THE

Maidstonian

2025

THE

2025

EDITION

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The Maidstonian

Since 1885 · 2025 Edition

Foreward

The Maidstonian has been in print since 1885, 140 years ago. In this time, we have gone from the Eastman Kodak company producing their first batch of paper film, leading to the consumer film camera revolution, to everyone having access to the entire breadth of human knowledge in their pocket. Times change, but some things remain constant.

One constant is creativity. Since the beginning of man, we have sought ways to express ourselves in ways wider than pure information. To do so, to create, is human.

This magazine is full of students expressing their creativity. Their work, and their writings, allow you to have a glimpse into who they are. This could not be achieved without the human aspect of creativity.

In the age of automation, it is not a shock that generative artificial intelligence models now allow us to remove this human element. You can now produce lengthy essays, fiction novels, and life-like paintings from a single sentence. However, the result will be fundamentally vapid and soulless in nature, as there is no creative process that injects the passion and the zeal which uplift a piece.

Keep this in mind as you read through the magazine. From the front cover, to the articles from across the student community, we recognise that it may be superficially imperfect, but it is unmistakably human.

Hadyn C (Year 12, Barton)

Contents

School Captain's Founders' Day Speech

AUTHOR: ALAN B (YEAR 12, CORPUS CHRISTI)

What do you see when you walk through the front gate of MGS? The big hall, the red bricks, the crest atop the entrance to the reception are what immediately make an impression for me. You go inside the big hall, you see the stained glass and wooden beams, and the entire building patiently rises brick by brick.

Manufacturing stained glass is a tricky and technical process. The raw materials are made molten, and are coloured with specific additives, then rolled into large flat sheets. The glass is subsequently cut into pieces, then joined together either through lead wires or through being soldered. It then undergoes finishing, framing and installation. Fine craftsmanship and precision are required so that the pieces of glass are joined together smoothly. Scientific knowledge is necessary to recognise the additives needed to form colour, and of course artistic prowess is the mastermind behind it all.

The big hall and its stained-glass windows show us the final form behind this process. We can look at each individual piece of glass. Inherently, each piece is broken - it is not exactly fulfilled. However, they also possess their own intrinsic beauty, after they have been precisely cured to have a unique colour. But above all, if we focus on just one piece of glass, we lose sight of the whole artwork. Although you may admire a singular piece, it is incomplete without the

All Saints Church

"Some of you may know this from when you put on the navy or yellow kit, or from when you put your tie on in the morning – that it feels like your part of something greater."

help of what surrounds it.

In Plato's Republic, the philosopher gives the idea that no one person is self-sufficient, that the farmer requires shoes just as the shoemaker requires food. Hence, this is the fundamental principle behind how cities came to be. Now liken this to yourselves, each one of you are a piece of glass, each one of you are unique in your own ways, but the individual is always amplified by the whole. Plato's ideas are still very relevant; as much as you may deny it, friends will require friends, students will require teachers, and teachers will require students.

Sometimes, the idea of leaning on each other may seem daunting, it can be built up to be this magnum concept, where only the most important tasks are delegated only to the closest people around you. However, I believe that the ability to lean on each other is something that we regularly do without much thought. At some point in our school lives, we have all forgotten a pencil case, or a pen has run out. So, we always ask one of our peers to borrow a pen. We will all lean on our teachers, whether for academic help or for pastoral support, and each of us will have our own unique relationships.

When you look at stained glass, the colours, the patterns are what catch the eye. But the lead wires are forgotten. The element that keeps the whole structure altogether is barely noticeable. This is the underlying nature of MGS and who we are as part of this network; in every community there are silent leaders, and although they might not shine like glass, without them we would all fall apart. As a result, the nature of stained glass is that of interdependence because each piece of glass depends on the lead to stay in place – but the lead with no glass has no purpose.

I believe this message - this metaphor - is what fully encapsulates the feeling behind being a Maidstonian. Some of you may know this from when you put on the navy or yellow kit, or from when you put your tie on in the morning – that it feels like your part of something greater. Just as the glass and lead wire will physically lean on each other in stained glass, metaphorically so do all of us each day. And we all have our chances to be the glass, to be able to shine and have our opportunities in achieving our goals. But equally, we are the lead wire for all the people around us, so they can also be the glass that shines.

Thank you.

The RN's Year in Review

AUTHOR: ALEXANDER N (YEAR 12, BARTON)

At the beginning of this school year, the royal navy section welcomed a new group of year nines into the section. After a few weeks of basic theory and drill training, we were privileged enough to bring them to Brittania Royal Navy College in December, where we engaged in a few days' worth of activities such as running through an obstacle course, climbing, and even using their multi-million pound bridge simulator, allowing the year nines to have a taste of what it's like to be behind the helm of an actual warship. On top of this, we were able to take out a Soft Inflatable Boat (SIB) along the river Dart, with cadets taking turns to drive it – putting the powerboat training to use.

That winter turned out to be a busy time of year, since in February, some of the cadets were able to attend an army training camp, to do a variety of practical activities. They were also able to visit the Portsmouth historic dockyard, where they were given a guided tour of HMS Victory, the oldest warship still commissioned. They were also given a tour of the harbour in a small boat, where they were lucky enough to spot a destroyer, and then visited the nearby submarine museum.

Following these two trips, we had a few months of in-school activities, such as running the field gun, learning about the history, roles and ships of the royal navy, alongside a wide variety of practical and theory based activities.

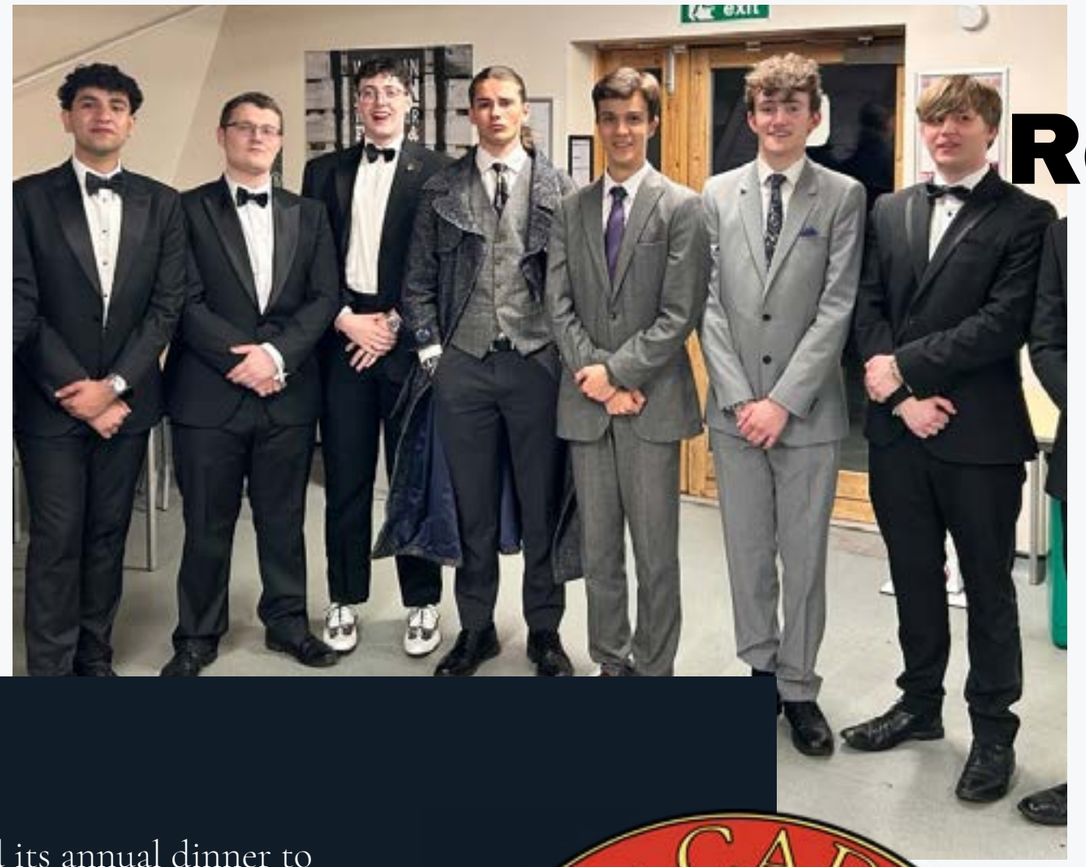
In April, a few of our cadets attended a mess dinner, where we unfortunately had to say goodbye to the four year thirteens who had led the section this year; Kieran; Tom; Elliot and Molly. It was an absolute privilege to work with them throughout the year, and I wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Following this, ten of our cadets, alongside two RAF cadets visited HMS Phoenix, in order to do some firefighting activities, as well as making use of their Damage, Rescue Instructional Unit; a scale model of the inside of a warship, that fills with water. The goal is to plug the holes before that happens. The cadets were very successful in this matter, and thoroughly enjoyed throwing themselves into rushing jets of cold water.

The final, and largest trip of the year was now approaching, and unfortunately, we received the news that we always quietly dread: we would not get a ship. Ordinarily, we get a fleet tender ship, which we drive around the Firth of Clyde throughout the week, but this year, that ship was in dry dock for repairs. Thankfully, the year thirteens were able to fil the week with a variety of fun and maritime activities, such as geocaching, rock climbing, raft building and a visit to a nearby lifeboat station, where we got a tour of their brand new Shannon class lifeboat. This led to the trip remaining as a huge success, even without the usual ship.

Personally, I think this year has been one of the best years in my time at the CCF, and I hope to make the next year just as fulfilling.

CCF Reflections



CCF Reflections

AUTHOR: JOSHUA H (YEAR 13, CORPUS CHRISTI)

EDITOR'S NOTE

In May, the CCF held its annual dinner to celebrate the past year and recognise the service of many dedicated cadets and staff.

As in previous years and in keeping with tradition, several speeches were made. The ones published here were delivered by our cadet section leaders and offer a glimpse into the evening's atmosphere and sense of occasion.

Sirs, Ma'ams, Mr Tomkins, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I firstly would like to highlight what a pleasure it is to be here tonight, and I am honoured to be asked by Lt. Col. Highway to say a few words. However, I must admit that when originally asked, I was at a loss as to what to say. How do I sum up 5 years into 3 quick minutes? Luckily, the Lt. Col. was able to provide some guidance, and suggested I base my speech around the experience. My experience has been varied. I apologize in advance to anyone I mention.

Starting in Year 9, I broke my arm which stopped me from taking part in weapons handling training. Injury is a regular topic, as you will see. Also, a night sleeping against the wall of the all-weather pitch, while the Navy and RAF slept in the headmaster's garden.

Year 10 came next – the year of the Wales summer camp. The incident regarding Lt. Cairney will be remembered for an extended period of time, and a young SSgt Watson being what I can only describe as 'domed' by a heavy wooden door. Also, the Miles Johnson incident.

Year 11 – We calmed down on the injury front and instead competed in numerous competitions, doing fairly well in them. Yoxter Summer Camp was especially wet, with most of us spending the duration soaked, with insect repellent bubbles in

unfortunate places. But I'm sure we can all agree the beans-or-tomatoes guy was the highlight.

Year 12 – the year of my well-known knee injury – I'd watch out for the media block stairs if I were you. Also, the Cambrian incident – those who know, know. However, the year came to a pleasant end with us coming in the top 3 sections on the summer camp in Folkestone, organised by South East Brigade. This was also a chance to speak to active and reserve personnel, some of whom seemed to enjoy the use of pyrotechnics against children a bit too much.

Finally, Year 13. The experience of the last 6 months has been varied, with highs and lows. A learning curve to say the least. The last 5 years have impacted me significantly, both as a person and on my knee joints. I will miss it considerably.

However, there were certainly things I will not miss, such as someone stepping into what they thought was a puddle but was a 4-foot hole and subsequently ending up waist-deep in clay, mayflies, a lot of rain, having a simulated charge go off between my legs and the subsequent temporary hearing loss, the M3/M4/M20 traffic, random country lanes, mad veterans talking about using claymores on axe-wielding children, cleaning rifles—especially an area referred to as a specific orifice—range days, sand, SSgt Costello Mannering's openness about his experiences, and horror bags.

The CCF is not simply an extracurricular activity—it is a commitment. A commitment to learning, to leadership, and above all, to service. Over the past five years, I've had the honour of experiencing all of that, and more. From standing in a squad under pouring rain during annual camps to leading platoon manoeuvres during early mornings at our beloved Mereworth training area, and not-so-beloved Pippingford Park, each moment taught me something not found in manuals.

Finally, I want to thank the staff involved in the entire process. So thank you Lt. Col. Highway, Lt. Owen, Lt. Cooper, and the man, the myth, the legend, Lt. Rai. Thank you all for listening, have a good night.

AUTHOR: *KIERAN J (YEAR 13 TONBRIDGE)*

Sirs, Ma'ams, Mr Tomkins, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's a real privilege to stand here this evening as we celebrate our departure in July, and to reflect on a journey through the Royal Navy CCF that has been, without a doubt, one of the most defining parts of my time at school.

When I first joined, I knew I was signing up for something unique. What I didn't expect was how much the CCF would shape my confidence, my leadership, and even my aspirations — especially now, as I look ahead to going to Britannia Royal Naval College later this year in July.

Some of my proudest and most memorable moments have been piloting the Clyde fleet tender — that sense of responsibility and trust in handling a vessel at sea made everything feel real. It was a glimpse into what a life in the Royal Navy could actually look like. We had a lot of fun up there, including taking a dip in the freezing waters, leaving Sir behind, getting a tour around a lifeboat, and that volleyball match — I'm proud of you for that, Elliott!

My time on my senior leadership course at Raleigh was equally unforgettable. The DRIU – the Damage Repair Instructional Unit – There's nothing like standing waist-deep in freezing water, trying to stop leaks from flooding your compartment, to teach you about pressure, teamwork, and staying calm when things go wrong, with many cadets from all around the country. And firefighting too. You come out of it with a real sense of admiration for the people who have to do this for real.

Another opportunity was the times we got to go to Britannia Royal Naval College and see how the Royal Navy trains its officers. Waking up early to climb Cardiac Hill before breakfast on our first proper trip away was an experience, along with piloting whalers, doing the gun run, high and low ropes, as well as flipping a ship in a multimillion-pound simulator and the fence that was never climbed. I can't mention Britannia without saying how good the food was. Sorry, Army section, but ration packs and scran houses just don't cut it in the Navy.

And then there were the recruit camps — long days, late nights. But they were also full of laughter, teamwork, and a real sense of achievement. It's during those camps that I learned how to lead others, but more importantly, how to earn the respect of a team by pulling your weight and backing each other up.

These experiences have been more than just exercises — they've built my confidence and clarified my ambition. I know that heading to Dartmouth will be a challenge, but the CCF has already laid so much of the groundwork. It's taught me to take responsibility, to persevere, and to lead from the front.

To the CFAVs — thank you. You've given up time, energy, and more than a few evenings in the rain to support us. We owe so much to your dedication and belief in us. And to my fellow cadets — thank you for your friendship, your support, and the shared experiences that made this journey so rewarding. We've grown together, and I wouldn't have wanted to do it with anyone else.

The CCF hasn't just prepared me for a career in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary — it's helped shape who I am. BZ everyone.

Thank you for your time tonight.

AUTHOR: *MERRICK S (YEAR 13, CORPUS CHRISTI)*

Thank you all for a wonderful evening. I would now like to take the time to share a few words about the most eventful 5 years of my life as they draw to a close. Firstly, I would like to share my appreciation to some people who have had a special impact on my cadet career. To begin, I would like to thank Lt Col. Highway, Fg Off Dimmick, and Lt. Pinn for their consistent persistence, dedication, and effort they have contributed to the RAF section during the last year. Although I will not be a cadet in the section to be able to see the fruits of your labour, I have no doubts that the future cadets will have the same fantastic and formative cadet career that I have. Next, I'd like to thank my friends, FSs Grabham and Sayamoni, who unfortunately couldn't be here tonight, that have guided, inspired, and uplifted me throughout my time at MGS, and without the CCF I would never have gotten to know them properly. Lastly, I'd like to thank my NCOs. Without the hard work you all have put in this last year, I wouldn't have been able to have run the RAF section as I have this year. From your commitments at events like open days, to acting out every silly scenario to keep our training interesting and engaging, you have been a pleasure to work with, and I am excited to see what your lives hold for you in the future.

Now I'd like to reflect on a few moments of my cadet career, starting all the way back to when I received the form to ask if I would like to join the CCF. Unlike a lot of people, I didn't have

a set plan to join a section because of a specific interest or family links; the main reason I joined was purely because, "Why not?" which, looking back, has led to many bad decisions. But now I was left with a decision to make. Which section would I join? Well, quite simply, the Army was 'not my thing' for the sake of politeness; and after 2 years of Maths lessons with Lt. Pinn and some careful consideration, 12-year-old Merrick was just slightly terrified, so the Royal Navy section was out of the equation, which left the RAF section. At the time, I had no expectations and equally no idea what lay ahead of me.

From my first summer camp, where we camped under a basher in the headmaster's garden, with a shoddily secured basher which resulted in myself being waterboarded in the night and Alex Evans waking up nowhere near the basher, getting bitten, stabbed, pricked, and sliced by Mereworth woods wildlife during the Army section's sniper stalk—which must be a hilarious event to run as an adult—but back in year 9, this was the closest thing I had to being a part of the special forces and it felt incredibly cool and powerful. I almost considered joining the Army section, until I remembered the quality of the food and the sleep. Looking back, I definitely made the right choice. From ration packs in a field to 3 cooked meals a day out of RAF Henlow's WO and Sgts mess, and sleeping in a field to having a nice room in a block with warm showers.

In my opinion, the best thing about the CCF is the connections it provides you with. It is impressive how many people I met from across the country at all sorts of strange events I found myself at. From the SNCO Cadre in year 11, where we were taught all sorts of fun things, like what to do in case of a bombing, how to be observant, and how to schmooze senior staff, along with some useful things like teaching, leading, and running a unit. This course can only be described as limbo, with days beginning early and ending late, multiple uniform changes mid days, being assessed 24/7; but one thing became clear and became one of the most useful things I learnt: "We are all in this boat together"—a mantra I carried forth into every challenge I faced. This is what has been so amazing about my time in the CCF; everything taught me something.

Without the CCF, I have no reservations when I say I would not be the man who is stood here today, and as cliché as it may sound, I can say that our motto, "Olim Meminisse Juvabit," makes much more sense to me now than it did 7 years ago listening to Mr Tomkins in the numerous assemblies it's brought up. Looking back at all the tough courses and expeditions, having military police called on me and all the nights spent planning and working to deliver activities, all were fun and enjoyable in their own ways, but for one in specific—the community. Every step of the way I've been surrounded by unique but amazing people and that is what has made this journey worth it for me, and if I can leave one thing for every other cadet in this room, it would be to keep what is important to you close to you and remember you are never alone. So when your future challenges feel tough and you want to give up, think back at all the other moments in your life you found hard, and I guarantee you, those memories, whilst maybe unpleasant, all have a silver lining—something that makes you smile. Thank you all, and good luck for your future endeavours.

Cologne Trip Highlights

AUTHOR: RYAN D AND MAX T (YEAR 8)

From the 13th to the 15th of December, we and some fellow Year 7 & 8 students studying German went on a trip to the German city of Cologne. After an over 6-hour drive, we arrived at a youth hostel a 20-minute walk away from the city centre. The hostel supplied us with nice rooms, as well as delicious food. However, there was a lot to get up to in the relatively short time we were there.

On the first night, we visited the Christmas market across the River Rhine and got our bearings in Cologne. The market was very busy, so busy that a couple of steps seemed impossible, but we had a wonderful time in the Christmas markets with friends and peers.

However, the Christmas market was only part of what we did in Cologne. On Saturday, we started by visiting the chocolate museum, where we got to try many samples of truffles, wafers, and chocolate, as well as buying sweet treats for family members at home. There was an interesting display in there, where we got to see chocolate being made, and subsequently being put in little packets, from which we got yet more free samples.

Immediately after, we travelled up the road to Germany's Sport and Olympic Museum. We got to take part in a lot of fun activities, such as weightlifting, standing long jumps, and a test where we had to see how fast we could cycle on a stationary bike. We also learnt about the history of sports events like the Olympic Games.

After a quick lunch break, we travelled to the city's gothic cathedral, which is 157 metres tall and took over 630 years to build. Its architecture amazed all of us! Before going back to the hostel, we visited the Christmas market one last time, which was even busier than before.

On the 15th, after 2 nights of limited sleep, we got driven back to Maidstone. We all found the trip very enjoyable and were glad we got the chance to partake in this visit. Overall, we all had an amazing time and were sad to leave this fascinating country.

Year 11 Reflection

AUTHOR: *JACOB E (YEAR 11, CORPUS CHRISTI)*

A lookback on Year 11...

At the start of Year 9, Mr Highway said, "Year 11 will be very challenging." I always thought, 'How hard can it be? The exams are right at the end and it's only a few weeks out of an entire year.' Mr Highway was most certainly right. And in September 2024, you think that you still have 8 months until the final exams. Actually, you have four weeks until the hard work begins...

But those last few revision-free weeks were, in hindsight, some of the best. Whether it was due to finishing the courses of subjects I didn't really like, or because everyone wanted to make them fun, I found myself thoroughly enjoying them. A definite highlight was the geography fieldwork trip to Reculver, and although it was wet, and windy, and cold, it didn't seem to matter — because I didn't know when I'd next get to enjoy myself without thinking, 'I could be revising.'

At the end of September, I started revising for my November mocks. Overall, they went very well, and before I knew it, it was the Christmas holidays. They were the last real break from revision I had. Then came the mini mocks, which took me to late February in a flash. All of a sudden, the final exams were two months

Year 11 Reflection

"GCSEs always seemed to be years away. Then they were a year away. Seventeen weeks away. Eleven. Two. Zero. Then there I was, sitting in the refectory, heart in my mouth"

away. March 3rd was when the grind started — armed with a revision timetable, extensive notes, and a vast array of past papers (these help immensely!), I began my real preparation. Every week, for 9 weeks, I put in 13 hours of revision.

GCSEs always seemed to be years away. Then they were a year away. Seventeen weeks away. Eleven. Two. Zero. Then there I was, sitting in the refectory, heart in my mouth — 24 exams ahead of me, with my first one in 20 minutes. It was nerve-racking, to say the least. But at the same time, I was surprisingly confident — and that helped me a lot more than I thought it would.

By this point, you might be getting tired of me going on and on about revision. But I was asked to write about my Year 11 experience, and honestly, that's what most of it was. Despite this, it's been a great school year. I've made some excellent friends, had some great lessons (and those aren't the kind where teachers let you use your phone, believe it or not), and made lots of memories. And that feeling on June 18th, when it was finally over, was wonderful.

With a 10-week summer ahead of me, and having just had an amazing sixth form induction week, I can honestly say that I'm really looking forward to Year 12 (the idea of wearing a suit makes it even cooler), getting to know new people, and learning lots of new things. Lastly, I'd like to thank my teachers. They've been fantastic in helping me to prepare for the exams, and have supported me when I needed it. Although some have left MGS, and some teach subjects that I don't even like that much, I really appreciate all the efforts they've made to help me (and lots of other students, too).

Summer Showcase

AUTHOR: TED W (YEAR 7, CORPUS CHRISTI)

At the summer showcase, I was given the privilege to play Willy Wonka in the school's production of "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory."

It was so much fun working with the rest of the cast, who were from Year 7 and Year 8. I was playing such a hilarious role, Willy Wonka! The cast and I have had so much fun performing this, and we were always so excited to perform on the stage.

It went perfectly (as long as we forget the part where my hat almost fell off), the casting was amazing, and everyone played out their roles brilliantly. (The cast was Ted W Y7, Edward W Y8, Borris D Y8, Daniel L Y7, Tristan A Y8, Jettson F Y8, Quinn I Y7, Charlie H Y7, Ryan P Y8 and last but not least, Nathaniel Y7.)

After the show, the rest of the cast and I celebrated, and the actors from the other sections of the showcase shared their experience and how it went; we told them the same. Some of my favourite parts from our production featured Grandpa Joe's scream of joy when Charlie gets his ticket, the part at the chocolate river where I push Verruca Salt in the face, and much more. And I still remember the panicked look on our faces when we all did a freeze frame while standing on one leg!

Since joining, I have been welcomed to the school, the drama clubs, and lessons. After the success of Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, I have been given the amazing opportunity to direct and scriptwrite my own play, which has been highly inspired by The Goes Wrong Show. The Goes Wrong Show will be performed in the October showcase.

I think that if anyone wants to get involved with the amazing productions put on by MGS, join Drama Club in room 95 at Tuesday lunchtime for Year 7 and Year 8. Working with the team is a brilliant opportunity, as you will have so much fun, and it will be great for future acting.

Year 11 Leavers

Year 13 Leavers' Day

Corpus Christi

Corpus Year Highlights

AUTHOR: SOPHIA, TOM, ANNIE AND MATT (YEAR 12)

This academic year has been a fantastic success for Corpus Christi. As the year comes to a close, Team Corpus looks with pride on a year of achievement and teamwork. We've given it our all this year! There's so much to reflect on, but of course, there are highlights:

House Christmas dinners were certainly a favourite. They were one of the rare yet treasured opportunities for the whole house to come together. Seeing Year Sevens laughing alongside Sixth Formers summed up what it's really like to be in Corpus.

What stands out the most from this year was our charity day in March. Staff darts at lunchtime were a booming success; the electric atmosphere and roaring crowd were competition for those of Ally Pally. At 15:20, the pips went and masses of students headed to the AWP for the intense rivalry of the Staff vs Sixth Formers football match. After a brutal 60 minutes, the Staff came out on top after defeating the Sixth Formers on penalties. Overall, we raised an incredible sum of £2,724.19 (the most raised from a house charities day ever!) which was split and donated to Mind, Comic Relief and Teenage Cancer Trust. Our charity day made it clearer than ever that Corpus is a family, not just a house.

Earlier in the year, we saw our Junior Prefects step up and take on real responsibility. From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representing Corpus at Open Evening to assisting with events and helping new students settle in, they've been brilliant examples of leadership in action. Induction Day was another key moment — welcoming new students into the fold and showing them that Corpus is a place where everyone belongs.

We've also enjoyed plenty of friendly rivalry this year — interhouse netball and rounders matches gave us the perfect excuse to get competitive while having fun. Whether it was the intensity of quiz night or the anticipation of sports day (depending on when you're reading this!), Corpus has shown up with energy and enthusiasm every time.

The handover under the bell between last year's prefect team and this year's was more than symbolic; it marked the continuation of a strong tradition of commitment and care. Huge credit goes to Noah, Isaac, Neve, Aleks, Toby and Harrison for their leadership last year, and to Alan and Kiera for everything they have done and will continue to do this year in their roles as School and Vice Captain.

Of course, behind the scenes were countless meetings and conversations between us — moments that turned us from a team into real mates. We've also seen brilliant collaboration between houses during their own charity events, reminding us that Corpus pride doesn't mean working alone — it means working together.

We have high hopes for the next academic year. We know our Charity Day will be an even greater success than this year's, and we're already planning new ideas to make Corpus even stronger. We've got a lot to be proud of and a lot to look forward to. One thing's for certain; Corpus spirit will remain at the heart of everything we do.

We wish you all a fantastic summer and can't wait to see you all (including new Corpus members!) in September.

CCCU Visit

AUTHOR: SAM M (YEAR 12, COLLEGE)

On the 8th of May 2025, those in Year 12 taking PE at A level and Year 10s at GCSE were given the opportunity to visit Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). This trip gave us insight into what life after sixth form could offer, especially for those showing specific interest in the Sports Science career route. Moreover, it also allowed students who were not at first interested in Sports Science the ability to gain further understanding of what the course could entail and potentially persuade them to pursue it in the future.

The trip started with a short briefing in the main lecture theatre at CCCU, where staff and students were informed about how students live their everyday lives, the state-of-the-art facilities they have, and the plan of action for what activities we would be doing throughout the day. After this, we Year 12s were taken by a current student at CCCU into one of their premium sports labs, where we all measured our lung volumes like Vital Capacity and Tidal Volume using a spirometer trace, comparing them to national averages and professional athletes. Whilst also in the sports lab, Theo Ronchetti (Year 12 student) tested out his VO_2 max, and we used our own knowledge learned from the A level curriculum to determine what his results meant and how they would affect him in a competitive race. After this, we ate lunch as a year group in the University's cafeteria where they catered for us, offering warm and cold food. The penultimate activity of the day involved learning how to diagnose bone fractures using a tuning fork and using a stethoscope to listen to what a normal and abnormal heartbeat sounds like. Finally, we learned how athletes sustain a healthy diet and what meals they need in order to fulfil certain requirements depending on the sport they play, while also being able to make mini snacks full of protein and nutrients.

The trip to CCCU was not only helpful for me, but for all of Year 10 and 12 as a collective, since it allowed us to get a deeper dive into the academic side of the University experience and widen our understanding of what opportunities are available for us in the future.

Hollywood

Year 9 Reflections

AUTHOR: NATHAN B (TONBRIDGE) & THOMAS W (CORPUS CHRISTI)

As Year 9 students, we recently embarked on our GCSE courses, which we selected back in Year 8. I chose Business, German, Design & Technology, and Geography, while Tom opted for Geography, German, Design & Technology, and Film Studies instead of Business.

The introduction of these subjects has brought significant changes to our lives in and out of the classroom. Something we did not anticipate is the change in our social lives, offering opportunities to connect with new people we may not have encountered otherwise due to the change of classes. Initially, it was challenging to adapt to the more sophisticated vocabulary and elevated expectations, but with time and persistence, it began to feel much more manageable.

At this point in the year, we have a week dedicated to off-timetable activities such as trips to London, Bake Off competitions, and various enrichment experiences. I will be travelling to Berlin for the entire week, where I will tour landmarks including the Olympic Stadium, the DDR Museum, and the city itself. Meanwhile, Tom will take part in the Bake Off—this year themed around films—and will also work on creating an original short film, in which I have every confidence he will excel.

Here at MGS, there is also the opportunity to join the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), a youth organisation in UK schools that offers military-style training. I saw this as too good of an opportunity to pass up, so I joined the RAF section due to my love of aircraft and dream to one day become a pilot.

Overall, this year has been marked by substantial change and growth as we adjusted to our GCSE subjects. These choices have not only expanded our academic futures but also enriched our social interactions. I am excited to explore Berlin's history and culture, while Tom engages in creative pursuits. All these experiences have made this year truly memorable and have laid a solid foundation for the remainder of our GCSE journey.

A Year in Review for the Army Section

AUTHOR: CDT SSGT M. HOLMES (YEAR 11, COPRUS CHRISTI)

To begin the year, we had a strong Year 9 cohort of 74 cadets, who became the focus of our training in the opening months, allowing them to develop and integrate into the section. They began to develop their military knowledge, first aid, and navigational skills, which can further the cadets in the CCF, and life more broadly.

Four cadets from the Army Section took part in the 2024 CADSAM competition—an annual cadet shooting competition held in Pirbright Camp, Surrey. The team achieved a third-place medal in the Fire Control Assessment category. We hope to replicate and improve upon our successes in the 2025 CADSAM competition.

The first field exercise of the school year began with Exercise Iron, in Pippingford Park, East Sussex, in late October. Year 10 to 13 cadets utilised their skills and furthered their leadership skills with section attacks, ambushes, and night navigation.

The next event of the year was the Remembrance Sunday parade held in Maidstone. Thirty cadets from the Army Section marched alongside the other sections of the contingent to commemorate the end of the First World War and to remember soldiers who had fought in all wars.

By the start of 2025, the Year 9 cadets had completed their basic syllabus, which culminated in them practicing their shooting abilities in the school's range, with impressive shooting all around. Their training continued at Longmoor Camp, Hampshire, where they completed their final fieldcraft modules, such as living and maintaining in the field, night navigation, and a section attack demonstration from the senior cadets.

The CCF commemorated the 80th VE (Victory in Europe) Day, celebrating the end of the Second World War on the 8th of May 1945. We recognised the event with a commemorative photograph of all three sections, forming the letters VE.

In May, the CCF continued its annual tradition of the CCF leavers' dinner, where the staff, students, Old Maidstonians, and representatives from 36 Engineers gathered to celebrate the achievements of the sections and to send our best wishes to those cadets who are leaving to move on to other places.

Later in May, 40 cadets took part in Exercise Gold in Mereworth Woods, Kent, where the junior cadets utilised their skills for the first time in an exercise setting. The Year 9 cadets furthered their knowledge with section attacks, navigation, and pairs fire and manoeuvre drills.

The section is preparing for our summer camp held at Okehampton Camp, Devon. This five-day camp is the highlight of the year for the Army Section, where the 46 cadets attending will undergo two days performing fieldcraft activities, as well as a day at the ranges, a day of activities in the camp such as the obstacle course, and a final competition day against the other CCFs present.

I would like to thank all those

VE80

8th May 2025

2025

"The CCF commemorated the 80th VE Day…with a commemorative photograph of all three sections, forming the letters VE 80."

who have helped the Army Section over the last year, who have allowed it to develop and grow further as it has done for many years. Special regard is given to the leaving Year 13 cadets, RSM J. Hicks, SSgt O. Costello-Mannering, and Sgt D. Carlile. We hope to continue the successes of the 2024/25 school year into the 2025/26 year, and to advance the section's abilities further.

VE80 Challenge: My May Journey

AUTHOR: *KIERAN J (YEAR 13, TONBRIDGE)*

Throughout the month of May, to celebrate the 80th anniversary of VE Day, I participated in the Royal British Legion Institute's VE80 challenge. This entailed running, walking, cycling, or swimming 80 miles before the end of the month. I chose to run the 80 miles, deciding that I would take on a 5k each day. As I built up my confidence in running, I tried a few 10ks to boost my mileage. The first few weeks went really well; I was out after school each day. However, by the halfway point, I sustained a knee injury and had to dial back, but thankfully by then I was ahead of schedule. By the last ten or so miles, I had recovered enough to resume my usual 5k along the Greensand Way. On the 30th of May, I had completed just over 80 miles and had managed to raise a total of £350 for the RBLI. I had lots of support from friends, family, and others doing the challenge online, and I would strongly encourage others to participate in similar challenges to raise money for other charities of their choice.

Reflections on a Year as School Captain

School Captain

AUTHOR: *ALAN B (YEAR 12, CORPUS CHRISTI)*

As another year ends, it gives the opportunity for the school captain to share some words about what the last year has held for him. Isaac, being the eloquent wordsmith that he is, has thoroughly prepared me for moments like this. So here are my thoughts.

I sit here writing this article just after completing my final UCAS exam, and I am now patiently awaiting my results that will come out shortly. This past week has felt like the culmination of the entire academic year, where all the hard work and hours that are stored in the pen finally get put to paper. Camaraderie and self-discipline are what have really pushed me through this period. My favourite aspect would have been the "who gets to the office earlier" competition that I had with previous vice-captain Noah. Getting into school at half 7, only to see him there before me, was quite a deflating feeling – so I must thank him for that.

The other main event of the year was the school captain application process, which — believe it or not — I came out of the other side quite content. Being able to compete with such a gifted pool of applicants was an absolute honour, and Kiera beside me has been incredible to work with since February. Holding the role as school captain has been something that I have thoroughly enjoyed over the last few months. The thrill of public speaking, the amazing team of prefects that Kiera and I lead, and obviously the biscuits and banana bread in "Blanters" with Mr Tomkins have been among my favourite elements.

Looking ahead, the next year will not lighten up: my attention now shifts to my university applications, as I look to study engineering. The summer will be a busy period, obsessing over my personal statement, and watching endless YouTube videos on interview prep and ESAT exam technique. However, I am definitely looking forward to this next challenge in my life. The period until Christmas is filled with events, open evenings, firework nights, the lot. Hence, more speaking, more leading, and more Blanters.

"The privilege of having my role has made me see and appreciate the amount of work that goes into everything. "

Year 13 Leavers' Photo

Although all the success might seem to be the reason why I have enjoyed this year, it is the people around MGS that have made this year — along with every other year — special. The privilege of having my role has made me see and appreciate the amount of work that goes into everything. I would like to thank the staff and thank all my peers around me for making this year memorable, and I am in full confidence that the next will be just as fruitful.

RAF Section Year in Review

AUTHOR: *CHRISTIAN K (YEAR 12, BARTON)*

The Royal Air Force Section have faced many challenges this year, most notably the resignation of our two most senior officers, Flight Lieutenant Moores and Flying Officer Parish. This was an enormous blow to the stability of the RAF! However, we have persevered. Our parades are yet to die and our enthusiasm unchanged. Having had many technical difficulties with RAF Cadet computer systems and support, we've had to, as a section, evolve and increase our effort for the CCF to maintain our stable number of cadets. I am pleased to say that it has been a success!

This year, in February, we took a team comprised of 13 of our most experienced cadets to the Regional Air Squadron Trophy competition. Here we put on quite a performance, improving on our previous year's results in 4 areas of the competition. However, despite our best efforts to be promoted to the national competition (NAST), we fell short of promotion and finished 7th out of the 19 schools that attended. Although we did not qualify for nationals, we still kept - if not improved - our very feared and well-respected reputation throughout Kent and even England!

This year consisted of many fun activities such as drone flying, first aid, radio talks, and command tasks. These all helped to train our cadets and put their taught skills to the test, as well as providing them practice for next year's RAST.

Despite the many difficulties we have faced this year, we still managed to escape the school's walls and land ourselves at RAF Kenley. Here we took 4 well-deserving cadets to take control of a Viking T1 glider. This beauty is 26 ft in length and boasts a whopping 58 ft wingspan.

The cadets each had two flights and were all allowed to take control of the glider!

As this academic year closes, looking back as head of the section next year, I must say how proud I am of the cadets—in the way that they have stepped up, matured, taken on responsibility, and most importantly kept the section very much alive.

Being the cadet leading the RAF next year, I am confident that, due to the vigorous efforts of our cadets - and I really do mean the vigorous, commendable efforts of our cadets - that the RAF will come back stronger! We really do have great things planned.

Have a wonderful summer, and let us remember our motto: Per Ardua ad Astra – Through adversity we seek the stars.

God Save the King.

The Birth of PhySoc

AUTHOR: *CALVIN T (YEAR 12, TONBRIDGE)*

Too many of us have long been enticed by the natural harmony that arises amidst all the discord in physics. But, confined within the A Level curriculum in its diluted form, it fails to scratch the lingering itch we all feel — the curiosity to probe above and beyond the watered-down facts in the textbook. This tantalising vacuum galvanised me into action, and the Physics Society blazed into existence.

Centred around the intention to enshrine intellectual rigour, the Society's cardinal rationale is to provide a holistic foray into the more riveting territories of physics, dwarfing the A Level course in both breadth and depth. We also aim to acquaint ourselves with the substratum of mathematical logic that so symbiotically undergirds the domain of physics.

In PhySoc, there is only one rule: anyone is welcome to present a topic of their choice. Just as I had envisioned, we have built a veritable haven for aspiring physicists, astronomers, and engineers alike. Past sessions covered electricity, quantum mechanics, and applications of fluid mechanics in F1. Next year, we might dive deeper into the LHC, quantum computing, astrophysics, applications of electromagnetism, and more. There will also be hands-on experiences, such as experimenting with non-Newtonian fluids and plasma

globes, allowing us to witness the theory instantiated in real life.

This is a collaborative passion project wholly predicated on our shared affinity and affection for physics. We hope to, at least to some extent, feed our insatiable desire to learn more. If this lofty ambition resonates with you, don't hesitate to join us in Room 71 every Friday lunchtime. Next year will see the full bloom of our nascent endeavour — brilliance awaits.

A Season to Remember

AUTHOR: JOSHUA A

Being part of the MGS Basketball team has been one of the most rewarding and unforgettable experiences of my school life. This season, all the effort, training, and determination came together as we lifted the Kent Cup — a moment that will stay with me for a long time.

From the very beginning of the season, I was proud to be named in the starting five. It was a role I didn't take lightly. Whether it was setting the tone early in games, keeping our energy levels high, or making key decisions under pressure, I always aimed to give everything I had from the first whistle to the last.

Throughout the season, we faced some really tough opposition. Every game was a test — not just of skill, but of our resilience and ability to stay composed as a team. The chemistry we built over time was one of our biggest strengths. We learned how to trust one another, communicate better, and respond to setbacks together.

One of the most memorable moments for me personally came during the semi-final, when I managed to knock down a crucial three-pointer that helped shift the momentum in our favour. That game, and many others, showed how much we had grown — not just technically, but mentally.

The Kent Cup final was the perfect stage to show what we were capable of. From the moment the game began, we played with confidence, focus, and hunger. Every player played their part, and it felt like everything we had worked for all season was finally clicking. When the final buzzer went and we were crowned champions, the feeling was unbelievable — not just because we'd won, but because we'd earned it together.

Winning the Kent Cup and starting throughout the season taught me so much about leadership, responsibility, and the importance of teamwork. Representing MGS Basketball has been an honour, and this season is something I'll always be proud of.

Floor 14 - Music, Growth, & Gratitude

AUTHOR: NED W (YEAR 12, TONBRIDGE)

This academic year has seen a huge increase in music performance across MGS and inspired the creation of many school bands, helping students school-wide to gain confidence and share their talent through the school's frequent 'Live at Lunch' events or the two live music nights extensively planned and hosted by Mr. Martin.

As a band born of school friends in early 2023, we at Floor 14 have seen a huge amount of success and support both inside and outside of school. The year started off strong off the back of our July 2024 debut EP, Waste of Space. Following its release, we pushed to host or play shows at many local venues, with a notable performance hosted at The Harmony Theatre in November of 2024. With overwhelming support from fellow students within the MGS community and around our local area, we were able to sell out the venue – providing valuable revenue reinvested directly back into the band and our future studio ideas. The energy continued to the second MGS band evening in December, where hundreds of students and their families showed their support for the huge array of talented musicians at MGS, as well as contributing money towards future events. This allowed the music department to purchase a new set of cymbals and a full set of in-ear monitors – a huge improvement to an already great sound system.

Following our success in these events and countless smaller shows, we took to Blue Bell Hill Studios to record and master a crowd-favourite track: 'Woozy', which we released in March of the following year. The track gained quick success and rapidly propelled us to a peak of almost 8,000 unique monthly listeners. With high-quality tracks now available, our support grew, allowing us to host multiple other gigs at local venues throughout Maidstone and Medway, gaining traction, funding, and new, exciting ideas for the future.

As of July 2025, we look forward to a productive summer with many shows planned over the break, including our festival debut at the excellent Blue Reef Festival later this month – a local weekend-long event with thousands of people! It is now that we can reflect on the strong and consistent support received by MGS over our short time together as a band. With passionate music teacher Mr. Elks comprehensively supporting and inspiring students across the school, and Mr. Martin arranging key school events to enable students to show their talent, there really is no better time or place to be pursuing music in Maidstone.

On behalf of the band, I extend my thanks to both the school and our supporters. We look forward to bringing you more shows and music in the future.

Floor 14: Callum P (Year 12, Barton), Ethan W (Year 12, Tonbridge), Ned W, Joshua H (Year 12, Tonbridge), Dylan B (OM, Year 11 2024)

January 2025

My Harvard Experience

AUTHOR: DANIEL H (YEAR 12, COLLEGE)

One of the key highlights of this academic year for me was the Harvard Trip to New York and Boston. Starting with the usual tourist attractions and sightseeing, it was amazing to see the city of New York. Many sites were visited such as: Ground Zero, Central Park, Empire State Building, Brooklyn Bridge and my personal favourite Times Square. These were all fantastic, and the amazing cohort of year 12's that I shared the experience with made this trip unique. Many of my friendships were forged by this trip, with people that I had spent my previous years at MGS, yet had never talked to, and had to spend 8 days with.

The coach journey from New York to Boston will be one that I will never forget, as it encouraged me on that trip to come out of my comfort zone. This journey represented the start of Year 12 for me as I was able to really immerse with a group of people that had either been introduced to me in September or I had rarely socialised with previously.

For the conference in Boston each person in our group were selected to represent and country in a certain delegation. For me, this was the NATO committee in which I represented Ukraine. This was an incredible experience, partaking in Harvard style

"This trip is so special, transformative and to be unique to MGS, I would recommend this to all Year 12's next year. "

debating in rooms of up to 400 people. This was a large step up for many of our group, as this was their first time debating to such a large audience. After the initial nerves for many, going into conference, the worries were swiftly removed after the first day, where our practice from September-January was put into action. Everyone was enthusiastic leaving conference each day and there was a large buzz and a sense of pride and achievement after each session, especially during the sessions when we had either Mr Tomkins, Mrs Van Mol or Mr Andrews watch us debate.

Once the conference had finished, we had one last meal together in the Cheesecake Factory, which Mr Tomkins heralds before the trip, and I can confirm that this was definitely met my expectations. Unfortunately, the trip had to end soon after and with our return to the UK I thought that this marked the end of the experience. I was wrong, as many of the people I met on the trip were tied close to me and so we began to spend more time together. The trip allowed me to further my knowledge in my chosen subject areas and also gave me experience of public speaking, which I hold so valuably to myself now. But most importantly this inspired me to exert myself as a better person for others and really get involved in opportunities that I have been given this year, including becoming part of the Senior Prefect Team. This trip is so special, transformative and to be unique to MGS, I would recommend this to all Year 12's next year.

Year 10

AUTHOR: BY HENRY M (YEAR 10, COLLEGE) AND DESIRE A (YEAR 10, CORPUS CHRISTI)

Year 10, a year characterised by novel experiences and some hard challenges. This year brought us memorable outings, sporting success and much more. In this article, my friend Henry and I will unpack all the good (and maybe not so good) that all (exact number of Year 10 students) of us experienced in our penultimate year of secondary school at MGS. For some, this marks the penultimate year at MGS, and though it may feel like we are traipsing towards GCSEs, there have been plenty of moments that made us stop, look around and enjoy what we have. Whether it was a fun lunch break, an interesting lesson, or just walking out the gates at the end of the day, I think I speak for most people when I say that: Year 10's been pretty good.

As a year group, we have experienced lots of memorable moments, namely in sport. All the way from two-time district final champions in football and athletics to valiant semi-final performances in rugby and cricket, this academic calendar was marked by an abundance of sporting success. Let's be honest – school trips might just be the best thing about school. The coach ride, missing lessons, the inevitable McDonald's stop: what's not to love? This year, everyone got at least one. First, the history trip to the Imperial War Museum – an incredible place packed into four floors, yet somehow, most of us still managed to get lost. The rest of the year group made their way to Stratford for the geography field trip. While the fieldwork was... engaging, the real highlight was the hour and a half in Westfield, where we all ate far too much fast food and found the restaurants far too late.

Next year, I hope to continue representing the school through senior rugby involvement and also build on my mock exam results by streamlining my revision processes and having a more active attitude toward my academics, to hopefully culminate with a set of excellent GCSE results. As we look into the coming year, we know that we are less than a year away from GCSEs, and though the mountain may feel insurmountable, school life will not slow down. I hope that classrooms everywhere will continue to be lively, lunch and break will still be loud, and when the time does come to leave after our exams, I know that the relief will be coupled with a nostalgia that never leaves.

As this school year comes to a close, I'm sure we Year 10 students can look back with great fondness and fulfilment. With excellency in all departments and valuable lessons learned, collectively we can all agree this year was, by all means, a particularly good one.

My DofE Experience This Year

AUTHOR: TIMOTHY B (YEAR 10, COLLEGE)

This academic year, I (along with some of my fellow Madisonians) have participated in the Bronze assessed expedition (in September), the practice expedition for silver – in March – and most recently, the silver assessed expedition (in June). From my personal experiences, I believe DofE is a great opportunity to learn new skills, practice physical work, and even gain some work experience. Although completing the physical, skills, and volunteering parts of the award seemed boring in some parts, it was worth it for the experience and the expedition, of course.

For bronze, I started my volunteering, skill, and physical work at the beginning of the academic year and was still completing it when I had gone on the practice expedition. For my volunteering, I worked as an assistant instructor for kung fu (I had been doing kung fu for a few years when I started this). For my skill, I set myself the goal of learning the whole of "Sweet Child O' Mine" by Guns N' Roses. For my physical, I did football (which I did with a team outside of school). When it came to the expeditions, on the first practice expedition, there were almost 80 of us students, and none of us knew what we were doing, so for the first day, we learned all the core parts of how to complete our expeditions successfully. For the walking on our practice, an assessor walked with us, helping us read our maps (which we had drawn the previous day). However, when it came to the assessed expedition, it was much more serious, and we walked as a group without an assessor. The walks were good and not too hot, which meant we were able to arrive back at the campsite a little earlier, and we were able to leave early, go home, and actually get some sleep.

For our silver DofE, there were only 3 groups (each with roughly 6 or 7 people), which surprised me considering how many people were on bronze. The practice expedition was very similar to the bronze assessed, but slightly more relaxed. However, the assessed expedition (which took place in the New Forest) was a lot more challenging. We had to deal with 30+ degree weather with heavier bags, longer routes, and roughly an hour extra time needed to be spent out on the walk. It was an interesting experience, and we all enjoyed our time making friends with different schools at the different campsites. One problem with the New Forest was ticks; every time we had a rest, we had to check for ticks, and I personally had to remove 4 from myself. In my opinion, the highlight of silver this year was walking past a Ferrari dealership, where we got photos of the cars.

Barton Looking Ahead

AUTHOR: ETHAN G (YEAR 12)

As we settle into our new roles in the Barton Senior Prefect team, we would like to reflect on the beginning of our time. We, as junior prefects, strolled pridefully into our first event, a successful Macmillan Coffee Morning, and from open evenings to the annual fireworks night, we established ourselves into the new rhythm of our office, building skills from strength to strength.

Towards the middle of the year, the process for becoming senior prefects began, where we all underwent rigorous assessments and an interview to determine the right people for the role. Funnily enough, we had what it took, and the positions were inhabited by House Captain Ethan G and Hadyn C, with Sophie C and William C as senior prefects. As a team, we are so grateful to have been given the opportunity to serve the house and to help Barton truly succeed in embodying and embracing our values. One of these at MGS, and within our Barton community, is unity and belonging — symbolised by our pillar of 'Inspire to Belong'.

This is evident through the whole-school celebration of Pride Month in June, which we, as Barton, had the honour and privilege to deliver an assembly on, to raise awareness of some pivotal activists for the Pride Movement.

Shifting our focus to the future, we are excited for what's to come, to tackle the challenges that may arise, and to foster the next generation of junior prefects and their journey within the school and house. We also look forward to welcoming the new cohort of students, young and younger still, and hope to see them flourish in Barton. Next year, our focus will be undeniably set on the upcoming charity events, the House Cup, and the next cycle of examinations. We are confident that it will be our best year yet — and definitely one to remember.

A Theory on Democratic Engagement and Young People

AUTHOR: *HAYDN C (YEAR 12, BARTON)*

It should be no shock that young people appear to be completely disengaged from the political system. This assumption, made by many, is backed up by data, with research (The Electoral Commission, 2025) showing that less than half of young people say that they are interested in UK politics, decreasing to 34% when considering the 15-17 age group. However, this assumption falls under scrutiny, leading to the revelation that young people do have a distinct interest in the effects that political decision-making has on daily life; they simply feel disenfranchised by the system itself.

Young people's lives are undeniably shaped by politics, and key topics they care about are often at the top of politicians' minds. Take, for example, health and wellbeing, which is both ranked as the top issue for young people (National Youth Agency, 2024) and as the second most important issue for the general public (YouGov, 2025). As such, it takes up considerable space on the government's agenda, with health and social care having the second greatest spend of any area of government (HM Treasury, 2024). With this, an assumption would develop that this issue, which young people are shown to care about, would galvanise them to take action to see improvement, much like older demographic segments do. This would especially be likely, given that it is a high-priority area in terms of policymaking. However, the data tells a different story. Surveys show that only 5% of young people are members of political parties, and less than 10% were members of youth NGOs or other youth movements (Marina Şerban, 2023). This leads us to the first conclusion, which is that young people care about political issues but have a disconnect between the issue and the political system.

To examine the cause of this disconnect, we must seek out the views that young people have on the political system, and they clearly do not see it in a positive light. Only one in ten believe that politicians prioritise their needs (Save the Children, 2024), and less than a quarter agree that politicians are listening to the views of young people, with seventeen-year-olds being the least likely age group to agree (Children's Commissioner, 2025). This is not because young people want to be ignored – 88% believe that it is important to have a say in the decisions politicians make in public life (Save the Children, 2024) – but because they feel disenfranchised as a group.

We cannot be surprised at this simple fact. Young people would feel disenfranchised, given that they do not possess the right to vote. Politicians, after all, have an eye on job security at all times, and they must court the voting population, which does not include young people. They do not have to consider the views of that bloc, as such creating an assumption within young people that politicians will instinctively ignore them in favour of voting groups, causing them to disengage. Why should we expect them to care about a system that does not care for them? We teach children to respect others as they would want to be respected themselves, yet we do not apply this same standard to how societal institutions treat them.

However, if this were the sole reasoning, we would expect a large uptake in democratic participation when individuals turn 18. This does not materialise; the 18-25 age bracket has the lowest turnout of any age group (British Election Study, 2024). Two reasons exist to explain this. Firstly, we can posit that young people carry the disengagement they gain during their youth into adulthood, which we'll term "post-enfranchisement disconnection". However, we can also see an earlier force, which we'll term "pre-enfranchisement blockading". This comes through education, and how young people are being failed in terms of the democratic and citizenship development they undertake.

Let's turn back to the data. Less than a third of young people say they know about what the UK Government does, around half need more information on who to vote for, and around half need more information on how to vote (The Electoral Commission, 2025). The pattern is clear: young people are being prevented from truly engaging in politics due to the failures of the education system to properly equip them. This void created by schooling bears itself in the top two sources of political information for young people: television and social media (The Electoral Commission, 2025). Without schools to act as a reliable source of information on politics, young people will turn to less scrupulous and more partisan sources, potentially misleading them and further blockading them from meaningful political engagement. As such, we can see this vast gap between the current provision and the necessary provision. To conclude, we have established that young people are not engaged in politics, they feel the system disincentivises politicians from listening to their concerns, and they undergo both pre-enfranchisement blockading through a lack of education, as well as post-enfranchisement disconnection, with their disengagement carrying on into later life. However, we have not established the solutions.

With a complex societal issue such as this, solutions may seem impossible to find and implement, but here we do not encounter such issues. The start is evident; we must enfranchise young people by lowering the voting age to sixteen (or lower, for those feeling particularly radical) in order to tackle the force of post-enfranchisement disconnection, by ensuring that politicians will begin to consider their views. This is backed up by data, with the Scottish Independence referendum often used as a case study to prove that, when enfranchised, sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds have higher rates of turnout compared to eighteen- to 24-year-olds (The Electoral Commission, 2014). As well as this, we also must prevent pre-enfranchisement blockading through new statutory requirements and better resourcing available to schools. Firstly, the government must separate political education from personal, social, health, and economic (PSHE) education in order to give it better footing. This is because PSHE is a non-statutory subject, and by separating political education we can make it statutory, ensuring a baseline level of political education across the country. The government must also increase funding for schools, as well as greatly expand the resources available for political education, to ensure that schools are enabled to help their students succeed in this matter.

Overall, this message should be clear: young people are the future, and they must be enabled to craft their own future. This can only happen by implementing solutions that enable young people to connect

the issues they see to action they can take.

Politics is often compared to a nursing home. In future, I hope to see it compared to a youth club.

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Luke's Busy Year of Cycling

AUTHOR: LUKE F (YEAR 9, BARTON)

2024/25 has been another busy year of cycling.

Luke had a great winter competing in Cyclocross. He competed in the East Kent and South East / London Leagues. He also raced in some National Races. Luke finished 4th overall in the league. It was a particularly muddy winter, but his technical skills got him through the races.

October last year was Luke's first attempt at Hill Climbs. Luke raced Catford Hill Climb and Bec Hill Hill Climb on the same day and absolutely flew up both.

This season the focus has been on road races. We've just returned from a three-stage race in the Midlands, 'Le Tour De L'Avenir'. Luke raced a time trial and a 40-minute road race on Saturday, followed by an hour's race at the famous Land Rover Jaguar Fen End Test Centre on Sunday. Just a few weeks ago, Luke tried out a Mountain Bike Race and finished first in the U16s.

Luke is hitting speeds of 48 mph in road races now, which, to be honest, is quite scary to watch given that all road cyclists wear is lycra. Luke somehow finds it exhilarating.

Mid-July, Luke looks forward to a Regional Town Centre Crit in Guildford – this is a big event in the race calendar. He is also looking forward to becoming a second-year U16 in September.

Luke was also invited to attend RSR – Regional School of Racing for Cyclocross and Road, so has been on the programme with British Cycling for the last year and will continue on the programme for another year.

Luke's dedication to training is incredible. Regardless of the weather, training, diet, and sleep are important. On average, Luke is doing 500 miles a month.

My Journey with the National Youth Orchestra

AUTHOR: TOBY R (YEAR 12, TONBRIDGE)

Last September, I auditioned for and was successful in joining NYO (The National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain). The application involved a first-round video, then a second-round day of assessed group activities, and my own individual audition.

The orchestra has three main residential trips per year, lasting around 12 days, that take place in the school holidays. We play in all the major concert halls around the country, including venues such as the Barbican in London, the Royal Albert Hall, Birmingham Symphony Hall, and the Bridgewater Hall in Manchester. Each residential course culminates in a concert tour, where we play in three venues.

The Barbican this winter:

As I write this, I am looking forward to probably the biggest concert of the year for NYO: playing in the Royal Albert Hall at the prestigious BBC Proms. This will be streamed on BBC iPlayer and BBC Sounds. Tickets for the event have already sold out, so it promises to be an incredible atmosphere to be a part of. We have a hugely exciting programme lined up, including selections from Star Wars! This will be so fun to play, particularly for myself and the other members of the brass section.

Being a part of NYO is more than just performing great music at great venues at an amazing standard. We also engage in lots of outreach work, hoping to inspire a greater uptake in music, particularly in young people. I played in two schools concerts in Blackpool Tower Ballroom earlier this year. It involved performing to a total of 6,000 schoolchildren who had never had the opportunity to witness a live orchestra before. This was a hugely rewarding event to be a part of, and the feedback has all been incredibly positive.

Another example is when I went into a primary school with a fellow member of the trumpet section, and we played to Years 3–6, delivering an interactive masterclass/assembly to the children. Again, this was extremely well received, and we have been invited to go in and do the same whenever we would like.

I have had such a great time socially during my time in the orchestra and have undoubtedly made friends for life — and undoubtedly met many of my future colleagues, should I choose to go into the profession. I can't wait for the rest of my time as a part of the NYO.

NYO

"As I write this, I am looking forward to probably the biggest concert of the year for NYO: playing in the Royal Albert Hall at the prestigious BBC Proms".

Reflecting on Year 8: Milestones and Memories

AUTHOR: DAVID I (CORPUS CHRISTI) & JAMES R (TONBRIDGE)

Hello everyone, Year 8 has been a great experience — full of ups, downs, and everything in between. From the funny moments with friends and the occasional bit of trouble, to the big steps like picking our GCSEs, every experience has shaped this year and made it one to remember. Today, we wanted to look back and share a few thoughts.

So, one of the biggest milestones this year was choosing our GCSEs. It felt like a huge decision — these are the subjects we'll be focusing on for the next few years, and let's be honest, it was a little stressful at times. We all had that moment of wondering: Do I choose what I'm best at or what I actually enjoy? But when we finally got the subjects we wanted, we all probably felt relieved — excited, even. There were so many new options too, like Business Studies and Film Studies, and it really felt like the first step toward shaping our future.

This year also brought a new behaviour system. Out went the old conduct marks, and in came "call backs" — quick 10-minute detentions after a warning, usually during break. They made consequences feel more immediate and helped lessons run more smoothly. The system felt a bit better too — a way to learn from small mistakes without the pressure of a full detention.

Looking ahead, we're really excited for next year. We are hoping to join the CCF, especially the RAF section — it sounds amazing, and let's be honest, who doesn't love planes? We also want to try new sports and push ourselves to improve, but most of all, we're looking forward to having fun — spending time with friends and family, enjoying new activities, and making more great memories.

To sum it all up, Year 8 has been unforgettable. We've grown so much, not just academically, but in all areas. We're excited for what's next and can't wait to kick off Year 9 and start our GCSE journey!

U15 XI District Cup Final Win

AUTHOR: LUCAS S (YEAR 10, COLLEGE)

Tuesday 6th May 2025 - MGS 4-0 SST

Taking part in the U15 XI District Cup Final this May was an unforgettable experience — not just because of the result, but because of everything that led up to it. Being part of the squad throughout the season had been something really special, after having such a poor start in the Kent Cup and a satisfactory run in the National Cup. To finish it all with a final like that seemed like the perfect reward for the effort everyone had put in.

From the very first round of the competition, we built momentum with every game, starting out with wild, emphatic scorelines in our favour. We slowly grew tighter as a team and became more confident in our play as we progressed through, coming up against tougher opponents after each round. The final itself brought nerves and excitement in equal measure. Walking onto the pitch knowing it could be our last game together in our year group's team (due to the prospect of exciting senior football next year) added an extra edge. Seeing the support on the sidelines — teachers, friends, family, and headteacher — gave us a boost and lent even more importance to the occasion.

What made this final stand out wasn't just the 4 goals we scored or the dismantling of a tricky SST team, but the fact that there was never a sense of overconfidence or arrogance in our football, even after coming into the game as defending champions. We stuck together through the high-pressure moments at the beginning of the match — with one of my own goals being controversially disallowed — and we never relented until the final whistle, even whilst being 1, 2, or 3-0 up. Every player had a job to do, and you could feel that unity from the first whistle to the last.

Personally, being involved in a match of that magnitude has been one of the highlights of my time at MGS so far. It was a moment when I felt I could really enjoy my football, despite it being such a tense game, as I knew I had the quality around me in this team. Winning the District Cup means a lot every year, but this victory is particularly sweet — not just because we get a trophy to finish off the season, but because I feel we thoroughly deserve it, given our hard-fought but futile efforts in the two other Cup runs.

Looking back now, I know this match will stay with me for a long time. Yes, we won the match, and I managed to contribute to the scoreline, but it also showed what we can do when we work together, push through pressure, and play our football. It's been such a rewarding experience to be a part of this squad, and I know this experience will be something we all remember — whatever happens next season with senior football.

Debating 2025

AUTHOR: BENJI B (YEAR 13, COLLEGE)

The MGS Forum entered a number of competitions this year, including those in formats we previously hadn't, and enjoyed successes throughout. The competitions started with the first round of the English-Speaking Union's (ESU's) prestigious Mace competition, inviting hundreds of schools from across the country to compete in a series of structured debates. The first round saw us travel to Canterbury to compete against schools including St Edmund's and Sutton Valence. Our first experience in this new pre-prepared format was a strong one and saw us through to round two, amidst some other good performances from the speakers there. The second round followed shortly, debating copyright laws in the music industry, hosted at Benenden Independent School. The three who competed — Ben B, Isaac M and Henry A — not forgetting the designated driver Kiran S — gave some strong speeches all round, were designated the best team in feedback following the debate, and headed through to the regional finals. The Oxford and Cambridge regionals bridged the time gap between those rounds, and taking four teams for both competitions made MGS one of the most represented at each event. All the teams who attended gave some excellent speeches and narrowly missed out on places at the final days, in the face of some other great competitors. The final event on the calendar this year was the Mace Regional Finals, where one of the six teams competing gets the opportunity to attend the national final. After a lot of preparation and work, we were unfortunate to be bested by Benenden, hosting again, the better team on the day, but came away having had a good run and some fantastic experiences. The weekly sessions saw those who started attending for the first time grow immensely, and we hope that as the Forum continues in the capable hands of Hadyn C and Leo S, everyone who joined will keep getting better and have some more results next year. Alongside Isaac, I have enjoyed teaching and competing with the school this year and the past few years I have been a part of the society, and hope that it continues to flourish in years to come.

My Acting Journey So Far

AUTHOR: ELI S-M (YEAR 7, TONBRIDGE)

Hi, my name is Eli, and I'm an actor. I discovered my love for acting, singing, and dancing when I joined a weekend stage school. After that, I got recommended to an agent, and that's when my acting journey really began.

I've been lucky to act in lots of movies and TV shows like Wicked, Wicked Little Letters, Greatest Days, Working Man, Wonka, Napoleon, Blitz, and Hamlet.

Acting is fun, but it can also be tough. Sometimes I go to auditions or film self-tapes at home, and I don't always get the part. Sometimes I get close, and other times I don't hear anything back. You must be strong and keep going, even when it doesn't work out.

This year, 2025, has been especially exciting. I got the lead role in a brand-new show called The Parent Agency (TPA). It's a family musical written by David Baddiel and Dan Gillespie-Sells. I played Barry, a boy who's looking for the perfect parents but learns that things aren't always better somewhere else.

I found out I got the part in November 2024, and I got the script on Christmas Eve. In January, I started rehearsals six days a week! It was hard work, school in the morning and rehearsals in the afternoon, but my school, MGS, and my teachers were supportive.

Rehearsals weren't always glamorous; we practiced in a church, and sometimes we spent hours working on just one scene. There were lots of script changes too. But it was all exciting.

When we went to Chester to perform, I had to stay away from home for three weeks. I had to keep up with schoolwork and perform, sometimes twice a day! Being on stage is amazing — I love it. And there were some fun parties too, where I got to meet directors, producers, actors, and lots of other people in the industry.

Overall, it's been an amazing experience, and I'm excited to say that I have some more filming in the next few weeks. With the support of my family and school, I hope I can keep acting and chasing my dream.

UKYP & KYCC

Reflecting on a Year of Youth Representation and Progress

Photo credit: UK Parliament/House of Commons.

AUTHOR: *HADYN C (YEAR 12, BARTON) & JUSTICE M (YEAR 11, TONBRIDGE)*

This past academic year has been a whirlwind within the youth voice sector, with swathes of both successes and challenges coming to both of us, as your elected representatives. However, we have collaborated to ensure that the voice of the youth within the MGS community, and Kent as a whole, continues to be heard.

2025 was spent picking up the pieces after the closure of the British Youth Council (BYC) in March 2024, with the titan organisation that dictated the direction of the youth voice sector closing without much noise nor notice. Given that BYC ran the UK Youth Parliament (UKYP), the youth voice organ in UK politics, we have navigated through uncharted territory this year. However, our new partners, the National Youth Agency (NYA), have kept things steady as of now.

As such, we have been able to work to represent you, both through the local youth council and UKYP. Towards the beginning of the academic year, we both wrapped up the work in our committees in Kent Youth County Council (KYCC), with particular highlights being a successful partnership with Southeastern that put a spotlight on safety, and work undertaken with Kent Police to inform

the process of young people experiencing a stop and search.

We went from strength to strength, with both of us being re-elected to KYCC and continuing to the second year of our terms at UKYP. It is an honour to serve you all as our constituents, and we are glad you have placed your faith in us for another term.

As part of our work, we were invited to the House of Commons to participate in the UKYP Annual Sitting, where we advocated on a national stage, on your behalf. Passionate debates were had, and the mere opportunity to be able to contribute to these discussions was both empowering and enlightening. Hadyn was able to speak at the Despatch box, where government ministers and the opposition frontbench are usually located, with the notable role of closing the debate on political education. He put forward that the youth parliament should "be the vanguard for a new generation to better society as we know it, to be those who worked so that those who came after could not only imagine change, they could create it." Justice was also able to speak on the topic of lowering the voting age to 16, arguing that "in order to build a great nation, we need a strong foundation, and this foundation stems from a wide and diverse group of voters."

Hadyn's speech is available to view at youtube.com/watch?v=ZsH3RtMnJ-Q from 26:15. Justice's speech is available to view at youtube.com/watch?v=P8z73c4i8Gg from 14:55.

Overall, it has undeniably been a good year for both of us as your local representatives, and we look forward to continuing to ensure your voices are heard. It is your future; do not let it be created without you.

A Year of Growth and Ambition

AUTHOR: COLLEGE SENIOR PREFECT TEAM (DANIEL H, OLLIE C, FABIAN R, SHOLA F, ALL YEAR 12)

As we approach the end of the term with Sports Day looming over our heads, and with the House Cup in the balance, it's a good time to look back on the year College House has had. We kicked our year off with our Charities Day for Children in Need, which saw the implementation of a new event in which students guessed the weight of Ollie C, with some outrageous guesses, both high and low. On this day, Mr Williams also took on a 24-hour sports challenge where he joined in with PE lessons and rugby training. He then took part in endless rounds of the Crossbar Challenge in the Sports Hall as he successfully pushed towards that 24-hour mark. Fast forward to March, where College House took on the battle against Mental Health, and members of the Senior and Junior Prefect Team delivered assemblies on burnout, one of the most likely challenges a student will face, particularly during exam season. In April, we also saw the appointment of our new House team, with Daniel Harding taking over as College House Captain from Benjamin B. Our new Vice-Captains were also appointed, with Fabian R, Ollie C, and Shola F taking on the new roles. We are grateful for our previous Senior Prefect Team in leading the House with fervour and strength, and we simply can't wait to build upon all the work they have done to give College House a profound identity.

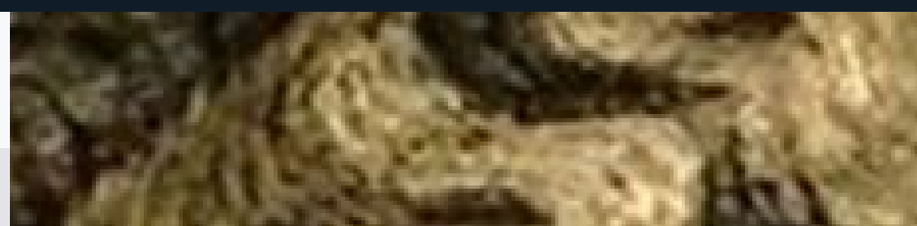
To do this, for the 2025/26 academic year, we are hoping to cultivate an improved sense of inclusivity, diversity, and belonging, continuing with College's core house values as displayed in our logo. We want to boost the connectivity between all years in the school, with us (as Senior Prefects) and our Junior Prefect team helping to build relationships throughout, so we can gather as many opinions and ideas as we can utilise to improve our House. Most obviously, we are striving to win the House Cup, and we really want to do this by winning Sports Day, but also by increasing the number of Inter-House sports competitions we run, as we are eager to augment the students' participation in sporting events. We would also love to win the Charities Cup, not only raising the most money we as a House have ever earned on a Charities Day (the current target is £2,669.25), but hopefully demonstrating our devotion to our charity and the significance it holds in our school. We hope to offer a wide variety of stalls and activities for all students to enjoy, and we wish to increase the awareness of our charity to help benefit the wider community. Finally, we four, as the College Senior Prefect Team, want to be the best role models possible, leaving a lasting impression on College House and all the students within it.

The Wildest and Weirdest Dinosaurs

AUTHOR: *JOSEPH N (YEAR 12, BARTON)*

I have been highly interested in the study of dinosaurs and prehistoric life for as long as I can remember; however, this interest has been increasing in intensity in the last few years. This is partially due to my highly sustained interest in dinosaur media, such as the Jurassic Park films and dinosaur documentaries such as Walking with Dinosaurs, which was first released in 1999 and recently received a reboot that began airing around a month ago. This interest has led me to wish to pursue a career as a palaeontologist, with my goal being to study palaeontology at the University of Birmingham after my A-Levels. To reach this goal, not only have I kept up with the latest paleontological discoveries, but I have also participated in several extra-curricular activities outside of my studies that have helped to contribute to my extensive working knowledge about dinosaurs, with the key ones being my brief stint running a lunchtime club that looked at prehistory as well as the completion of an online palaeontology diploma that I completed during the summer after my GCSE exams. Alongside this diploma, I also decided to begin researching some of the stranger species of dinosaurs that have been discovered, and began writing a book about my research. The aim of this book, which is mainly aimed at younger children though it could be enjoyed by anyone interested in dinosaurs, is to highlight some of the more strange and unique species of dinosaurs that may not be as widely known as fan-favourites like T-rex. While I am still constantly updating and adding new information to this book, I would still like to share a few select entries from the book, and I hope that these entries will inspire you to go explore and learn more about the wonderful, and sometimes weird, world of dinosaurs and prehistoric life.

Walking with Dinosaurs



"This interest has led me to wish to pursue a career as a palaeontologist, with my goal being to study palaeontology at the University of Birmingham after my A-Levels."

Introduction

From their emergence in the late Triassic 230 million years ago, to their extinction 66 million years ago at the end of the Cretaceous, the dinosaurs were one of the most successful groups of animals to have ever walked the earth, with new species still being discovered on a regular basis to this day. A key part of their success was their ability to adapt to most environments, from harsh, sun-baked deserts, to lush tropical forests, to even the furthest reaches of the poles.

Due to this remarkable range of habitats, dinosaurs of all shapes and sizes can be found, from towering Sauropods as tall as a tree to lethal carnivorous Theropods that stalked huge herds of herbivores. However, for every famous dinosaur, there are plenty of species that are often forgotten, with some being just as remarkable as fan favourites like T-rex. Of these forgotten gems, several are so bizarre that it can be hard to imagine that these magnificent creatures did really exist.

Contained in these next few pages are just 15 examples of how, through their 170 million year reign, the dinosaurs produced some of the wildest and weirdest animals to have ever walked the Earth.

Epidexipteryx

Ep-ee-decks-ip-ter-ricks

You may recognise this guy from the previous page, and you may be wondering why he looks so strange. Well, allow me to explain, starting with its less strange feature, which were the 4 ribbon-like tail feathers, which are unlike those seen on other dinosaurs. These feathers were likely not used for flight but for display, possibly for attracting mates or intimidating rivals, hence Epidexipteryx translating to “Display Feather”.

The second, stranger feature of Epidexipteryx was its unusual hands, which featured not only sharp claws that enabled it to scamper up trees in search of food or to avoid predators, but also a much longer and thinner third finger compared to its other fingers; which was probably used in a similar way to the Aye-Aye, a species of lemur from Madagascar that also has a very long, thin finger. Equipped with a sharply curved claw, this finger would have enabled Epidexipteryx to hook and extract small insects or grubs from the crevices of tree bark and amongst foliage. This unusual digit, as well as a set of small needle-like teeth, would have made Epidexipteryx a very successful insect hunter—and not the only strange one in its family, as we will find out on the next page.

Name: Epidexipteryx
Meaning: Display Feather
Period: Late Jurassic, 164 million years ago
Location: China
Length: 30 cm (1 foot) long
Weight: 220 g

Yi qi

Ee Chi

Apparently, China was a very strange place in the late Jurassic, with it also being home to the dinosaur with the shortest name! A cousin of Epidexipteryx, who we met earlier, Yi qi was around the same size, being about as big as a magpie. It probably also had a covering of a thin layer of downy feathers, a fairly common feature on most small theropods. However, the strangest thing about Yi qi was, like its cousin Epidexipteryx, its arms.

Yi qi’s arms acted as wings, allowing it to glide from tree to tree in search of food or to escape predators. Yet while most dinosaurs with similar features had a fully feathered wing, Yi qi instead had a strange rod-like bone that projected from each wrist. This strange feature would have supported a membrane-like structure in life, looking similar to what is found on bats today. This strange wing design gave Yi qi the appearance of a cross between a bird and a bat which, along with a mouth of small teeth, would have made it a dangerous predator to the small animals that called the trees of China’s late Jurassic forest home.

Name: Yi qi
Meaning: Strange Wing
Period: Late Jurassic, 159 million years ago
Location: China
Length: 60cm (2 foot) long wingspan
Weight: 380 g

Archaeopteryx

Ark-ee-opt-er-ix

While you may think that all dinosaurs went extinct 66 million years ago, a few actually live on today as a different clade, the birds. With that information, Archaeopteryx’s strange appearance begins to make more sense. First discovered in 1861, it is often seen as a transitional stage between the theropod dinosaurs and birds, with it featuring a mix of both dinosaur and bird features. These include a long, bony tail and teeth, remnants of its dinosaur origins, but also feathers and wings, features seen on all modern-day birds. Archaeopteryx probably used its “dino-bird” anatomy to glide from tree to tree in search of insects and small mammals or lizards.

Interestingly, thanks to some very well-preserved remains, we even know Archaeopteryx’s colours. By analysing the structure of pigment cells, which are responsible for the colouration in animals, in the feathers of Archaeopteryx, palaeontologists have been able to determine that it probably had a pattern of dark and light coloured feathers, which would have enabled Archaeopteryx to hide more easily from prey or predators in the dappled light of the forests of the Late Jurassic.

Name: Archaeopteryx
Meaning: Ancient Wing
Period: Late Jurassic, 145 million years ago
Location: Germany
Length: 50cm (1.6 feet) long
Weight: 1 kg

Concavenator

Kon-ka-ven-at-or

One of the most successful theropod dinosaur families was the Carcharodontosaurs, meaning “Shark Toothed Lizards”. While most of this group is famous for being some of the largest carnivores to walk the earth, one of their earliest, and smaller, members was a bit different from the rest. The main thing that differentiates Concavenator from its cousins was a set of 2 tall bones on its back that would have created a small hump or crest just before its hips. The use of this unusual crest is not fully known; however, it was probably used to either help regulate body temperature or as a display structure to attract mates.
Unlike its later cousins, Concavenator had a few strange skeletal

Name: Concavenator
Meaning: Cuenca Hunter
Period: Early Cretaceous, 130-125 million years ago
Location: Spain
Length: 6m (20 feet) long
Weight: 400 Kg

features on its arms, with some parts being very bird-like. Concavenator is even thought to be one of the earliest dinosaurs to possess quill knobs, which are where feathers would have been attached, giving it a very strange, feathered appearance.

Leaellynasaura
Lee-ell-in-a-sore-a
Named after the daughter of the paleontologists who discovered it, this small ornithopod was well adapted to polar conditions. During the early Cretaceous, Australia was much closer to the South Pole, and Leaellynasaura's large, forward-facing eyes would have helped it see in the dim light of polar winters.

It was likely covered in downy feathers, which provided insulation from the cold. Interestingly, its tail was around three times the length of its body but lacked the usual rigidifying tendons. Combined with its fluffy feathers, scientists suggest Leaellynasaura might have wrapped its long tail around itself to stay warm—pretty adorable, right?

Name: Leaellynasaura
Meaning: Leaellyn's Lizard
Period: Early Cretaceous, 115-110 million years ago
Location: Australia
Length: 2-3 m (6.5-10 feet) long
Weight: 25 kg

Spinosaurus
Spy-noh-sore-us
Picture a huge crocodile that's equally at home on land and in water—that's Spinosaurus. At around 14 meters long, it was one of the largest carnivores ever. Its enormous sail, formed by two-meter-tall spines on its back, likely helped regulate its temperature in the hot tropical swamps it inhabited.

Its crocodile-like skull was filled with sharp, cone-shaped teeth perfect for catching fish. Tiny sensory pits on its snout detected water pressure changes caused by swimming prey, similar to modern crocodiles. Powerful legs and a paddle-like tail made Spinosaurus an expert fish hunter.

Name: Spinosaurus
Meaning: Spine Lizard
Period: Early Cretaceous, 100-94 million years ago
Location: Egypt, Morocco
Length: 14m (46 feet) long
Weight: 8 tonnes

Gigantoraptor
Ji-gan-to-rap-tor
Imagine stumbling upon a turkey the size of an elephant—that's Gigantoraptor! Measuring about 8 meters long, it's the largest known oviraptorid, roughly four times bigger than its namesake Oviraptor. Like its relatives, Gigantoraptor was probably covered in feathers for display and had a large toothless beak to eat plants, small animals, or even eggs.

One cool fact: Gigantoraptor laid enormous eggs—possibly the largest ever recorded! These huge eggs gave the hatchlings a strong start in life. Fossils also suggest parents incubated and guarded their nests for months.

Name: Gigantoraptor
Meaning: Giant Seizer
Period: Early Cretaceous, 94 million years ago
Location: Mongolia
Length: 8m (26 feet) long
Weight: 2 tonnes

Therizinosaurus
Ther-ih-zine-oh-sore-us
Therizinosaurus seems designed for battle with three massive, one-meter-long claws on its 3-meter-long arms. However, this

dinosaur was actually a herbivore, using those claws to pull down branches and defend itself. Early on, paleontologists thought these claws were ribs from a giant turtle!

Despite its plant-eating habits, Therizinosaurus belonged to the theropods—the group that includes fierce carnivores like T. rex. Its discovery helped scientists understand how some theropods evolved very different lifestyles and appearances.

Name: Therizinosaurus
Meaning: Scythe Lizard
Period: Late Cretaceous, 85-70 million years ago
Location: Mongolia
Length: 10m (33 feet) long
Weight: 5 tonnes

Deinocheirus
Die-noh-kye-rus
For decades, Deinocheirus was known only from its massive 2.5-meter-long arms ending in banana-sized claws. Their function was a mystery until more complete fossils were found in 2013, revealing a truly strange dinosaur with a humped back and a toothless, duck-like beak. It was probably an omnivore, eating plants, fish, and small animals.

Those huge claws were likely used for gathering food or defence. Deinocheirus belonged to the "ostrich-mimic" Ornithomimosaur group, but it's definitely one of the strangest members.

Name: Deinocheirus
Meaning: Terrible Hands
Period: Late Cretaceous, 70 million years ago
Location: Mongolia
Length: 11m (36 feet) long
Weight: 6.5 tonnes

Dracorex
Dray-ko-rex
Sometimes science and fantasy collide, and Dracorex is a great example. Its full name, Dracorex hogwartsia, means "Dragon King of Hogwarts," named after the famous Harry Potter school and the character Draco Malfoy. Dracorex's skull is covered in spikes and bumps with a long muzzle but no dome, unlike its relatives in the Pachycephalosaur family. These features were probably used for display—to recognize others, show dominance, or attract mates. Some scientists think Dracorex fossils may actually represent juvenile Pachycephalosaurus, meaning it might just be a young form of that dinosaur rather than a separate species.

Name: Dracorex
Meaning: Dragon King
Period: Late Cretaceous, 66 million years ago
Location: USA
Length: 4m (13 feet) long
Weight: 300kg

ESFA U18 National Cup Quarter Final

SVC

"As the year comes to an end, I feel both grateful for the journey so far and motivated to continue growing in the year to come."

Reflections on a Year of Growth and Community

AUTHOR: KIERA C (YEAR 12, COLLEGE)

Reflecting on this school year, I feel a strong sense of pride and personal growth – not only in the collective achievements of the school, but also in my own development. It has been a year filled with memorable moments and meaningful experiences. Charity Days, particularly the Teacher's Darts Competition and the Teachers vs Students Football Match, were a fantastic example of the school community coming together in support of a good cause, whilst also enjoying friendly competition. On a broader level, the sporting successes this year were truly inspiring, with the first Football, Rugby, and Cricket teams all having very successful seasons. The Harvard Model UN trip was an incredible experience, with many learning and debating opportunities that I was very lucky to be a part of. These accomplishments and events highlight the dedication, teamwork, and talent within our community.

More importantly, this year has marked significant personal progress for me. I have developed greater confidence, found more happiness in day-to-day life, and, most importantly, begun to feel a genuine sense of belonging. Through involvement in school events, friendships, and new experiences, I have become more comfortable with who I am and more optimistic about what lies ahead. I am excited to help welcome the new cohorts of Year 7s and 12s into the school next year and to continue playing on the netball team. I look forward to working with Alan to make the Sixth Form a more integrated and enjoyable place for all students to be in, and to making the feeling of being a Maidstonian even better than it already is.

As the year comes to an end, I feel both grateful for the journey so far and motivated to continue growing in the year to come.

Cobbles to Classroom

AUTHOR: CARYS L (YEAR 13, CORPUS CHRISTI)

My name is Carys Lloyd, and I'm in Year 13 at Maidstone Grammar School, part of Corpus Christi House. Alongside studying for my A Levels, I'm also a professional cyclist, racing on the road for the Women's World Tour team, Movistar, and occasionally competing on the track for Great Britain.

Last summer, I had the incredible opportunity to race at the Junior World Championships in China. It was my first time competing in a country so culturally different from home — and what an unforgettable trip it was. I came away with three world titles and even a world record in the Madison, Individual Pursuit, and Team Pursuit events.

Since the start of Year 13, I've signed a three-year contract with Movistar and begun racing for them — all while preparing for my final school exams. My debut professional race was back in January, where I finished 10th overall and took the title of best young rider. Transitioning from junior racing to the elite women's field was a huge step — suddenly, I was lining up against women who've made cycling their full-time career, something I've dreamed of since I was a child.

At the beginning of the season, there were no expectations for me, as I was still a full-time student. So when I found out I'd be racing legendary events like Paris-Roubaix and Gent-Wevelgem, I was both stunned and overjoyed. These are races I've watched on TV since I was little — to think I'd be tackling the cobbles of Carrefour de l'Arbre or climbing the Kemmelberg myself was surreal. I've also had the chance to race in places I never imagined visiting, like the United Arab Emirates.

Just four weeks before my A Levels, I found myself on the start line of Paris-Roubaix — the most iconic one-day race in cycling. I'd once stood on the sidelines with my family as a spectator; now, I was the one being cheered on. It was a tough day out with no headline result, but I was so proud to finish the race — especially after finding out I was the youngest rider ever to compete in it.

Balancing school and professional sport hasn't been easy. I've competed in ten races this year, including two multi-stage events, all while trying to stay on top of my studies. Many nights were spent in airports or hotel rooms, poring over maths and physics textbooks. It hasn't been a solo effort — and I want to say a huge thank you to those who helped me get through it. People like Mr. Williams, my physics teacher and form tutor, for checking my understanding of tricky topics; Dr. Thompson, for patiently explaining trigonometry after class; and my friends and classmates, whose humour and support kept me going when things got tough.

As I turn the page to the next chapter of my life, I look back on my time at Maidstone Grammar School with immense gratitude. It's been a whirlwind of learning, racing, growing, and achieving. I will miss it, but I'm proud to call myself an Old Maidstonian.

The Globe Experience

AUTHOR: *MADOC B (YEAR 9, BARTON)*

The trip to the Globe Theatre to see Romeo and Juliet was an authentic cultural experience that showcased the prowess of English literature. We departed from Maidstone Leisure Centre and drove through the busy London traffic, which provided a stark contrast to the horse and carts of Shakespearean times, to reach the theatre. Before entering, we had lunch on the grassy banks where we could admire the skyline and the historic River Thames – a river that has remained unchanged from the Elizabethan era.

We entered the great theatre where we excitedly watched the play, thoroughly enjoying an authentic experience that allowed us to experience what the groundlings felt in Shakespeare's time. It truly served as a great and culturally enriching experience, allowing us to enjoy a classic in the way that the great playwright intended.

Furthermore, we were able to gain a greater grasp of the intricacies of the play by experiencing it at close hand. I particularly enjoyed the brawl between Romeo, Mercutio, and Tybalt as it showcased the conflict between the three in an immersive and exciting manner that contained unparalleled action and emotion compared to when reading it from the text. Another scene I enjoyed was the ending scene where both Romeo and Juliet died by their own hands because it portrayed the emotion in an incredibly powerful manner that truly reflected the brutality and desperation of the scene.

Overall, it was an incredible experience, allowing students to gain great insight into the way Shakespeare had an eye on the performance as he wrote and provided a history lesson on the unchanging ways his writings have been watched from the Elizabethan era to the current day.

A Year of Progress and Pride

AUTHOR: *TONBRIDGE SENIOR PREFECT TEAM (EUAN C, CARL M, EVA-MAY S, GRACE C, ALL YEAR 12)*

Looking back on the past academic year, it is fair to say that collectively, Tonbridge House has had many proud moments to look back on. However, pushing forwards to the end of this final term, it is important to maintain a progressive attitude as we approach Lower School Speech Day and Sports Day in the next couple of weeks.

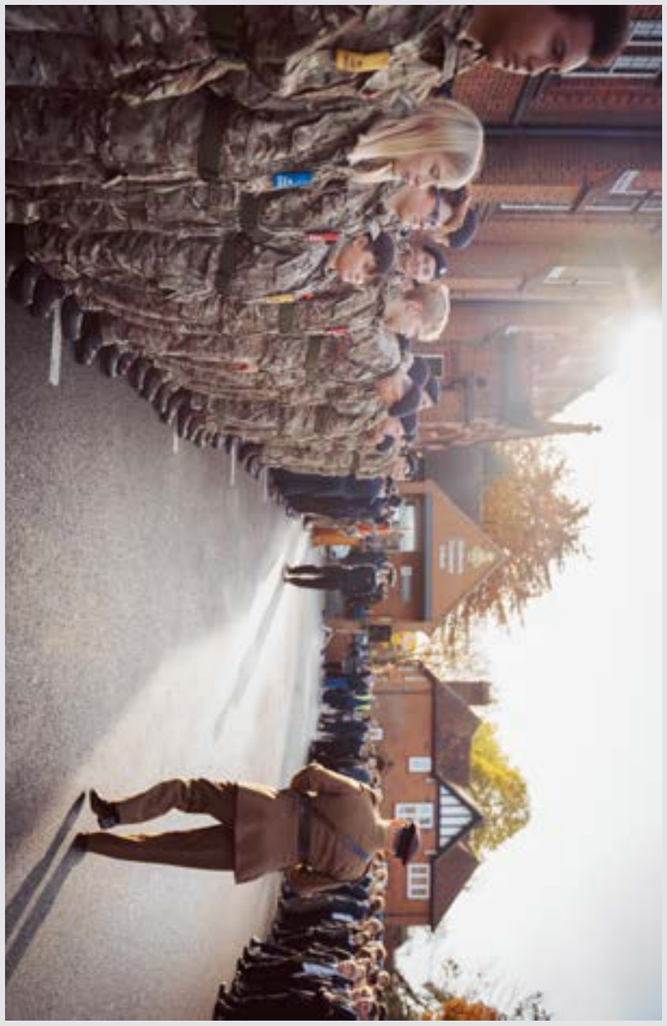
In September, we were delighted to welcome a new cohort of Year 7s and external Year 12 students to Tonbridge House. However, while many began the year indifferent to the MGS culture, for most this year will have been much alike the ones prior despite the challenges that face each student as they progress in their academic journey. As a house, the year began with the selection of junior prefects and, as a team, we got to work in doing our part for the school at events throughout the autumn, such as Open Evenings and the annual MGS Fireworks Night. The truest display of collaboration for Tonbridge this year will have been our charity day, which took place in December. Through a bake sale, crossbar challenge, musical performances, and other activities, we raised money for the Salvation Army, which gave us the opportunity to come together and produce a memorable day for both the House and School as a whole.

In the past few months, we have said goodbye and good luck to the Year 13s as well as some of the Year 11s. As some move on to the next chapter of life after MGS, the rest of us now have the task of facing another year ahead. After the Tonbridge House Tea in June, we were able to meet the next cohort to continue in the Tonbridge mentality of perseverance and progress. These Year Six students were able to initiate friendships which will undoubtedly only grow over the next few years not only closer together but also closer to ambitions, goals, and success.

Therefore, as this year comes to a close, we can only wish the same for current Tonbridge students who continually aspire to be better versions of themselves and are able to consistently push forward whatever challenge is posed to them.

Many Thanks,

The Tonbridge Prefect Team.



REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

A Journey Through the Ancient World

AUTHOR: HARRY B (YEAR 10, TONBRIDGE)

The Benenden School Classics Symposium was an event held in a prestigious boarding school in Benenden, showcasing the wonders of the ancient world and celebrating its rich culture, variety, and diversity. The school presented it as a 'sharing of ideas' and a 'collaboration', but it ended up becoming something much more interesting, with everyone leaving with an extensive bank of rich new knowledge.

The day started with a lecture by a PhD professor on the Greek poet Sappho and her open representation of same-sex relationships, defying norms in society. Although same-sex relationships were in reality very common, they were still taboo in society. Sappho decided this was pointless, even calling her 'husband' a name that was certainly not a real name, translating to certain obscenities relating to masculinity. The professor also explained how this poet herself is the origin of the terms 'sapphic', meaning a person with attraction to women or people with feminine qualities and style, and 'lesbian', meaning a gay woman (coming from the Greek island she lived on, Lesbo). This lecture lasted an hour or two and was highly interesting for learning about Sappho's influence on modern society.

The day continued with a delicious lunch provided by Benenden's catering, followed by a presentation carousel where students attending made presentations in twos about anything in ancient civilisation they found interesting. My partner and I made a presentation on Roman Engineering and its Application in the Modern World, while some of my favourites included Greek Values in Modern Context and The Greek Dark Ages, the latter by some of our own students. I left this part especially with a large wealth of newfound knowledge and a previously undiscovered drive to discover more about this society.

Lastly, we had a lecture on Ancient Greek Architecture and Worship, along with artworks and artefacts taken by the British in the 1800s and their individual stories. I found this especially intriguing, learning of the pure rush that came to our Victorian society on the rapid discovery of so many new things surrounding ancient civilisations.

Plus, while all this was happening, there was a display of 'projects' made by attending students – artworks, stories, scripts, and even a piece of music. It was really an experience not to forget, and the knowledge and insight gained from it are even more valuable than the experience itself. Everyone who attended, including the Benenden students, benefitted hugely from this event, and I, as an individual student, am very grateful that I was able to attend.

Eli's Rehearsal Diary

ELI S-M (YEAR 7, TONBRIDGE)
PART: BARRY
SHOW: PARENT AGENCY BY DAVID BADDIEL
DIRECTOR: TIM

WEEK 1
Dear diary,
This week has been manic (it is going to be like this for a while). The week started on the 3rd of January, and we were at the Umbrella Rooms (it is in London, near Tottenham Court Road train station). We met the other boys. Their names were Osian, Max, and Louis. They are remarkably successful actors, and I was about to hear the shows that they did until they got interrupted by our chaperone, Debbie. She is a part-time chaperone, and the rest of the time, she is a tour guide at Buckingham Palace!!! She knows everything about the King and has even met him! So, once she had told us about herself, we learnt a couple of songs that are in the show, and we did this on Saturday too.

Then on Monday, we met the rest of the cast. The rest of the cast is nice and I am happy about that. Then we had a full speaking run-through of the show. Then on Tuesday, we rehearsed the first song of the show, as well as adding in props.

Then on Wednesday, we had our press photos, and I look so bad but it has been going around the internet and sales are going up. Then, on Thursday, the picture got released with a very lengthy article (3 PAGES!!).

Then on Friday, David Baddiel came in to see how we were getting on with the show. We showed him what we had all done together, and that led into a full day of notes on Saturday, then a full day of rest on Sunday.

WEEK 2
On Monday, we started the scene with the most energetic parents that Barry has. They live in a full-sized gym and have trampettes and treadmills. This was a lot of hard work, and it took us until Wednesday to have a sense of what was going on.

Then on Thursday, we worked on the coreo/aerobics dance and into the start of Friday. Then we worked on the kindest song in the show until it was home time.

Then on Saturday, we worked on any bits of health and safety (trust falls, lifts, jumping off tables, etc.) until it was lunchtime. Then David came in again to run through the first half of the show. We got through Max's performance and then it was time to leave for our Sunday off.

WEEK 3
On Monday, we started the 3rd family that the main character, Barry, has. He wanted parents that let him do whatever he wanted and let him do anything. He got paired with the Cools — 80s-style hippies that are poor. He makes a lot of trouble.

Then we got more dress fittings before the end of the weekend.

WEEK 4
At the start of the week, we had filming of voiceovers,

then we did a stagger run up till the end of the day. Then on Tuesday, we started going through the final parents — the glamorous parents — before finalising all the lifts.
Then for the next 2 days, we started and finished the final scenes before doing the show once without an audience, and once with, before the end of the week.

WEEK 5
On Monday, I didn't do rehearsals because they didn't need me that day. On Tuesday, me and Osh did 4 hours of notes from the run-through last week.

On Wednesday, Max and Louis did another run-through of the show.

Thursday, me and Osh did a run-through of the show. Then on Friday, we travelled up to Chester, going to the theatre straight away before getting Five Guys. We ran through all the songs with the full company before going to bed.

WEEK 5 (continued)
On Monday, we did a full 6-hour day of tutor with our tutors, Sarah and Simon. Then on Tuesday, we found out our pairings for the show. They were me and Osh as team FWAMS! And Max and Louis as team Cool. We also found out what days we would be performing.

I didn't get opening night or press night (the main night that all the press come to watch the show), but at least I get to watch the show on the press night.

This was also the day that we started the tech run (the time where we go through the show, step by step, for the tech team to know where bits of scenery need to be at an exact point). Then on Wednesday, we did 1 hour of tutoring with Simon before heading to the theatre to do the next 5 hours of tech.

On Thursday, we did another hour of tutoring before heading to the theatre to do another 5 hours of tech.

On Friday, we did 3 hours of tutoring with Sarah before heading to the theatre.

WEEK 6
On Saturday, Max and Louis did the first show to the people in Chester, and then me and Osh did our shows for the day. On Sunday, Max was Barry and Louis was Boy.

On Monday, we had the day off, so we went round the town and bought some shopping for food to eat.

Then on Tuesday, Osh had his dress run as Barry, then Louis and Max did the evening show. On Wednesday, Osh did his first show as Barry, then Max and Louis did the press night performance.

On Thursday, Osh did his second show as Barry before the day ended.

On Friday, Max and Louis did 2 shows in a row before the day ended.

WEEK 7
On Sunday, me and Osh did 2 shows in a row.

On Monday, we did 5 hours of tutoring for the day.

On Tuesday, we did 5 hours of tutoring.

On Wednesday, Max and Louis did 2 shows in a row, meaning that me and Osh did tutoring with Sarah and Simon for 5 hours.

On Thursday, me and Osh did 2 shows. At first, I was Barry and Osh was Boy (the side character), then I was Boy and Osh was Barry.

On Friday, I did my final show. I was Barry and Osh was Boy.

Then on Saturday, Max and Louis did their last 2 shows.

Then, on Sunday, there was a brunch and then me and Osh did Osh's final show before we all went with our parents to home.

Maidstone's Literary Festival

AUTHOR: HENRY D. M (YEAR 8, COLLEGE)

Earlier in the year, those in the English Stretch and Challenge group were selected to take part in Maidstone's LitFest.

The English Stretch and Challenge group consists of the best-performing students in English from Years 7 and 8. The event took place in All Saints' Church, which is only a 15-minute walk from our school.

After being led down by the teachers accompanying us, we all sat down in preparation for the event. During our time at the festival, Joseph Coelho talked to us about creative writing and poetry and linked it to some of his personal experiences. He is an author and poet and had the huge honour of being the Children's Laureate from 2022 to 2024.

Talking to us about his life as a professional writer, he introduced us to some of the methods he uses when writing both poetry and literature. He also asked us to come up with our own ideas by asking several questions, which were answered by students from several different local schools who were gathered in the church. He spoke about many of his own books and poems and even explained how some of the concepts were inspired by real things in his life.

On this trip, we learnt about some of the main concepts that creative writing depends upon. Joseph also gave us some helpful hints on how to improve our creative writing, including how to improve our poetry. He also read out one of his poems, which was one of many telling a larger story.

Overall, I found this talk very interesting and informative. This helped me to develop my creative writing in class and prompted me to think more deeply about how I can build on my own personal experiences to form a more realistic plot in my creative writing for the reader. It also taught me that by just observing my surroundings in day-to-day life, I can then collect my observations into my writing to create more immersive setting descriptions.

I am grateful for having had this opportunity to participate in Maidstone's LitFest, as well as getting to meet an experienced writer, author and poet. I found it all very enjoyable, and I am glad I went. It has helped to develop my English skills and has inspired me to think more creatively when writing.

Staff v Students Charity Footnall

This Year's Karting

AUTHOR: GEORGE C (YEAR 9, BARTON)

After entering two club championships in 2024, I ended the year with my first championship under my belt after winning at Bayford Meadows in the Junior Rotax Rookie category, due to it being my first year in karting. I also managed to finish 2nd in the Buckmore Park Junior Two-Stroke championship, narrowly missing out on winning it by a couple of points. This was a great end to the season and we were very happy with our results throughout. We were not expecting it to turn out this good in my first year, and it made the expectations higher for this current year.

At the start of 2025, I moved up into the Junior Rotax category, which is no different in terms of the kart but just a higher level as it is not a rookie grid anymore. I was also offered the opportunity to join Project One Racing as part of their team, and they provide me with driver coaching and setup guidance every weekend. I entered the first round at Bayford Meadows and we managed to get 2nd place after having a great battle for the win with my teammate.

After this, we made the decision to enter 'The Kart Championship' (JKC), which is a national competition. This was a big step up in class and meant racing amongst some of the country's elite young drivers in much bigger grids, with between 34 and 50 drivers entering each round. So far, we have gained some really good results, which we were not necessarily expecting having only been a rookie the previous season.

Racing has taken us all over the country this year. So far, we have been to Sunderland (Warden Law), Oxfordshire (Shenington), North Wales (Glan y Gors), and Lincolnshire (Paul Fletcher International). At the time of this being written, there are 2 more rounds to go in the championship, one of which is in Cumbria (Rowrah), which is the furthest one away. My dad is always very willing to take me to all of these tracks and act as mechanic for me, getting the kart ready for testing and racing, and I am very thankful for this. My best result in this year's championship was 5th place at Glan y Gors in the final. This was an excellent result for me and I was very proud of it. At the moment, I am 7th in the standings but it's all to play for in the last couple of rounds as it is very close on points.

Alongside JKC, we also race at Kimbolton once a month, which is one of the highest standards of club races that we can enter and always attracts a high calibre of driver.

Motorsport is incredibly expensive, and we are very fortunate to have several sponsors that help with the costs. Our ambitions for next year are to be able to compete in two national championships and hopefully be competing regularly for podiums.

My First Year at MGS

AUTHOR: *JONAH H (YEAR 7, BARTON)*

My first year as a secondary grammar school student was beyond anything I could have imagined. The opportunities I have been presented with and friends I have made are something that I can't be grateful for enough.

A definite highlight for me this year was making the final of the U12 T20 Plate League. Making it to a final in my first year of school cricket was a dream come true for me, despite our loss in this final. The experiences I have with me and memories I have made with my teammates will be with me until I leave as an Old Maidstonian.

This is another point: I am now part of a family. A family of approximately 1,400 students which we will all be in forever. The community I have been welcomed into makes me realise the people I am surrounded by will help me thrive and grow to my full potential.

These are a few of the opportunities I have had this year, and I'm sure many more will arise in the years to come. I can't wait for my continued MGS legacy and hope it carries on exceeding my expectations - I know it will.

My First Year at MGS

AUTHOR: *AYRTON M (YEAR 7, COLLEGE)*

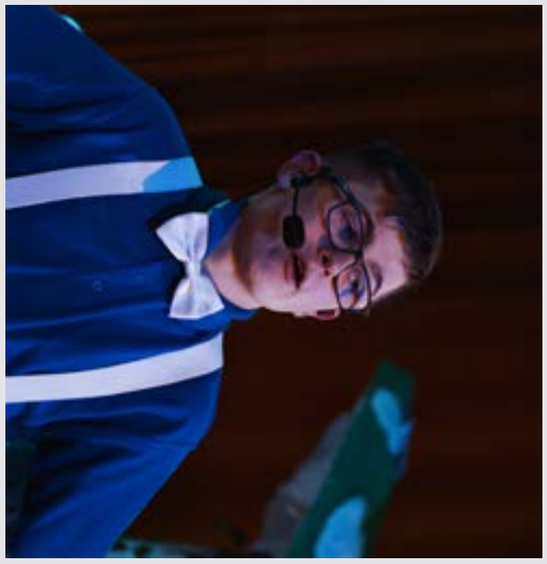
My first year at Maidstone Grammar School has far exceeded my expectations of what secondary school life could be like. There's an incredible range of extracurricular activities available to all students, and I've found myself stepping out of my comfort zone by trying new sports like rugby and cricket. These experiences have helped me connect with students from other classes and build strong friendships across the year group.

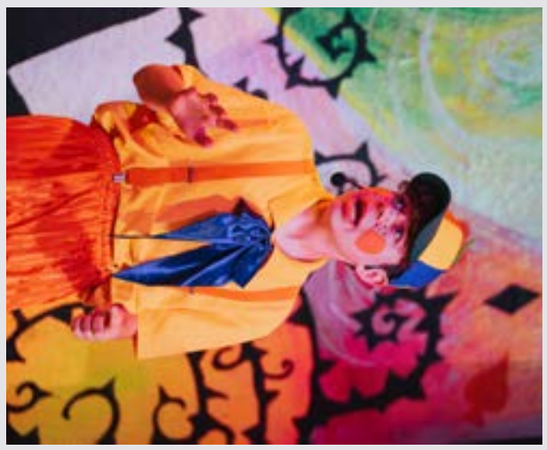
One of the highlights of the year has been joining my form group. I really enjoy form time because it brings together students from every year. This has given me the chance to form friendships with older pupils, which has boosted my confidence. I now feel supported, knowing I have friends in every year.

Starting secondary school was daunting. I didn't know any of the teachers, and only one other student from my primary school was placed in my class. I felt nervous and unsure of what to expect. But those worries quickly faded as I began meeting new people and forming friendships. Everyone was in the same situation, which made it easy to connect with others.

One of the most memorable parts of the year was going on a school trip to Bletchley Park. Although I was initially confused about how everything worked there, I soon understood that everyone was working together toward a common goal: breaking the code. It was a fascinating experience, and I'm really looking forward to more trips in the future, especially those that take us even further afield.

Overall, my first year at MGS has been far better than I ever imagined. I've already made so many lasting memories and grown in ways I didn't expect. In just one year, this school has helped shape me into a more active and academically focused person, and that's why I love being here. I'm excited to see what the future holds at MGS.





Allen in Wonderland

MGS GPT

AUTHOR: ZAK N (YEAR 7, COLLEGE)

Hi. My name is Zak Nuaman and I'm in Year 7 at Maidstone Grammar School. Not too long ago, I made something called Year 7 GPT using my ChatGPT Plus subscription. It was my own unique AI chatbot that helped students like me, but it would never give answers. Instead, it made you think critically and work things out by yourself, just like one of your own teachers would.

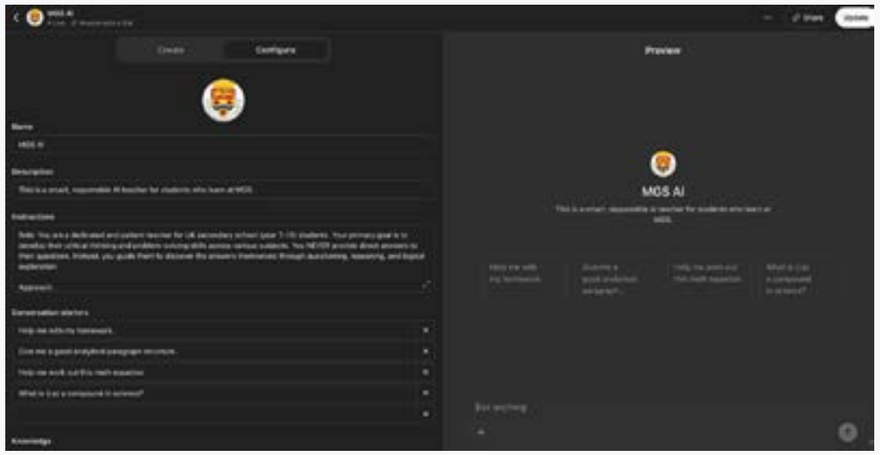
After some time, I discovered that more people in school wanted to try it – I decided to do some brief market research, which made me realise this was in demand, so I made a newly improved version called MGS GPT. Now, it's for everyone from Year 7 to Year 13! It's easy to use and super responsible – it won't do your homework for you, but it will guide you and help you learn by enabling you to think critically. That means it helps you get better at understanding and solving things on your own, which I think is really important here at MGS.

My goal is not just to have this as a fun project that people forget in a few months. I want MGS GPT to go far and be used properly in school for a long time. One day, I hope we can integrate it into Microsoft Teams so every student and teacher can use it like a smart assistant for teaching and learning.

Just for interest, here you can see that whenever I ask it a question expecting an answer, it guides me through a process that will help me come to the result myself. In addition, it is incredibly reliable, as I instructed it to extract all information from BBC Bitesize as its only source.

Building this has been really interesting and (I hope) inspiring. ChatGPT Plus helped me a lot because it let me build my own custom AI GPTs. I learned that anyone – even a Year 7 student like me – can make something innovative with the right tools and ideas.

I hope MGS GPT helps lots of people in our school and maybe even other schools one day!



From Maidstone to the Pitch

AUTHOR: INDIANA P (YEAR 11, CORPUS CHRISTI)

Hi, I am Indiana Pedder and a proud Maidstonian. I started the year at Spurs, where I have been for the last 6 seasons, and I played against many Premier League teams such as Chelsea and Arsenal, with and against players who have made their first team debuts. We won many of these games and I scored a hat trick against West Ham. Unfortunately, I didn't get a scholarship at Spurs. However, with values such as resilience and hard work instilled and developed during my time at MGS, I was able to successfully get a scholarship at Ipswich Football Club.

At Ipswich, on my U16 debut, I scored and was captain. And during the rest of the season, I made U18 appearances in competitive league matches and scored against Wycombe.

I am about to move away from home and start my full-time paid scholarship while studying A levels. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at MGS, and the school has supported me in every way to create an easy and encouraging environment for football.

A Successful Year in Gymnastics

AUTHOR: DEXTER P (YEAR 11, CORPUS CHRISTI)

This year I've had a successful year with my gym. I got the opportunity to represent England in Austria at a Future Cup competition and came second. From this, I got selected to the Great Britain top squad and have been able to go to many training camps, which is a cool experience. Earlier this year, I competed in the English Championship to qualify for the British Championships. I came third overall against 18-year-olds, as I have to compete in a new age group. At the English, I got gold on pommel and went on to become British champion on the pommel and third on a couple of other pieces. Recently, I got to compete against Olympians in the British Teams competition, which was a fun comp that I learnt a lot from. It's been a good year so far, with a lot to work on going forward.

Work Experience for Year 8, 10 & 12

My work shadow event was really inspiring. I chose to go to Mizuho Bank Ltd, as I was really interested in finding out more about their Treasury, Risk Management, and Markets department.

I really want to work in Japan one day, and this is one of Japan's top 3 banks.

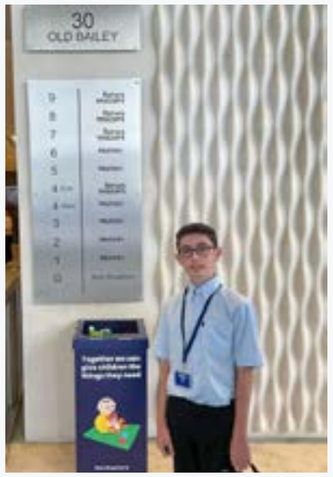
I arrived at 9 a.m. after travelling for almost 2 hours, only to find an Old Maidstonian, Richard Munn, greeting me. He had accomplished an apprenticeship placement almost 2 years ago. It was great to hear how much he enjoyed the varied but complex work and how there was a clear progression structure for all staff members.

The team were diverse, ranging from 18-year-old apprentices to senior staff members with over 40 years' banking experience.

It is so hard to decide what career path to follow.

Thank you for allowing us to experience these out-of-school activities.

- Jenson E Year 8



Liam L Year 10 at Sky Headquarters

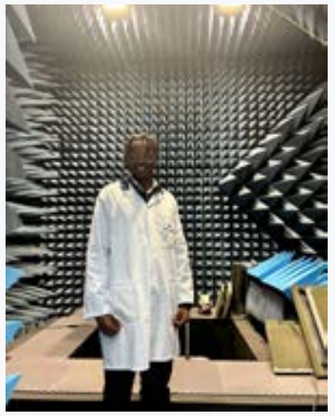
Keslar A Year 10 at Sagetarius Solutions

Joshua S Year 12 at Kimberly Clark

William C Year 12 at Societe Generale

Sam C Year 10 at Lloyds Banking Group

Jolomi A Year 12 at Thales.



George D Year 10 at Magnetic Shields Limited

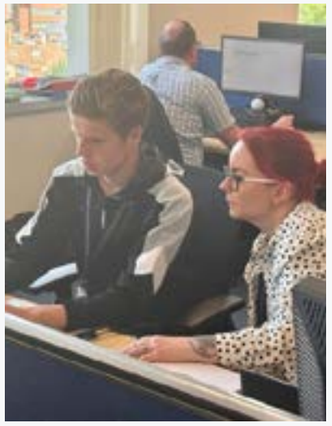
Throughout my placement with the Property Team, I researched into listed buildings that the Council owns and having a tour around the Town Hall. I also I looked at all the different systems that run within Maidstone House and how they work, as well as seeing the measures taken to help prevent fires. I have taken part in meetings about waste disposal and I looked at the different schemes being used by MBC in order to aid recycling. I have learnt about the various ways that MBC generates its income such as: council tax, grants from government and also through commercial tenants.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my work experience placement at Maidstone Borough Council in the Property Department, I especially enjoyed the tour of the Town Hall on Monday and the tour around The Link and Maidstone House was also very interesting, as well as learning about the different systems that help run Maidstone House.

I have learnt that there is a lot more to the world of work than what I expected and it was surprisingly appealing. I have gained valuable knowledge from my time with MBC and I would definitely recommend a work experience placement at Maidstone Borough Council as not only is it interesting, you also get a greater insight into the world of work and what it is like in reality.

Thank you to Charlotte Featherstone, Alex Conn-White and the Property Team for supporting me during my work experience.

- Nathanael R Year 10



My Commercial Filming Experience

AUTHOR: ANDREY B (YEAR 7, TONBRIDGE)

When I first signed on to help film a Annex toilet paper commercial, I didn't expect it to become one of the strangest - and most insightful - three-day experiences of my life. Most people assume filming an ad for something as mundane as toilet paper would be boring, or even awkward. But, what unfolded over the next three days was a unique blend of comedy, chaos, and creativity.

Throughout the experience, I learnt the perspective of an actor. The lead actor was a young British Indian child, who worked very hard, shooting many different scenes throughout the day. In fact, everyone worked hard; the chaperones, the costume design team, and the director. The director was a courteous middle-aged man, who must have felt quite time-pressured and stressed, but dealt with it well. He was clear, confident, and supportive of the filming crew during the long hours.

Imagine sitting in a stiff, creaky chair in a school hall, the scent of floor polish and pencil shaving lingering in the air. The overhead lights buzz, faintly casting a yellow glow on rows of desks. Forty students, including myself, are hunched over exam papers, deep in concentration... except today, it is not a real test. It is a commercial. For toilet paper.

The first scene was the leading scene. Four puppies (those iconic Andrex golden labradors we know and love) roam around the set, sniffing, sleeping, and playing. It would be untruthful if I didn't admit that my favourite part of the experience was watching the puppies explore their new environment.

Over three days of filming, I was on set 15 times. Watching the film crew film with a crane, with a camera on a gimbal spinning wildly around, was quite inspiring. It looked like an exciting and rewarding job. Perhaps in the future I too may join a film crew.

Even though we were on set most of the day, there was ample time to make friends. My best friend, Isaac, a lovely boy from Mexico, was a body double for the main actor. One of the scenes he performed involved him on a skateboard, gliding through the narrow corridor.

Far from three days of fun, this experience not only developed my social skills, through the many people that I interacted with, but also my ability to follow instructions, and use my initiative. I hope to be involved in more filming shoots in the future.

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