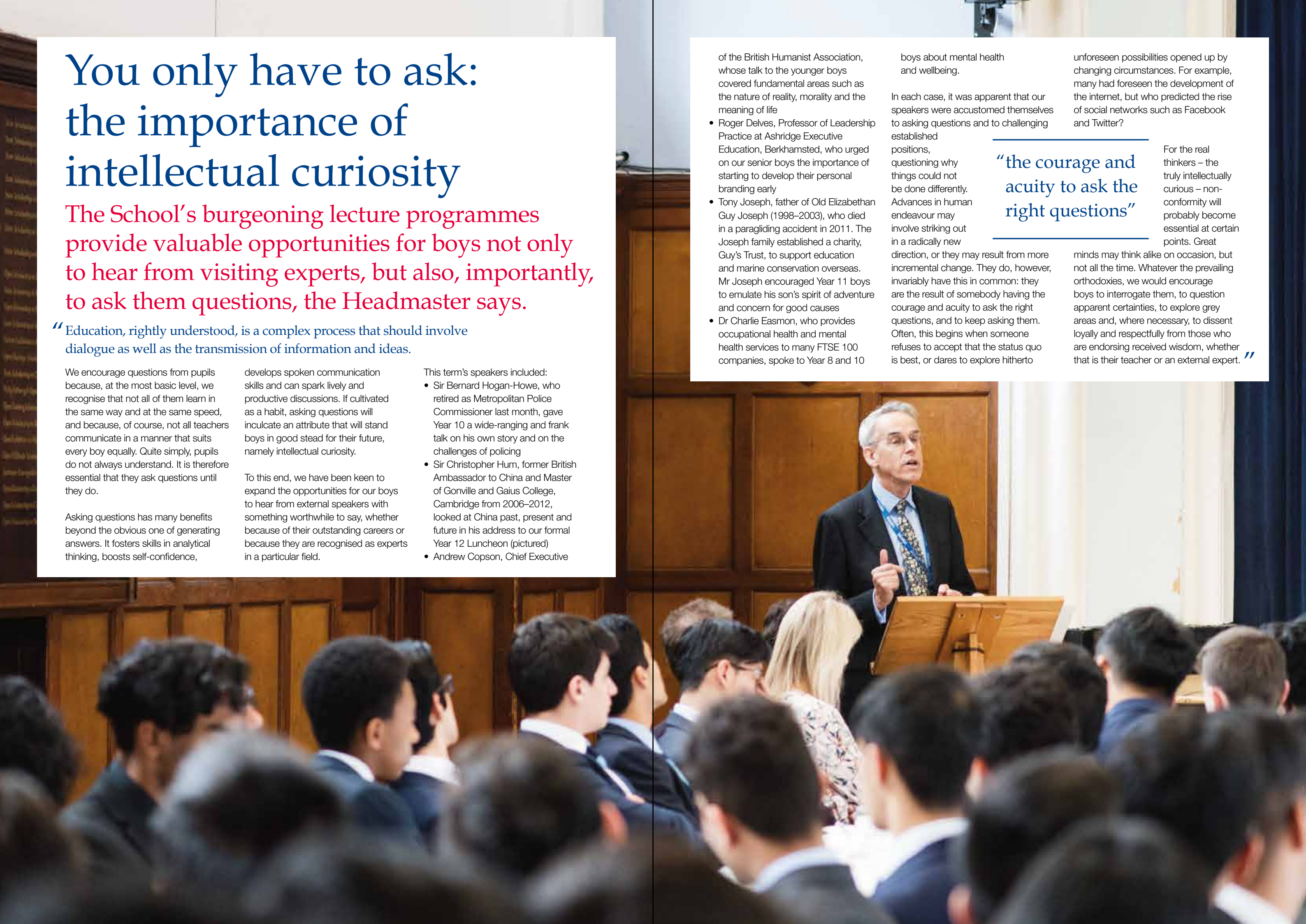
positions, questioning why things could not be done differently. Advances in human endeavour may involve striking out in a radically new direction, or they may result from more incremental change. They do, however, invariably have this in common: they are the result of somebody having the courage and acuity to ask the right questions, and to keep asking them. Often, this begins when someone refuses to accept that the status quo is best, or dares to explore hitherto

unforeseen possibilities opened up by changing circumstances. For example, many had foreseen the development of the internet, but who predicted the rise of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter?

“the courage and
acuity to ask the
right questions”

For the real thinkers – the truly intellectually curious – non-conformity will probably become essential at certain points. Great

minds may think alike on occasion, but not all the time. Whatever the prevailing orthodoxies, we would encourage boys to interrogate them, to question apparent certainties, to explore grey areas and, where necessary, to dissent loyally and respectfully from those who are endorsing received wisdom, whether that is their teacher or an external expert.”



From the archives: A Victorian boy and his prize for coming second



The School has recently acquired an interesting artefact which sheds light on pupils’ lives and aspirations during the High Victorian period.

The St Elizabeth Hospice charity shop in Wickham Market, Suffolk, contacted the Headmaster’s Office: they had been given an old book emblazoned with the School crest. Photographs of the beautifully bound volume were sent, which revealed that it was a prize awarded to a pupil. The School duly made a donation to the charity and the book was quickly despatched to Barnet.

Upon inspection, it was

revealed to be the Victorian best-seller by Samuel Smiles, *Self Help; With illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance*. An inscription showed that the tome was presented to John Samuels of Form III as second prize for Physical Geography on 29th July 1876.

Self Help sold 20,000 copies in the first year following its publication in 1859. By the time of its Scottish author’s death in 1904, sales had topped a quarter of a million and Smiles had become a household name.

Self Help’s preface states: “The object of the book

briefly is, to re-inculcate these old-fashioned but wholesome lessons – which perhaps cannot be too often urged, – that youth must work in order to enjoy, – that nothing creditable can be accomplished without application and diligence, – that the student must not be daunted by difficulties, but conquer them by patience and perseverance, – and that, above all, he must seek elevation of character, without which capacity is worthless and worldly success is naught.”

Headmaster Neil Enright said: “We know nothing further of John Samuels, but one could conclude that his prize was given to reinforce his qualities of character and application. It is interesting to reflect that the lessons his book espouses remain relevant today and coincide with some of the virtues of character that we try to instil in our pupils.”

The preface goes on to state: “Failure is the best discipline of the true worker, by stimulating him to new efforts, evoking his best powers, and carrying him onward in self-culture, self-control, and growth in knowledge and wisdom. Viewed in this light, failure, conquered by perseverance, is always full of interest and instruction...”

“One could, therefore, also put a wry interpretation on the choice of book for young John Samuels – that it is in fact saying ‘here are the traits you would need should you want to be first!’” Mr Enright added.



And all that jazz!

The popular Jazz Evening showcased five ensembles this year, with most of the musicians taking part for the first time. The programme ranged from jazz standards – *Take the A Train* – to Leonard Cohen’s *Hallelujah*. The Big Band opened and were followed by the B-Minors, the Friday Jazz group, the Barbershop group and the Saxophone Ensemble, with a vocal solo from Varun Vassanth, of Year 13.



German humour is a hit

A play performed by a visiting specialist theatre group provided plenty of laughs for Year 9 pupils. Onatti Production’s comedy performed in German, explored whether the friendship of Jürgen and Sophie would survive a camping trip. Not only were the boys engrossed in the action, but some were invited to take part in the play, thus putting their German skills to good use.

Mind-broadening conference

QE pupils heard university lecturers expound on philosophers from Plato to Simone Weil and on topics ranging from hedonism to the philosophy of Science at a Sixth-Form conference.

During the philosophy event at North London Collegiate School, it was announced there that a younger QE pupil – Binu Perera, of Year 11 – had taken second place in the prestigious North London Philosophy Writing Competition. His essay tackled the question: *Mark Zuckerberg has pledged \$3bn over the next ten years to try to eliminate disease. Should we aim to extend people’s lives indefinitely?*



“So many books, so little time!”

QE boys have continued to demonstrate their love of books and reading during a busy term of events and competitions centred on The Queen’s Library.

Year 10 pupil Rishi Shah is among just five pupils nationally to be selected as a finalist for the Pupil Library Assistant of the Year Award 2017. The award was inaugurated in 2015 and seeks to recognise the contribution made by pupils who work in their school libraries and to acknowledge the skills they have gained.

Fifteen QE pupil librarians toured the North London Collegiate School’s library, where they heard a talk by successful Young Adults author Keren David. She spoke about how she became an author and combines this work with a career in journalism.

“Our boys were particularly taken with the vertical design of the Library, which is housed over four floors,” said QE librarian Ciara Murray. Overall, they preferred the fact that in The Queen’s Library, it is not

necessary to walk up and down stairs to get to different subject areas, she added.

Forty lucky ticketholders were the first to sample hundreds of new fiction books at a special lunchtime event in The Queen’s Library. During the Book Bonanza, the Library was closed to the rest of the School. The boys therefore had exclusive access to the new books purchased following a substantial donation from the School’s trustees.

And, as part of the annual *Harry Potter World Book Night*, The Queen’s Library ran its own *Hunt the Horcruxes* event. Twenty-four boys from Years 7–9, who scored top marks in a recent trivia quiz held on eQE, were invited to take part. The boys were sorted into Hogwarts Houses, then had to solve riddles to locate the horcruxes hidden inside books.

House competitions bring out the best



A very diverse range of topics featured in a Year 9 video-making competition, while the winner of a Year 7 public-speaking contest took a topical tack, choosing Donald Trump as his subject.

Year 9 boys all produced videos on

a subject close to their heart and the winning six were shown in assembly. The overall winner was Karan Patel, of Underne House, who made a powerful video on the dangers of smoking, which used cut-out figures (pictured). With high production values, this emotive film provoked the biggest audience reaction, said the Headmaster when announcing the winners.

In the Year 7 competition, boys had to speak about a photograph; an image of the US President inspired Ansh Jassra to victory for Leicester.



Mathematicians’ successes multiply

Year 13 pupil Yuta Tsuchiya has been selected to take part in the British training camp for the International Mathematical Olympiad – only the second pupil to reach this stage in the School’s recent history. From the 20 young mathematicians at the camp at Trinity College, Cambridge, six will represent the UK in the International Mathematical Olympiad in Brazil.

Yuta’s selection represents the high point in a very successful term of competition for QE. He was one of eight sixth-formers – double last year’s figure – to qualify for the first round of the British Mathematical Olympiad, which is a follow-on round for the top participants in the Senior Maths Challenge. A further ten took part in the other follow-on round, the Senior Kangaroo.

In the Intermediate Challenge, for Years 9–11, almost half (143) of the 290 QE entrants gained gold certificates. Kiran Aberdeen, of Year 11, and James Tan, of Year 9, achieved perfect scores, jointly winning the Best in School award. And in the regional Team Maths Challenge, captain Guy Flint led his Year 8 & 9 teammates, Athiyan Chandramohan, Anshul Sajip and Thilakshan Thayalan, to second place out of 35 teams.



QE team in national water polo finals – and School ends up hosting the event, too

QE's senior water polo team competed in their sport's national finals after beating several leading schools to secure their place.

The U18 English Schools Swimming Association water polo finals were held at QE's Martin Pool in a last-minute change of venue after Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School's pool plant room suffered problems on the day.

QE's senior team reached the nationals by seeing off Warwick School, Cheltenham College and hosts Northampton School for Boys to take second place in the semis. QE operates its water polo in partnership with Watford Water Polo Club, and the club's Chairperson, Nikki Baker, congratulated the team on qualifying for the finals: "To be one of the top six schools at senior level in the country is an awesome achievement."

PE teacher Richard Scally reported that the boys found the national finals a tougher proposition than the semi-finals, ending in sixth place after narrowly losing each of their games against very strong opposition. Bolton School took the title for the fourth year in a row.



Magnificent mountains, magical memories and many, many miles!

Some 70 boys enjoyed a week of excellent skiing as well as a host of other activities – but only after making an epic 4,500-mile journey to the Rockies.

PE teacher Richard Scally, who led the first QE skiing trip to the western side of Canada, said: "We arrived to near-perfect conditions and temperatures, which made for a great week's skiing: we were definitely rewarded for the extra travel."

"As well as almost having the mountain to ourselves, the boys got to experience ice-skating on a frozen lake, a night walk up an ice canyon and the sight of the least light-polluted night sky in the northern hemisphere at a planetarium. Many great memories were made and litres of maple syrup consumed!"

Mr Scally was supported by a seven-strong staff team, each of whom led a team of boys, drawn from Years 8–13.



Fund-raising run

Five classmates joined Year 11 pupil Shivam Masrani to raise money for Great Ormond Street Hospital, where he has been a patient. Shivam, Rawan Ebrahim, Sachin Nayar, Rohan Rangra, Faraz Reza and Oliver Than-Lu all completed a 10km run in an hour, raising £1761.



Charity concert

Year 9 boy Senthuran Jeevan and three friends from other schools celebrated raising more than £2,000 in a year for children's charity The Wings of Hope at a concert at Rickmansworth's Watersmeet Theatre attended by the Headmaster.

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