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Et Cetera

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Cover shot:

Cllr Elizabeth Rutherford JP

HEAD'S INTRODUCTION

Well, there was not a hint of snow and barely a cold wind to chill our winter and here we are in spring. The term just closing in a grind, much to do, but no sure signs of success: all still to be earned. Hard for the students, too: the adrenalin, not yet fully coursing through their veins, but time running out. The term was not without its moments of personal challenge, but not for the first time I have felt the deeply sustaining support of school life which is, in so many ways, one large family. Sixteen years into post, the school has a deep understanding of me and I never cease to marvel at the skill deployed by students in comprehending my character and seeking to please in their efforts. What all visitors comment on when they come is just how extraordinary the school is in its sense of purpose and its attention to detail: such compliments are a helpful reminder of where the long hours go each day and week.

But, our work seems minor by comparison with the civic duty of our redoubtable Vice Chair of Governors, Cllr Mrs Elizabeth Rutherford, JP. A local resident for a very long time and a governor here for over a decade, we are very proud of her appointment as the Mayor nominate of Kensington and Chelsea (from May 2016). Her devotion to our school is so enduring; there is no event or performance to which she fails to arrive, but not just one for feasts and high days, she is ever there in matters both mundane and the occasionally problematic. I judge that she merits our front cover, for valued as her national predecessors are in that place, it is ever people and their values and not position or fame, that matters. So here, a debt of gratitude to Elizabeth Rutherford.

It is an early spring holiday this year – all the more fun therefore to be had next term. And coming next term, we await eagerly Mr Chappell's A2 Art Exhibition. No one including me, is permitted any sneak preview. After the stunning 2015 exhibition, I await with bated breath. The Katharine Kent concert is setting out, also, to outshine its previous stellar performances with a varied repertoire of the orchestral and the choral. The term ahead contains some very significant challenges for us: we have been alerting everyone for some time about the increased complexity and more difficult examination regime. We are ready with a raft of ideas, eager to maintain our stellar position for students' futures.

MR COLIN HALL
HEAD

SOMETHING SPRINGTIME

As usual our assemblies for the term ended with forty minutes of spiritual reflection. A sea of daffodils, a 1957 Oscar winning film, the choir, some lines from Phillip Larkin and T. S. Eliot, Mr Hall and Mr Robson in a piece of drama playing father and son exploring a meaningful spiritual message for people of all, any or no faiths. The devised drama ruminated on matters of loss, life, impermanence, diversity and the passing of time and was punctuated by the choir's first dalliance with the Victorian choral tradition. The final scene of *An Affair to Remember* brought hope and reconciliation alive. Students, as ever, beautifully attentive and appreciative. The experience was so poignant, uplifting and creative, and we were delighted to share the experience with friend of the school, Sally Clarke.

MR ALEX SEAL
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

REMAINS OF THE DAY

Trying his best to inspire us all, Mr Hall teaching Year 12 in front of an assembled audience of thirty teachers. As part of his commitment to ever extending his own and teachers' skills, Mr Hall 'performed' to senior colleagues and the school's Leading Practitioners. It is really quite extraordinary that our Head would be so willing and keen to make such a commitment, to put himself under such pressure – particularly in these days when many Headteachers market themselves as 'executives' and 'CEOs' and not as teachers at all! This was an intense experience – students attentive, eager, of course under pressure, but oh, so easeful and joyous. Dressed in 1920s dinner dress, sporting cloths and silver cutlery as props and, on his set, sitting at a period writing desk, this was a vivid illustration of the scene. The lesson experience certainly did not lack imagination or a spirit of creativity and we all left itching to make our own practice look so easy!



The Choir

It was a fitting close to the choir tour: the strains of Josef Rheinberger's 19th Century work *Abendlied* filling a carriage nearing King's Cross, much to the confusion and delight of other passengers. The choir found every opportunity to sing this work on their tour to Durham this January, though it must be said that all other opportunities featured venues in which we had planned to sing! Fuelled by wistfulness at the tour's closure, perhaps this valedictory rendition, in transit, was its most passionate, a swansong for our North Eastern escapade. Certainly, as the locomotive pulled towards the platform, the choir's tempo drew in to match our deceleration. It had been a wonderful tour. Opening by singing to a collection of some fifty or sixty students and staff in Durham Sixth Form Centre, we were given the warmest of greetings and treated to the most generous of hospitality: sweet meats; fruit-fizz; savoury nibbles. Our arrival had been hotly anticipated! Having dusted down our less classical numbers for the opening gig, we geared ourselves up for a spate of some recording and – our central event – a lunchtime concert in Durham Cathedral. Saturday afternoon is market day in Durham and, filled with tourists from across the North East, we performed our concert to nearly 150 audience members. Our repertoire worked through from the 16th century all the way to the present day, featuring work that spanned the renaissance world of Thomas Tallis and that bastion of light opera, Arthur Sullivan. Having closed our concert with a private performance in Durham Cathedral's chapter house, we ventured – not long after – to sing an encore at the house of our friend of the school, Jean Anderson. For students of Anderson House, this was a wonderful and rare experience to sing for someone so supportive of the school but who, owing to age crowd illness, has thus far been prevented from visiting us. Before travelling home, we fitted in time to sing in St Gabriel's parish

church, Heaton and the chapel of St John's College, Durham. Some excerpts of our performances from the tour can be found on the school website: www.hollandparkschool.co.uk/activities/music.

MR NICHOLAS ROBSON
DEPUTY HEAD

As I waved the choir off to Durham on Friday 28th January I relished my plan to surprise them by appearing in Durham Cathedral on the Saturday to listen to their concert, I had invited ex-colleagues from Morpeth with whom I taught in the 1990s, my PE master from my own school days and a number of Headteachers from Durham. All obediently seated, the concert began. Me in the cathedral of the city of my birth: the gifted Mr Robson in his university city and in the cathedral in which he sang as an undergraduate. What sublime joy as the choir's voice soared amongst the heights of the Norman cathedral. Their spiritual repertoire perfectly chosen for the venue. And, what a lovely historical connection to make, when afterwards, the choir walked a mile to sing for Jean Anderson: frail, on her doorstep she stood, whilst the choir acquainted themselves with the inspiration that is Anderson House. With a family matter to attend to, I left the choir to busk in the historic market place. Mr Robson stole himself away to come to supper in the evening with me leaving teachers and students to so something unmusical! For all kinds of reasons I shall treasure the memory of the Durham choir tour very dearly.

MR COLIN HALL
HEAD





THE WINTER'S TALE

Visually stunning with an evocative setting in black and white, a beautifully staged production of *The Winter's Tale* was performed prior to the half term break; our annual Shakespeare Reinvented production. More polished, profound and sophisticated than ever, members of the Leadership Team and a range of colleagues from the English Team, under the skilful direction of Colin Hall and David Chappell, moved and delighted students, parents and friends of the school with their 1930s inspired take on one of Shakespeare's problem plays. Written late in Shakespeare's life, the play may be less-well-known, but it certainly does not lack the extraordinary, the challenging and the ambiguous. The close of the play is not characterised by the terror and destruction typical of Shakespeare's tragedies but it is also not an ending that enjoys easeful resolution. Nicholas Robson portrayed the jealous then repentant Leontes with aplomb, supported admirably by Alexandra Pugh as his (wrongly) mistrusted and mistreated wife Hermione. The real star of the show was the knowingly wise Paulina, compellingly played by Naina Nightingale. Describing herself as the 'old turtle' whose husband's death left her with no companion, her performance ranged from strident and uncompromising prophet to loyal servant, and culminated in a poignant, yet understated lament. Closing the play and making sense of the plot's

undeniably strange - and frequently befuddling - turns, she brought an emotional depth and gravitas to the whole. The production did not shy away from some of the trickier aspects of plot and staging either: there was a quite terrifying bear - naturally given that the play contains one of the most famous of Shakespearean stage directions 'Exit, pursued by a bear' - and a golden statue stirred astonishingly, restoring Hermione back to life. A landscape change and time change was all told with an innovative use of resources and technology, yet in coherence the performance enjoyed an integrity of setting all drawn together by music from the 1930s and costume that matched it. Ticket sales raised a considerable sum and will form the basis of a donation to The Royal Marsden Hospital. Our thanks to all those colleagues whose hard work brought this production to fruition and to everyone who supported it by attending performances. And, in the audience stalwart friends of the school, our Chair of Governors Mrs Anne Marie Carrie and Vice Chair Mrs Elizabeth Rutherford (at everything we do). This year, also, the Chief Executive of the Shakespeare School Festival and the chair of its board. They were delighted with what they witnessed. In the cast, making their debut as actors Mr Chappell's two sons Sam and Jack, whose stage presence and confidence brought unrestrained anguish to the narrative of their deaths.

MS AMANDA REDFEARN
DEPUTY HEAD



SNOWBOUND IN ITALY

Majestic Folgarida in the Trentino-Alto Adige region of Italy: the destination of choice for our intrepid group of skiers during the February half term. Once these thrill seekers had made their way to the peak, they were afforded an impressive 880 meters of vertical descent through which to carve their way in deep and exquisitely powdery blankets of snow. Although temperatures were distinctly chilly, the picturesque views and sheer exhilaration of the sport kept our students and teachers warm. *Après ski*? Why, only Mr. Fuller's dulcet tones during a karaoke session; revenge perhaps for having been beaten resoundingly at bowling. An impressive 'esprit de corps' was forged

throughout this splendid week away with students supporting each other assiduously on the slopes. The quality of skiing progressed steadily throughout the week with particular mention deserved for Hazem Ahmed, who persevered and showed resilience in developing his confidence and ski ability, and the winners of student awards for the week: Riccardo Pescini for student of the week; Omar Hamadi for most improved boy; Molly Morrissey-Valler for most improved girl.

MR RICHARD NORTHOVER
DEPUTY HEAD



AND MAKING THEIR DEBUT

For those students unsated by the school production and spurred into action by the English and Leadership Team's *The Winter's Tale*, drama and dance 'debuts' offered that healthy outlet for creative activity. Grace and delicacy characterised many of the dancer's performances, as soloists from across the A Level class presented their self-choreographed pieces for an audience of parents and students. GCSE and BTEC students also showcased their creativity in ensembles that represented exposition of a range of social and technological themes. The Drama students' Fablaureate wove a collection of narratives that can only be described as the X Factor of fairy tales. Comic timing, dry wit and physical deftness were the highlights of this melange of actors and actresses drawn from across the year groups.

MR SIMON DOBSON
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

AND MORE STUDENT LOANS

The season for university applications has closed and a record number of our students have some very promising offers which they now, of course, must meet. Courses such as English and the sciences remain enduringly popular. I, of course, am seeking to compete with my predecessor (Mr Crow) who had seventy five percent of his A level Geography class proceed to university to read Geography. It is a considerable feat to break that record. But, try I will! I read Chinese as part of my geography degree and was brought up in the south east and travelled north to the Midlands for university. As I recall, the great thing about being 18-21 is that chance to branch out and experiment. A good moment for you to leave London: a good moment to try a new subject.

MR ALEX SEAL
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

THE BEAUTY OF LITERATURE

A visit from the Shakespeare Schools Festival; a live streaming of the RSC's acclaimed production of 'Henry V'; a literature lecture exploring Virginia Woolf's novel 'Mrs Dalloway' delivered by Mrs Hennah; a theatre visit to see 'As You Like It': this has been an exciting term and time to be studying English at Holland Park. While students in Year 10 and Year 11 were transported to the battle of Agincourt to fight alongside Henry V in his triumphant defeat of the French during 'Henry V', our sixth form students travelled to the forest of Arden via 'As You Like It' and The Gate cinema where they were thrilled to 'fleet their time carelessly' with the banished courtiers. Students in Year 10 who attended the workshops run by the Shakespeare Schools Festival, of which Colin Hall is a trustee, were equally thrilled by their experience for they were encouraged to engage with 'Macbeth' by acting rather than reading the lines. Suddenly the verse which had felt alien at times became as comfortable to speak as their own idiolect. The students were enthralled by the innovative exercises designed to teach them about rhythm and iambic pentameter as well as some of the context the leaders of the workshops provided. Teachers came forth from these workshops inspired to teach Shakespeare in an equally imaginative way and any visitor wandering the fourth floor the preceding week would have been heartened to hear their favourite lines of Shakespeare being spoken and acted out in class. Lessons were taught by candle light to recreate the atmosphere of Act 2, Scene 2 and Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking scene and students were encouraged to learn by heart the important monologues. Students and teachers have been delighted by their reminder that Shakespeare's text is live and belongs on the stage rather than as unintelligible words on a page. For those students lucky to attend both the workshop and the RSC screening of 'Henry V' interesting dialogue was had in lessons for students were encouraged to consider why Henry was so much more of a successful King than the doomed and flawed Macbeth. And so to another term and to exams....Once more unto the breach dear friends...

ST GEORGE'S FESTIVAL CONCERT

Following the choir's inaugural concert in Our Lady of Victories Church, High Street Kensington, Holland Park students are broadening their offering to local churches by taking a leading role in St George's Festival Concert on Saturday 7th May. The annual concert, which features musicians from the Royal College of Music, celebrates works of magnitude in the classical tradition. This year, it is an all-English feast. The concert will culminate in all the fanfare and pomp of Hubert Parry's work, Dear Lord and Father of Mankind and we join local and professional singers to raise the roof in characteristically Victorian style. To open, though, the choir sounds a more restrained note of Elizabethan motets and madrigals – the pang of romantic disappointment alongside haunting liturgical mystery – all sung a cappella.

TEACHING SCHOOL STATUS

The school continues to receive visitors from the length and breadth of the country, keen to observe the exceptional practice of our school's teachers and leaders. This term we have hosted international visitors from Holland and the United States of America and colleagues have visited from Durham. On one particularly busy day, the school hosted 30 aspiring Heads from the midlands seeking to learn about our outstanding ethos for learning. In the Summer term we look forward to hosting a school leader from New Zealand who has been impressed by reading about Holland Park from afar and has planned a journey to England to see the school. The school's now international profile continues to grow and we are privileged to continue to support the improvement of educational provision worldwide.

INTER ALIA

... so much to tell and so little room to put it all in! House Sports Week scintillated, literature lectures thrilled us. Cookery competitions conquered all, Duke of Edinburgh students trekked. And to come... the Katherine Kent music concert; the Year 11 Leaver's Ball; the Sixth Form Leaver's Dinner; Perfect Tense - all amidst our most pressured examination term.



POETRY FROM THE HEART

The founder of Café Nero, the founder of SKYPE, the founder of.... Courtesy of introduction by a parent, students were privileged to host a number of successful entrepreneurs who have carved out extremely lucrative and exciting business careers. Students listened early as they understood how chance, industry, even sometimes failure, led our uber A list business people to success. The programme of visitors was organised by Mr Northover who said 'My jaw dropped when I realised the magnitude of the people to whom our students were listening'. What a profound experience to have first-hand evidence of the world beyond school.

MR JAMES CURTIS
LIBRARIAN

WANDERING IN WALES

Not yet exhausted by my new role in school or by having spent previous school holidays taking students to Europe, I am off to the Brecon Beacons to lead our VIVO award winners up mountains with the expert guidance of Ian McCelland and Laurence Dawson our splendid outdoor adventurers. Possibly the sun might shine but rain-proofed and wind-weathered it will not matter and not for the first time I look forward to seeing students in awe of the space and light of the countryside and an environment so utterly different from their day to day life.

MS MARISA PILLING
ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

Designed and produced by
HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL



Hena Pasic | (detail from) *Narratives*, 2016 | acrylic on paper 300 x 200 cm