

HIGHNOTES

Highgate School newsletter

Number 38

Autumn 2009

Musical victory at the barricades

If Alison Brunner and Gareth Hanson's production of *Les Misérables* last term is anything to go by, the dramatic and musical talents in the school are stellar. With a cast mainly plucked from Years 7 and 8, the play looked and sounded fantastic. The sophisticated vocals were tackled with aplomb by Valjean (played by Alex Carver and Finn Strivens) and Javert (played by Patrick Dodd). Meanwhile, the ensemble rendition of 'Master of the House' – with outstanding solos from Sario Watanabe-Solomon and Beth Chalmers – was so stirring that it enjoyed a revival at Speech Day at the end of term. We look forward to another musical treat later this term when Juliet Fehr will present a Highgate version of *Sweeney Todd*.



The Chrysalis community grows

Highgate School's involvement with local schools continues to flourish, as this year's summer schools schedule proved. The three-year Chrysalis Partnership project – organised with the help of an Independent/State Schools Partnership grant – involves Highgate with 15 local state secondary schools and has two main aims: firstly, to help partners' sixth-formers obtain places at selective universities and secondly, to raise the aspirations of Year 10 pupils across the partnership. Highgate hosted a four-day summer school for Year 12s, inviting 72 students to attend tutorials and workshops on nine different subjects, as well as offering

UCAS sessions and talks by admissions tutors from Oxford and Cambridge. There was also a two-day summer school for Year 10; involving 50 pupils who busied themselves with five subjects. Later this year, Highgate will welcome some of the Y12s back as our Oxbridge lessons get underway – and they will also be able to attend a special university interview evening in November. Feedback from across the partnership was overwhelmingly positive – as one pupil wrote to an English teacher 'Thank you for being a fantastic inspiration to all the Year 10s – if only all teachers taught poetry like you!'



Caricature-building

Their work is familiar to readers of the Guardian, Sunday Times and Private Eye – and last term, popular author & illustrator duo Knife and Packer visited Year 3 and 4 children to introduce them to the intricate world of caricature production. The pair talked the children through the various stages of drawing distorted images of monster-like creatures – to the children's great entertainment and amusement. The duo's

audience needed little further encouragement, and gentle mockery of natural and acquired characteristics, as well as vanity features of extreme mannerisms and expressions appeared on the children's drawing boards, to the delight of all teachers present at the talk.



Illustrators Knife and Packer in action



Down on the Pre-Prep farm

The Pre-Prep's project work on 'Food and Farming' got off to an exciting start this term, when Appreciating Animals joined us for the day on Friday 11 September and brought a selection of farm animals for the children to meet. In the Memorial Garden we had ten kids (of the four-legged variety), a nanny goat, a calf and a pig; and in the main playground we had a selection of smaller animals including rabbits, ducklings, hens and mice.

All the children from Nursery to Year Two were able to spend time

finding out about the animals and they took turns to hold the ducklings and feed the geese. They watched the nanny goat being milked and then helped to use the milk to bottle feed the kids. It was a memorable day for pupils and staff alike and the experience has provided a great deal of inspiration for our project work this term. We were all very sad to bid farewell to our visitors at the end of the day and the Pre-Prep playground has seemed rather quiet ever since!

Sarah Kennedy

Another record year of results!

Highgate saw another record year on the two results days in August, with 70% A grades at A level (an increase of 13% on 2008), 83.9% A and B grades, and more than half of our departing Y13s gained three or more As. The vast majority of leavers secured their first choice place at university. Meanwhile, the continuing success of co-education at Highgate is highlighted by the fact that 95.9% of the grades obtained by the girls who joined us in the Sixth Form were either grade A or B. At GCSE, an excellent 81.5% gained an A or A*. For full details of the results, visit www.highgateschool.org.uk

How we engineered a marine break

Some people take it easy on holiday. Others build ships. Highgate Y10s Benjamin Price and Rory Purves were two of 96 students who attended a Marine Technology course at the University of Southampton this summer. Working alongside facilitators from Babcock Marine and the University's School of Engineering Sciences, they set to work designing and constructing their own ship to strict specifications. On the final morning students tested their ships in the university swimming pool.

The four-day residential programme was designed through a partnership between independent educational charity The Smallpeice Trust and the University of Southampton. An industrial visit to BVT Surface Fleet Ltd was also included in the programme which gave students an insight into engineering on a commercial scale.



Going for Gold in Wales

Over the summer holiday, 17 boys and four girls set off from Highgate to the wilds of north Wales to complete their Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme expedition.

With 80 km to cover over four days, it proved to be no mean feat, as foot-sore Hugh Lindsey (Y13QG) recalls: 'A balmy July morning. Five boys, good spirits and a lot of rice. And so we set off enthusiastically into the hills, with the dignified aim of "appreciating glacial beauty". Bearings were taken every 30 seconds, the map-reading was double - no, triple - checked... Mr Short would have been proud. By lunch, we were bathing our feet in a refreshing mountain stream and enjoying a number of delightful jam sandwiches. We even marvelled at the gorgeous sunset (across the glacial valley, of course) whilst

toasting marshmallows at our wild campsite.

'Two days of relentless rain later, we had been reduced to a somewhat glacial pace. Heads were down. We were not looking at the map, despite the fact that we desperately wanted to reach the relative comforts of the campsite, but we were instead searching for the faintest hint of what might possibly be a path through the interminable waist-deep heather. Fortunately, we had chosen one of North Wales' finest campsites. For a mere 50p, one could enjoy seven minutes of very hot water trickling out of a shower. It was blissful, on a par with Mr Pearce's cheesecake. That evening, Mr Barnikel briefed us with meticulous care on the next day's navigation. If only more attention had been paid...'

Hugh Lindsey

From Highgate to Africa

Members of the Highgate community have been travelling far and wide in recent months. Over the summer a group of eight Y11 boys visited Highgate's sister school in Uganda – which had earlier hosted former Pre-Prep Principal Julia Challenger. Here she recalls her experience at the Great Lakes High School, which was built with the help of Highgate's sponsored walk in 2007, through Ugandan charity CHIFCOD:

'I was welcomed very warmly during my stay. As a primary-trained teacher I had expected to find teaching the younger children the easiest but there was a lot to adjust to: the three to six year olds spoke mostly Rukiiga, their indigenous language, so communication was difficult, to say the least! Class sizes were between 40 and 70, and classroom resources minimal. I had only my piece of chalk and the blackboard to help me with the six one-hour lessons I had to teach each day. Yet the children learned to read and write in English with remarkable speed – without using any books at all. They take their studying very seriously: they know that a good education may help them to move out of the cycle of poverty in which they will otherwise be trapped, so they don't waste a minute of the day.'

Further information about CHIFCOD's work can be found at: www.volunteeruganda.org.

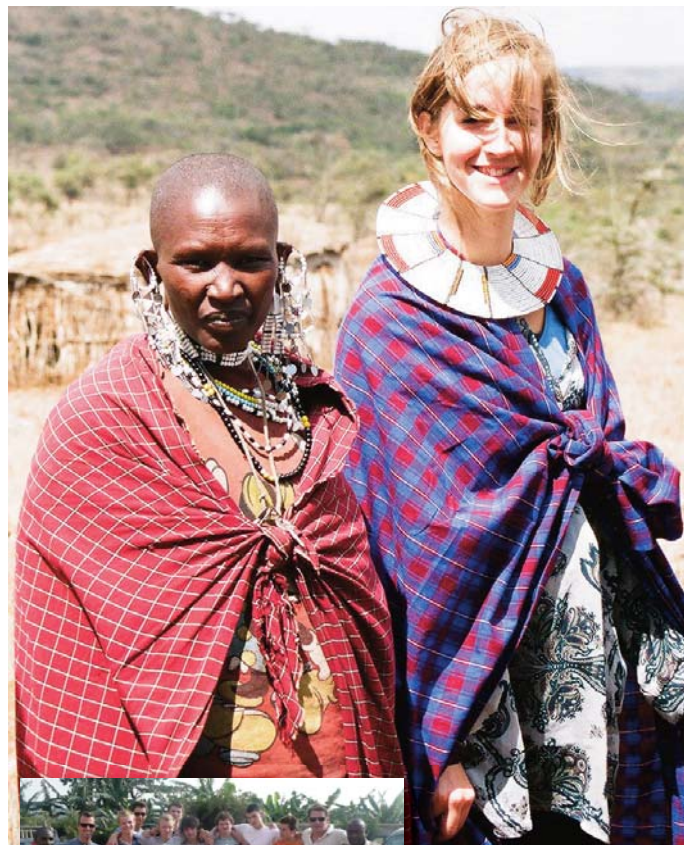
Meanwhile, in Tanzania, Highgate pupils were hard at work this August. Frances Jones, Y13 MG,



was one of five pupils who spent three weeks visiting Masai homesteads,

a well, going on safari, and – as she explains – doing lots of teaching:

'The pupils there do the old O-level courses and so their exams are in English, which is their third language. The atmosphere at the school is great – all the pupils recognise how fortunate they are to be in school as so many people can't find the money. Everyone is really keen and enthusiastic. Having to share five books in a class of 30 never causes problems. We spent much of our time amongst the Maasai tribe, to whom identity, care for the community and tradition is very important. They are an intensely optimistic tribe. Everyone we met was so welcoming and offered their friendship without exception. But life in rural Tanzania is not easy. Concerns for the spread of HIV and the hugely controversial practice of female circumcision are regularly discussed before meals. Their approach, though, is calm and matter of fact. We learned a lot from these people – it was an amazing trip.' Frances Jones



In Tanzania (main picture); Highgate boys in Uganda (left) and Julia Challenger amongst her pupils in Uganda (bottom).



Magic from the land of Mambica

In mid June, the children of Year 4 gathered to present the Junior School's annual play to an audience of parents, siblings and some fellow pupils – to resounding applause. 'The Peace Child' – performed under the watchful eye of Claire Stokes –

was a wonderful array of up-tempo songs, dynamic dances, colourful costumes, eye-catching props and backdrops and most of all, enthusiastic acting and keen participation on the part of the children. Set in the far-off land of 'Mambica', this is a story of two opposing tribes, with different lifestyles and traditions. The 'Sotongi' and 'Wannakeekee' tribes are separated by a river and also by generations of animosity. There seems to be little hope of reconciliation. When a western TV crew decide to build a bridge between the two communities, the threat of imminent war becomes a harsh reality. Only a gift, most precious to mankind, can help to bring peace to the land and its long-suffering people. All the children involved in the play worked very hard throughout the term to put on a truly inspirational performance.



Looking to the East

As the new linguistic kid on the block, Mandarin is the latest addition to the Senior School's academic and extra-curricular programme. The whole of Year 8 is timetabled to have an introduction to the language this year, while sixth-formers are invited to attend an after-school club on Monday run by new member of staff, Yutao Jia. Year 11s have the same opportunity on a Tuesday lunchtime. As Head of Modern Languages, Patrick le Berre, says 'it's a wonderful chance to learn this increasingly important language'.

The state we're still in

'Why did no-one see it coming?'- this, according to Will Hutton, economist and author of the best-selling 'The State We're In', is the question of our time. It wasn't asked by civil servants in the Treasury, nor the World Bank, nor the IMF. It came from an elderly British woman on her tour of the London School of Economics. That elderly woman was Her Majesty the Queen. Her question was central to the talk received by friends of Highgate School, teachers and most importantly, Year 12 Economics and Politics students; for in Mr Hutton's words we 'are the leaders of tomorrow'.



His engaging and informative talk took us from house prices via unemployment and Britain's recovery prospects through to the very essence of the credit crunch. Mr Hutton's underlying message was that we should be watching and understanding the effects of globalisation.

So, what was the answer to the Queen's question? Astonishingly, the economists replied that they 'thought the macro guys had it covered'. A very worrying response indeed! Adam Jogue

Not stumped for inspiration

A superb cricket season was played last term – but it wasn't just about thrilling moments on the pitch: In June, the U11A team held a special training session with the Pakistan World T20 cricket team as part of a promotion with sponsors, Emirates Airline.

The boys were given a great opportunity to watch



the Pakistan team train before being put through their paces, with a couple of fielding drills seeing the Pakistan team coaching both staff and players. They had their bats signed and chatted about the game with some of the best players in the world. The Australian cricket team even turned up, and again our boys – now hugely inspired - were able to get a few autographs and meet some of the team.

Earlier in the term, meanwhile, the school was lucky enough to have three West Indian Test match cricketers arrive on senior field for a question and answer session, coaching clinic and autograph signing. Lionel Baker, who opened the bowling against England at Lord's that month, along with Dale Richards and Amit Jaggernauth (all pictured), spent the morning with pupils from across the Foundation.

¡Viva La Coruña!

Over the summer break, 59 Highgate boys from Years 9 to 13 enjoyed a five day trip to La Coruña in Spain where they played ten matches including the local Deportivo academy team. They had rigorous training every day – and many aspects of the boys' game improved enormously. Except the results. Nevertheless, an impressed Mr Jones said that he was delighted with the behaviour of the boys and said 'it was a great way to say goodbye to leavers, such as Rhodri Williams and George Starkey-Midha who have contributed a great deal to sport at Highgate'. Jack Lewis



Chess champs

This year two Highgate Junior School chess teams qualified comfortably for the semi-finals of the National Primary School Chess Team Championship held in Camber Sands in June. The Under 9s performed well, earning a total of 15 points and a well-deserved Silver Standard award. In the Under 11s, top scorers were Isaac Sanders and Tom Disley, who was undefeated with four wins and two draws. A team total of 18.5 points saw the team to a magnificent 4th place (out of 42) and our first ever Gold Standard award. Only the top three teams went through to the all-England final, however – and Highgate missed qualifying by a mere two points. All the players deserve high praise for their determination and fine sporting behaviour.

Jolly good sport

The annual Junior School's sports day took place at the end of June, and saw the six houses compete against each other. The various races were made up of traditional Olympic events such as the 400m and long jump, as well as the much-loved egg-and-spoon and sack races. The day was a huge success due to factors such as the pristine weather conditions which brought a large number of parents, as well as the competitive but Corinthian nature of the pupils which created a vastly entertaining day in which Sandys ran out winners with Mansfield in second place. The contest was organised by Clare Rodgers and was supported by the PE staff.

Admissions 2010 – Dates for the Diary

Open Day: 3/10/09

16+ Open Evenings (for admission to our Coeducational Sixth Form in September 2010): 17/9/09 and 8/10/09 (from 4.45pm)

Closing date for 16+ applications (and music award applications): 16/10/09

16+ Assessment Day 7/11/09 (9.00am - 2.00pm)

Closing date for 7+, 11+ and 13+ applications (and music award applications): 30/11/09

Bookings for the Open Day and the Open Evenings should be made with the Admissions Coordinator, Julia Condor, on 020 8347 3564, or e-mail admissions@highgateschool.org.uk



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Editor: Verity Smith

Highgate School, North Road, London N6 4AY

020 8340 1524

www.highgateschool.org.uk



For admissions information contact:

Senior School: 020 8347 3564

Junior School: 020 8340 9193

Pre-Preparatory School: 020 8340 9196