

SPRING 2014 ISSUE 4

# Et Cetera

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF HOLLAND PARK SCHOOL

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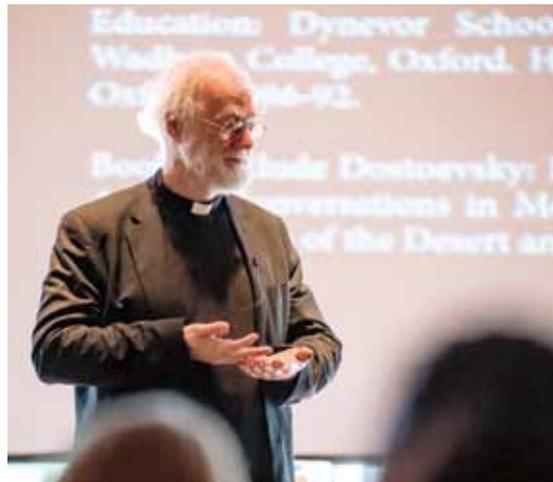
GROWING A BUSINESS...  
...to support our  
school charity

Cover shot and right: Professor Rowan Williams.

## HEAD'S INTRODUCTION

MUCH has changed at Holland Park since 2001, but one thing remains unchanged: our commitment to children of all abilities and from all walks of life. Our examination performance every year reveals equal achievement by all groups of children from all postcodes. In my own humble background in Durham City I went to school with the sons and daughters of as many miners as university professors. There was one potent message: it mattered not from whence we came but to where we were headed, and the route to success lay not in any ideology, but in scholarship and diligence. Thus it is here and now at Holland Park. In the Autumn Term, I enjoyed my teaching with those who find learning hard, and this term I have equally enjoyed teaching the top English set in Year 8 – what stunning scholars they are. Among the observers, over the course of three weeks, were parents, teachers and the Secretary of State for Education, Mr Michael Gove, who was tremendously impressed by our students. I hope that you will be pleased with our practice Ofsted Inspection Report, a testament to everyone's commitment and enthusiasm. And, as I write this, we are also about to embark on our annual Shakespeare production. I am also looking forward to our choir's performance at the close of term singing some Palestrina and Mozart, and hoping for an update on Hibba Mazhary's second term at Oxford. The second week of the Spring Break will be a busy one as we open our 'holiday' doors for examination preparation, the results of which will launch yet another year of young people to adult life.

MR COLIN HALL, HEAD



## Michael Gove observes *King Lear*

IT was a typical Monday, when we received a most surprising request. The personal assistant of Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, contacted Mr Hall's personal assistant to request the opportunity for Mr Gove to come to school and observe an English lesson taught by Mr Hall. Fortunately for Mr Gove, as part of our staff development programme, Mr Hall was already teaching *King Lear* to a Year 8 class, while other

teachers observed. Mr Gove was hugely impressed by the "remarkable incisiveness and maturity" of the students he met, and by the inspirational teaching which was being offered to the students. Reference is made to Mr Gove's visit in an article in *The Spectator* in which he described the lesson as follows: "It was the scene where Gloucester's eyes are plucked out and it was as gripping as anything you'd see on stage."

MR RICHARD NORTHOVER, DEPUTY HEAD



Mr Nicholas Robson, Mr Michael Crow, Mr Daniel Seed and Mr James Thom act out the blinding of Gloucester.

## Visit by Professor Rowan Williams

PROFESSOR Rowan Williams is one of the most high-profile visiting speakers we have hosted and certainly one of the most intellectual. His symposium to an audience of some 300 Sixth Form and Year 9 students was exceptional. Balancing erudition and scholarship with simplicity and palpable clarity, he spoke with students about matters political, philosophical, religious, literary, musical, artistic and ethical. One might ask why a secular school would entertain a speaker so clearly rooted in, and speaking for, a particular religious tradition, but such a question misunderstands the nature of secularity to which

Holland Park subscribes. As part of our legal requirement to deliver Religious Education to the Sixth Form, and our commitment to academic and spiritual edification, we invited a speaker able to talk about all faiths, to propose an argument about the value of religion in the modern world and to respond to the very many challenging and (in many cases) antithetical questions raised by staff and students. It was a remarkably edifying, uplifting and challenging morning; a morning for sophisticated debate and extensive cultural exploration.

MR NICHOLAS ROBSON, DEPUTY HEAD



Olivia Price and Matilda Wickham, who have been working with Mr Chappell.

## Expertise on show

STUDENTS in Years 8 and 13 have enjoyed the privilege of taking part in some inspiring and unique learning experiences this term, led by Associate Head Mr David Chappell and Head Mr Colin Hall. In a stunning testament to the intellectual acumen of some of our brightest students, 8.1.1 have gained an erudite knowledge of Shakespeare's *King Lear* in just three weeks, all shaped through the expert and inspirational hands of Mr Hall. The six-page essays students have produced on this staple A level English Literature text, in response to the demanding question 'What is wrong, unnatural, flawed and dangerous in the opening of *King Lear*?', is a fitting homage

to the quality of their understanding of the play. The stimulating journey to this final piece of work involved students entering the classroom to a creation of the Heath; an operating table with a Leadership enactment of the removal of Gloucester's eye; and a depiction of the funeral of King Lear, complete with a eulogy and a range of musical stimuli from Mozart to Jeff Buckley. While this work with our younger students has served to document their exciting future potential, Mr Chappell's outstanding work with two A level Art students has generated work of the quality that could grace any art exhibition in the land.

MR JAMES THOM, ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

## Artistic flair

THE maypole in the centre of the school gallery was spectacular, but not as electrifying as the talented Art Aptitude students who created their own Dance performance in December, using the exhibition space. They worked diligently, showing creativity, tenacity and enthusiasm to produce some truly exceptional works, inspired by the theme of childhood. The students created the exhibition via weekly workshops that taught a wide range of innovative and traditional skills and

techniques. By curating and performing in the exhibition space themselves, they were able to get a sense of how contemporary artists and galleries function. This term, students are working with tactile and experimental materials, discussing contemporary art and artists, and creating more personal works. As the weather improves, we plan to develop this into outdoor sessions, exploring sculpture, time-based pieces, photography and drawing.

MR GREG SMITH, ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

## From Auden to Armitage

YEAR 7 and 8 students have been on a poetic journey this term. They have developed beautifully creative Poetry Journals to record their annotations, thoughts and artistic interpretations of the poems they have studied. Each week, they have also produced sophisticated extended essays on the purpose and method behind the poets' messages.

"I have enjoyed a great experience with poetry," said Hiba Idris Nouris, "and loved keeping my own personal journal, as it allowed me to express how I perceive poetry." Jaden Sezer added: "I liked how we learnt ideas from Miss Hennah and also expressed our own opinions and creativity through our private journals." Students are determined to continue exploring poetry and developing their creative responses to literature.

MR JAMES THOM, ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER



Hiba Idris Nouris, Jaden Sezer and Romeo Roberts Alkaff.

## LESSONS IN LITERATURE

THIS term, the library welcomed the prolific teen author Bali Rai into English classes of students from Years 8, 9 and 10 to discuss reading for pleasure. Classicist, comedian and author Natalie Haynes also returned in March. Following her visit earlier in the year in her capacity as judge for the Man Booker Prize, Natalie this time talked to students of Latin at Key Stage 4 and the Sixth Form Book Club about her debut novel, *The Amber Fury*. Students across a range of year groups are also currently completing their final preparations for this year's First Story creative writing anthology with author Frances Wilson and James Thom. The launch event in July will provide an excellent opportunity for students to showcase their splendid writing.

MR JAMES THOM, ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER AND MS  
MARISSA GISBOURNE, SCHOOL LIBRARIAN

## Excellence in English

STUDENTS who sat the English GCSE examination in November found themselves nervously opening envelopes in January. In keeping with our English results over the past three years, the news was excellent. Year 11 students have universally improved their grades, with 94% of Year 11 achieving an A\*-C in English, of which 29% are at grade A or A\*. Students in 10.1.1. also gained their English GCSE this January, and their results were stunning. Almost every grade was an A\* or an A. Congratulations to all students who sat examinations in November.

MR DANIEL SEED, DEPUTY HEAD 5



## PE moves outdoors

FOR the first time in Holland Park's rich history, students have taken advantage of purpose-built, outdoor Physical Education spaces. Year 8 girls were introduced to the AstroTurf for a game of lacrosse. The lesson was splendid to watch and clearly thoroughly enjoyed by the girls. Students are delighted with their new floodlit space and we can look forward to watching both lessons and competitive team games played out on this fantastic new facility. "It's absolutely amazing," said one student. "I cannot believe how fortunate I am to go to such a fantastic school. This new pitch is the icing on the cake!"

The range of sporting opportunities available in school continues to extend through our robust extra-curricular, fixtures and House Sport programmes. Some 300 students participate on a weekly basis in a range of activities from football to netball, rugby to dodgeball. Our Sport Relief week's tournaments and competitions raised an impressive £800. A ski trip to Austria planned for February 2015 is currently eagerly anticipated by students. Such is the focus on sporting excellence that even our Sixth Form students were wowed by a Leadership Team cricket match as part of one of their assemblies this term.

MR DAVID CHAPPELL, ASSOCIATE HEAD

## Netball team tops the league

THIS year, Holland Park School has a keen field of Year 7 netballers. The squad of 15 girls have trained hard and competed in matches against other local schools. As a result, the team has won 19 out of 20 matches and have been crowned winners of two separate league titles. Earlier on in the season, the girls beat nine other schools from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea to win the title in the Pimlico League. A fiercely contested final in the Westminster League was held at Regent's Park against

St. Marylebone School. After a nervous start in the first quarter, the girls brimmed with vigour and execution, allowing them to win 3-2. Ms Bullen, their coach, was utterly delighted: "The girls' success has been a result of tireless effort, excellent teamwork and consistent commitment." As a result, they have been selected to represent the Borough in the London Youth Games, which are due to be held in April at Crystal Palace: an outstanding achievement.

MR LUKE FULLER, LEADER OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION



Ms Rachel Oxtoby and Mr Nicholas Robson performing in Hamlet.

## The play's the thing

THERE was certainly no need to "beware the Ides" this March as Holland Park's Leadership Team and a fine selection of talented English teachers stunned audiences in an innovative production of *Hamlet*. The play dramatises the revenge tortured Prince Hamlet exacts on his uncle, Claudius, for murdering his father, King Hamlet. Ever the uber-creative force behind productions, Colin Hall set the play against the juxtaposed backdrop of a gritty detective saga and Royal Ascot, combining 'Wallander' and Shakespeare in a fresh and highly original pairing, set to an evocative soundtrack

combining classical and contemporary music. Nicholas Robson's brooding Hamlet, Michael Crow's world-weary Wallander, Rachel Oxtoby's passionate Gertrude and Alex Pugh's tragic Ophelia were among a range of exceptional performances that entertained audiences made up of local primary schools, students, parents and governors. All proceeds were donated to our school charity, the Royal Marsden Cancer Campaign, and we were delighted to welcome Ms Janet Tobin from the charity, and indeed many friends of the school, at our performances.

MS AMANDA REDFEARN, DEPUTY HEAD



Edward Sonin and Frederick Bannister.

## BREAKFAST FUELS HEATED DEBATE

BREAKFAST Club continues to be a popular destination for students seeking to fuel up for a nutritious start to a day of fast-paced learning. While enjoying a free cooked breakfast, comprising eggs, bacon and fresh fruit salad, lively debate often develops. Rugby enthusiasts and Breakfast Club regulars Jack and Frederick Bannister were recently engaged in some intense debate with friends Edward Sonin and Ayoub El Bakkali around the question of Scottish independence – mainly in terms of its

impact upon the Six Nations Rugby tournament! I joined the conversation just at the moment Ayoub, a French supporter, was being goaded by Frederick for the recent "demolition" by Wales. While all the boys were in favour of Scotland remaining part of the United Kingdom, they nonetheless relished one possible advantage of the prospective break up of the union: a heightened sense of rivalry between the Scots and English in future rugby matches!

MR SIMON DOBSON, ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

## Learners' Views

TEACHERS were fascinated by the results of our Learners' Views exercise in February. All students were asked to take part in discussion with their tutor, where they put forward their views on teaching, homework and the school building itself. Their comments were insightful, balanced

and constructive. They have certainly given the entire teaching staff much food for thought. It was particularly interesting to be given specific examples of memorable lessons. Teachers now know that singing instead of talking is the way to get our students' attention!

MR DANIEL SEED, DEPUTY HEAD

## 'Apprentices' create cash for charity

THE 'Apprentice'-style charity project is currently under way for 2014; in 2013 it raised £2,000 for the Royal Marsden Trust. Fairuz Mezzi and Aida Sadeg, Year 8 students, were the 2013 winners, growing £50 into £500 through their truffle business, and are seeking to better this through participating in the challenge once again.

Students this year are required to create a business plan outlining the running of a business and how they would use a budget of £50 to grow and maintain such a business over a limited period of time. Projects have commenced, and 20 groups of students are aiming to further the target raised last year.

MR GREG SMITH, ASSISTANT HEADTEACHER

Fairuz Mezzi and Aida Sadeg.



## SHOCK TACTICS IN SCIENCE

THE Science teachers organised a packed week of activities for students in March. Visitors from the worlds of computer science, plant biology and cancer research gave talks, while the Science Museum gave Year 7 a shock with their electricity show, 'Danger High Voltage'. A former student, who is now a scientist at CERN, explained

Particle Physics to Year 8, while PSHCE had a Science theme and there was even a parachute competition. Finally, on the last evening, students were given the task of solving a murder mystery in 'CSI: Holland Park'. The event was designed to get students thinking about Science as a career as well as an academic subject, and it was certainly successful at doing just that.

MR DANIEL SEED, DEPUTY HEAD

## ALUMNI

HIBBA Mazhary completed her A2 courses at Holland Park in the summer of 2013, achieving A\*s in Geography, English, Mathematics and French. These outstanding results secured her place at the University of Oxford to read Geography. Hibba is now relishing her studies at this prestigious institution. "I have enjoyed the sheer variety of the course," she informed me, "from studying development policy to atmospheric systems. It feels like a dynamic academic experience." She is indebted to her teachers at Holland Park, particularly her A level teachers whom she describes as "passionate and always encouraging us to undertake enrichment activities and further reading". She is planning on completing internships, both this summer and next. Alongside her academic studies she has been undertaking some volunteering, including outreach work to local schools. Her voracious appetite for learning and endeavour is clearly continuing to support her studies, and we look forward to hearing of her many successes in the future.

MR RICHARD NORTHOVER,  
DEPUTY HEAD



## Visitors and validations

WE have been delighted to host a range of visitors again this term. Celia Birtwell, textile and fashion designer, and indeed muse of David Hockney, visited, and has indicated her interest in undertaking some work with us in school. We hosted a group of Sixth Form students and the Revd Dr John Breadon from Eton School; an exchange visit to observe lessons and collaborate in a debate with our own Sixth Form students. Colin Hall has been interviewed by *Tatler* as part of a documentary following the focus on our school in the prestigious magazine and by *Newsnight* for his views on Ofsted. Colin has also been invited by the Oxford Union to join a debate on state versus private education. We continue our focus on sharing good practice with other institutions and visits this term have included one from the Bishop Bell School in Eastbourne to focus on developing outstanding teaching.

MS AMANDA REDFEARN,  
DEPUTY HEAD



## Governors' Day

AT the beginning of the Spring Term, we hosted our annual Governors' Day. The day focused on the progress that students are making in their lessons. The event was conducted like an Ofsted inspection, with the intention of providing an insight for governors as to how progress can be measured in this context, and to provide some feedback to those teachers who were observed. The governors expressed their pleasure at the creativity and clear focus on learning observed in lessons that they witnessed and shared their wisdom for how we might seek to improve what we already do so well. We thank the governors for their time.

MR RICHARD NORTHOVER,  
DEPUTY HEAD

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