Spring/Summer 2026

Queen Mary's Observer

QMO – the revival

After an unexpected hiatus, the Queen Mary's Observer is back and thrilled to be providing the school with our Spring Edition! This term, we're returning with a packed edition covering our community's proudest academic achievements, celebrating our diverse and rich culture, and all the sporting highlights you've been wanting to read about. We're back – and we aren't going anywhere.

While writing this brief, we would all like to acknowledge Chun Yin Simon Wong – one of our most dedicated members of the QMO. Though he has now left our school, we wish him the absolute best in his journey, and this edition will acknowledge him as one of our greatest reporters!

Culture

LENT

Lent is a period of reflection, prayer, and fasting. It began on Wednesday 18th February (Ash Wednesday) and ended on 5th April with Easter Sunday. Typically, something is given up, traditionally meat, but it could simply be something you enjoy, such as sweets, video games, etc. Its purpose is to improve self-discipline and increase spiritual focus for Easter. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week and is the most important for Christians, as it follows the last week of Jesus' life, including his arrival in Jerusalem, his Last Supper with his disciples, and his crucifixion on Good Friday, where he was humiliated by crowds, nailed to a cross and made an excruciating journey to Calvary, where he would die. "Good" may not seem like the best word to describe that day, but it gets its name from the fact that Christians believe it paved the way for salvation and forgiveness of sins. To summarise the story, on his third day dead, the tomb was found to be empty, as he had risen from the dead, and, to Christians, this event demonstrates God's great power and that Jesus' teachings were true and he was God in human form. Even if you are not Christian, there are many important values at the heart of Lent (and Ramadan), such as self-discipline, resilience and general improvement of behaviour.

~ *Daniel Manoila*

RAMADAN

Once a year, Muslims from around the world come together to commemorate the month of Ramadan; QMGS is no different. During this time, Muslims are obligated to fast between sunrise and sunset before breaking their fast with a large meal near the end of the day. Additionally, Muslims try to be better people by praying more often and reading the Qur'an.

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic Calendar and is important as it contains one of the most important events in Islam – Laylat al-Qadr. Also referred to as the Night of Power, Laylat alQadr is the day where the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBuH) by God.

Furthermore, Muslims practice many key lessons throughout this holy month: self-discipline, appreciating what you have (God's gifts) and helping others in their time of need.

Here is a snippet of our interview regarding the Ramadan dinner hosted that day by Ismail Hussain from Year 12:

What kind of activities did you do?

Ismail: "In the canteen, we had a dessert stall, we had a mehndi/henna stall, we had a calligraphy stall, and people were welcomed in by year 12s. In the calligraphy stall, sixth form students gave out calligraphy bookmarks, and we even received a generous £20 donation from one of the teachers"

What kind of foods did you have on offer?

Ismail: "We had five massive cakes which we sliced up to give to everyone alongside the dessert stall grapes, dates and other foods. There were two options for the food that people bought beforehand, there was a regular option which included brown rice and chicken with a samosa and a vegan option which had chickpeas and a pizza slice."

Were there any talks?

Ismail: "Someone from the Mosque dissected a verse from the Qur'an talking about Ramadan, family and such alongside a member of the sixth form. We had some staff members present such as Mr Langton, Mr Farnell, Miss Tariq, Ms Morgan and a few more so we had a diverse mix of students and staff members." *What was the congregation prayer like?*

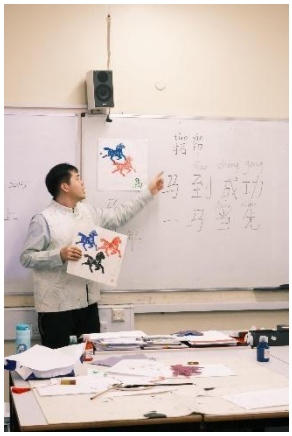
Ismail: "One of the students recited the Azan, which is a call to prayer, where everyone stood up. After the Azan, the fast was opened and everyone was given grapes and dates to open their fast with. Anyone who wanted to be allowed to go and pray in the triangle area of the canteen."

At the end of the month of Ramadan, the day of Eid-ul-Fitr is celebrated, where Muslims pray a special Eid prayer. When they have finished praying, Muslims usually have Eid parties where family members come together to eat and talk. In addition, Muslims exchange gifts on this day to strengthen the bonds between family.

Overall, Ramadan is a time for self-reflection for Muslims and at QMGS, we can provide an environment where our Muslim community can flourish and come together to celebrate this annual event.

~ Sulaiman Qureshi

INSIDE THE MEP: CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION



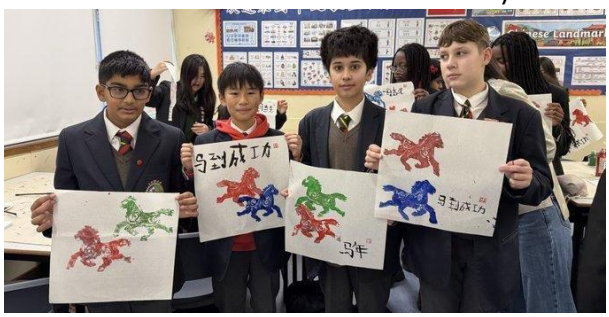
On 11th February 2026, the last Wednesday of the half term, MEP students from Year 8 and Year 9 celebrated the Spring Festival (otherwise known as Lunar New Year, or Chinese New Year, specifically in China) for the Year of the Horse. Spring Festival marks the end of one Chinese lunisolar calendar cycle, and it is celebrated across Asia in places such as China, Malaysia and Hong Kong.

Thanks to Mrs Wang, Mrs Li, Mrs Ho and three of our new trainee teachers, Mr Cui, Miss Luo and Miss Liu, this year's MEP Culture Day consisted of four exciting programmes, ranging from reciting traditional poems in Mandarin and crafting for the new year to dancing and enjoying authentic sweetened fruit sticks.

With Mrs Wang, the MEP students studied a compelling poem named *New Year's Eve*, a short piece by Northern Song Dynasty statesman Wang Anshi. The poem uses a classic AABA structure with its seven-character quatrain, featuring a clear rising-and-falling tone and strong action verbs that create a smooth sense of propulsion and a powerful dynamic of saying goodbye to the past year and welcoming the new Year of the Horse.

For Period 2, we moved into a more relaxed atmosphere to create a decorative craft for the

Year of the Horse. We made the artwork using horse imprints in different colours (symbolising 马到成功, meaning you will be driven to immediate success as the Year of the Horse arrives).



After breaktime, we enjoyed a session of upbeat—but for some, slightly awkward—dancing for Period 3. We danced to the authentic Taiwanese song *Love* by the Little Tiger Team, which brought a fresh charm to the room. Throughout the session, with guidance from Miss Luo and Miss Liu, even those who were initially hesitant found themselves joining in, and by the end the whole group performed together with impressive confidence.



In Period 4, we explored some culinary delights from traditional Chinese cuisine: candied hawthorn sticks (with a slight twist). The stick consisted of fruit dipped in sugar syrup, providing a sweet flavour with subtle sour notes. We were also introduced to the history of this Beijing street snack. This offered a vivid and authentic taste of festival culture as part of the day's celebrations.

To conclude the day, a former Marian student—who went on to Sixth Form at a boarding school in China—spoke to us about his life and experiences there, and what made him fall in love with a place shaped by a highly structured cultural and political environment.

As we move into the Summer Term, the energy and positivity from this celebration should continue as we brace ourselves for much more to come this summer.

~ *Simon Wong*

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black History Month is an annual event, celebrated to honour the contributions, history and achievements of Black people around the world. It is a time to recognise the impact that Black individuals and communities have had on society, as well as reflect on the struggles they have faced throughout history.

Black History Month began in the United States in 1926. It was created by Carter G. Woodson, a historian who believed the history of Black Americans often went ignored.

Over time, the week grew in importance and in 1976, it was officially expanded to a full month. This became known as Black History Month.

In the United Kingdom, Black History Month is celebrated in the October of each year. It was first organised in 1987, led by Akyaaba Addai-Sebo, to recognise the contributions of British Black people and to educate others about Black history in the UK.

Black History Month is much more than just learning about the past. It is about recognising the achievements of Black people across all areas of life, including science, arts, sports, politics and culture. It also helps to raise awareness about ongoing issues such as racism and inequality, encouraging people to be fairer and more inclusive.

For many people, it is a time to celebrate culture and heritage. It reminds us that history should include the experiences of all people rather than a select few.

People celebrate Black History Month in various ways. Schools often organise lessons around it, or opportunities for students to talk about a Black person that has interested or inspired them. At QMGS, we had a handful of sixth formers presenting a whole school assembly during one of the weeks of the month, sharing their ideas and research on influential Black figures, whilst the lower school took part in an art competition to draw or paint a Black person of their choice. Entries included celebrities, boxers, authors,

rappers and more; many great pieces were put on display.

An example of a key figure who often comes to mind when we talk about Black History Month is Martin Luther King Jr, a leader in the American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 60s. He is especially remembered for his famous 'I Have a Dream' speech, delivered in 1963. In this speech he spoke about his hope for a future where people would be judged by their character rather than the colour of their skin

Black History Month is an important time to learn, reflect and celebrate. By recognising the history of other ethnicities, we can better appreciate diversity and show more equality in our daily lives.

~*Vivaan Kummarasetti*

School life

SPRING CONCERT

On Wednesday the 25th of March, students and parents all gathered in the main school hall for the Spring Concert. The Spring Concert is an annual event in which students celebrate their hard work and progress during this term. This concert is also a time for new pupils in Year 7 to show their skill preforming an instrument for the first time, whether that be baritone, trumpet, trombone or clarinet. For Year 7s this was their first concert as QMGS pupils, but for Year 13s it was their last, ironically, symbolising this time of new beginnings and flourishing.

The concert commenced at 19:00 (although most students were expected to get there half an hour prior) and was split into two halves. These halves were separated by a 5–10-minute interval where the parents had time to stretch their legs. This was the first concert since the departure of the previous head of music, Mr Vause, known as a host for his jokes. On this occasion however, the concert was hosted by Mr Short and organised by Miss Tranchant.

The first half of the concert was an enjoyable and immersive introduction, kicking off with the jazz band and ending with Intermediate band. This allowed new Year 7s to play an instrument in a concert for the first time, showing incredible growth since September. It also allowed older students to take the stage and show their development in their musical abilities. This half boasted a wide range songs and included instrumentalists and a vocal soloist.

In the second half, after a brief refreshment break, the quality of performance was sustained. More students were able to show improvement; the audience seemed to enjoy the variety of skills. The choir and chamber choir – a group of people chosen to sing more difficult songs – also performed. Students took on the responsibility to perform solos and in smaller groups in front of the entire crowd. This half was concluded with the orchestra performing 'You Can't Stop the Beat' from the musical Hairspray.

Overall, this concert provided a diverse range of songs and instruments. It also incorporated the music of different cultures with a performance from the Tabla Ensemble and the Choir's rendition of a traditional Jewish prayer, Hashivenu. This concert also saw a numerous selection of student led groups, such as the Clarinet Septet and their arrangement of 'Golden' from K-pop Demon Hunters. Some of the pieces in the concert were also arranged by students.

All the hard work of the students and staff paid off as student and parents went home happy and satisfied with the performances. This concert was made possible with all the hard work of the music teachers and students involved.

~ *Jorawar Badhan*

NATIONAL CAREERS WEEK

National Careers week, running from March 2nd to March 6th, saw the return of twenty-one former students to share their knowledge and experience with pupils across all year groups. The week began with three lunchtime talks and one morning

assembly, with a total of 120 students attending. These alumni-hosted talks ran from Monday through to Thursday.

Not only did the speakers talk about their respective fields, ranging from aerospace engineering to economics, but also the varied pathways that led them there. Many speakers mentioned the importance of "soft skills" in the work environment, and a recurring topic that was emphasised across all talks was the non-linearity of careers. Mr Sunley, a member of our careers team, held assemblies on the ever-changing job market, alongside the threats and opportunities stemming from AI in the world of work.

The week reached its climax on Friday with the careers fair. Run by seventeen former students from a range of different professional backgrounds, the fair admitted 300 students who were able to learn about careers in engineering, economics, civil service and medicine, to name a few.

Thank you to Darren Cadman, Faris Aqbal, Nirali Parekh and Davina Budesha for their individual insights, along with all the other alumni and the QMGS careers team for making this event the best it could be.

~ *Evan Rosser*

ECO-COMMITTEE

The QMGS Eco Committee, who have already started to make a difference in our community, are a student-led group dedicated to making our school a greener and more eco-friendly place for everyone. Their determination is hugely important, especially as we, on a global scale, all face the devastating impacts of climate change. These devastating impacts leave us with two choices: we can give up or, or we can make a difference, like the QMGS Eco Committee have already started to do. Their progress sets an example for what playing our part can look like, it proves that doing our bit is essential if we want to better our community, regardless of whether we see a tangible result.

The Eco Committee's first project of the year was constructing hover fly habitats. Now you're probably asking yourself: 'why on Earth we would want more hover flies?' But the truth is, hover flies play a crucial part in early pollination, even before the bees emerge in Spring. Made up of multiple layers of leaf litter, bark and twigs, the Eco Committee left their habitats in buckets, letting them fill naturally with rainwater to provide the perfect home for the hover flies and their larvae.

Their most recent project was the building of a rockery (an area of rocky and gravely soil), which has proved to be a low-maintenance area, ideal for alpine plants such as heather. The Eco Committee sacrificed multiple lunch times to plan, purchase and prepare the rockery, which is now full of colour and located near the staff car park. It's worth taking the time to stop and appreciate it their work, though be aware you might run into some bees along the way! As we are now in April, they've emerged with the Spring and are on the hunt for heather, honeysuckle, and the many other flowers that the rockery has to offer.

Now, it wouldn't be an article about climate change if I didn't mention what you can do to help. And not to worry, there are plenty of simple but effective ways for you to play your part. I would firstly like to invite you to join the Eco committee, so that you can help contribute to the environment around our school. Meetings run every Week One Monday at 1:00 – your hard work and support will be much appreciated. Secondly, save more of the greenery around you. If you are planning to cut down a tree or hedge, consider trimming it down rather than chopping it completely. If you can, save a small patch of your lawn to grow, as this is a process known as rewilding, and encourages wildflower to grow, creating a safe place for insects like grasshoppers and food for butterflies and bees. Third- the simplest power saving habit we can all employ- turn the lights off when you leave a room. The amount of energy wasted by leaving the lights on in the UK is approximately 340 kilowatts annually and I am positive that if we work together, we have the power to reduce such an immense statistic.

To conclude, to fight climate change we need a community, not just a committee. A community where we all play our part and strive together to make a change. But to spark change, that we need you.

~ *Suraj Saini*

Sports

RUGBY SEASON IN REVIEW

As we reach to an end of the 2025/26 season of rugby at QMGS, it is truly worthwhile to note on how "fantastic" (as Mr Ryley described) the season has been with countless achievements across the year group. Looking at information from SOCS, our sports website, the statistics were truly comforting after the freezing afternoon fixtures in September to the high-intensity Sevens tournaments in late Spring Term, the commitment from both the coaching staff and the players has been unwavering.

One of the highlights of this season is that the school is committed to a "Rugby for All" experience, which is clear in the U12 and U13 teams, where six teams have their fixtures. This has provided competitive game time to over 100 more students in those year groups, despite constraint of staff, and constantly high pressure in the PE & Games Department.

There is also a huge sense of validation with the statistics this year. Key highlights include:

- The U13B reaches 17th in the whole of UK, skyrocketing local rivalries, such as Bishop Vesey Grammar School, Old Swinford School and Haberdashers' Abraham Darby, with our highest winning percentage in the school at 83.3%.
- U14A team has been ranked Top 50 nationally after finishing as tournament winners in regional Sevens, with a +195point difference and reaching late stages of the County Cup. After Easter, they will be competing in EDF Final in Gloucester Stadium, Kingsholm.
- U15A had a successful performance with winning the Greater Birmingham Cup.
- 1st XV demonstrated great resilience this year with a notable 55-5 win against Fairfax School, while 1st VII reached the semi-finals of the county cup, facing Ellesmere College - a dedicated rugby academy.

Our reporter interviewed Mr Ryley on the last week of the season, he said, "his best part of the year was the QM 7s. Seeing all our teams work so hard and have hundreds of rugby players at our home ground has been amazing. All the staff supported it; Mr. Hawkins and Mr. Finch repped it, and Mr. Dobson, Mr. Best, Mr. James, and Mr. Hammond all coached it. It brought the whole rugby department together in terms of staff, so it was an enjoyable week."

We would like to give thanks to every teacher of the PE & Games Department for your relentless effort, and to every player at school for your resilience and determination at the sport.

~ *Simon Wong*

BAT-ATHON

Queen Mary's Grammar School showed its strong community spirit as students and staff took on a full 24-hour Bat-a-Thon to raise money for charity. Led by Mr Hammond and Mr James, the event brought together pupils from every year group in a challenge that demanded stamina, teamwork, and plenty of determination.

The Bat-a-Thon ran non-stop from one morning (7am) to the next, with students rotating in shifts to keep the batting going. The sports hall stayed lively throughout, with cheers, encouragement, and friendly competition as each year group stepped up for their slot Mr Hammond's organisation and support from staff and students

alike kept everything running smoothly, helping students push through the tougher moments. The highlight of the event was during the night shift: pushing the senior cricketers through a cold dip into the swimming pool definitely gave them a vitalising shock to persevere!

A huge thank you goes to all the teachers who came down during the day and night to support the Bat-a-Thon. Their encouragement, energy, and willingness to get involved helped keep spirits high and played a big part in keeping the challenge on track.

One of the best parts of the event was the sense of unity it created. Whether that be new Year 7 students who are completely new to the school or old Year 13 students who are about to embark on a new journey, they all were working towards one thing, charity. By the end of the 24 hours, the school had raised over £1000 for charity – thus proving what QM is truly capable of!

~ *Aaryan Patel*

Trips

LESSONS FROM AUSCHWITZ

When we hear of the atrocities committed at Auschwitz and other concentration camps, it is so easy to reduce them to sheer 'statistics'. When faced with such incomprehensible and harrowing events, it becomes so easy to forget that each of the 6 million victims of war were ordinary human beings. They were people who had lived full lives, with careers, goals, families, ambitions, feelings, likes and dislikes of their own - no different from us. They came from a variety of different backgrounds across Europe – ranging from wealthy businessmen to confectioners and farmers, and to reduce this diverse, vibrant community to one monolithic figure would be to erase the humanity and individuality of the lives that were lost.

After having visited 2 of the 49 Auschwitz camp sites in Oswiecim, Poland, one key takeaway I have come to understand is that the perpetrators weren't just 'inhumane monsters' as they are often portrayed, but human beings that carried out acts of extraordinary cruelty in a system set up, controlled and enforced by them. The systematic genocide of the Jewish population of Europe did not just emerge randomly; they were forced under gradually worsening conditions, with each stage further alienating them from the 'superior' Aryan race and stripping them of their human rights. Furthermore, it is vital to mention the role of the 'bystander' - citizens and low-ranking officers who supported their government by turning a blind eye to the abhorrent treatment of the Jewish populations, often even reporting their own neighbours to the Gestapo to be seen as better citizens.

While this was due to the fear they also faced, it shows us how the marginalisation and ethnic cleansing of a particular group is allowed to be carried out at such a large scale without intervention. Ultimately, the fact that the perpetrators as well as bystanders were also 'ordinary' human beings led me to understand how normal people can carry out heinous actions and how moral righteousness and compassion is thwarted when one ethnoreligious group is singled out and systematically oppressed and killed.

Secondly, within my trip, I saw countless photographs of pre-war life of Jewish people across dozens of countries but one that stood out to me personally was the lives of the Huppert family. An influential, wealthy family hailing from Cieszyn Silesia, there are countless photos of their daily lives with their young son Peterle. After his birth, most of the photographs were centred around him, replacing the earlier individual portraits of other family members. This story resonated deeply with me, as I saw the love and adoration they had for their son etched into every photo. Also, the photos feature descriptions behind them, which got more bittersweet as the war progressed. One of these phrases was "My Peterle is laughing at the world. He thinks it all

belongs to him. He should be [laughing] and healthy until 120" - reading this was especially heartbreaking, especially considering the knowledge that Peterle died in infancy. Unfortunately, not much is known of the family's history other than what can be inferred from the photos, but it is known that they perished in the July of 1942 at Baranawicz. One of millions of stories, the Huppert family is preserved through their love for each other, serving as a poignant reminder of the innocent lives lost to the indiscriminate Nazi war machine.

Lastly, a vital takeaway I have gained from my visit is the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust today. Amid countless conflicts going on all over the world right now, it is essential that the utterly inhuman experiences faced by millions of innocent people are neither forgotten nor reduced to distant memory. The Holocaust should never be forgotten or trivialised, as it demonstrates the sheer extent to which anti-semitism and racism can escalate when left unchallenged within society. Furthermore, it is imperative that the new generation are not 'desensitised' to this suffering, as history tends to repeat itself when forgotten or overlooked. As the generation who witnessed these horrific atrocities firsthand fade, it is our moral obligation to preserve their legacy and to remember the detrimental brutality they were so wrongly subject to. Never again.

In conclusion, the Lessons from Auschwitz project has been an invaluable experience to me, in which I have learnt the importance of remembrance and above all, the significance of recognising the individuality of the millions of victims, both documented and forgotten as of now. Their only so-called 'crime' was their identity, and they were no different from you and me today.

~ *Samreet Kaur*

Year 7 Farchynys Trip

In June this year, I had the opportunity to take part in the annual Year 7 trip to Farchynys. The trip was a chance to learn outside the classroom and spend time with my classmates. It was an experience that I will always remember because of the fun activities that helped me bond with my friends.



We travelled to Farchynys by minibus. During the journey, we stopped at Tesco twice and visited Welshpool, where I bought the best fudge I've ever tasted! When we arrived after the exhausting fourhour trip, we first encountered the castle-like barn area, which to our surprise wasn't where we were staying. One of the first things we did was visit Cymer Abbey, a derelict monastery where we imagined ourselves as 12th-century monks.



One of the main highlights of the trip was exploring Barmouth town in groups of three. During this activity, we meandered through the array of shops, including an arcade, a dessert shop (where I had an Oreo milkshake), and souvenir shops filled with lots of random things. I particularly enjoyed it because it was an experience that was completely new to me: roaming around with no adults!

Another memorable part was the Precipice Walk, which involved climbing a winding path—littered with sheep poo—up to an 800-foot peak. It was challenging but also exhilarating; it was hard work, but the sense of accomplishment afterward was unmatched. We also visited the RNLI, where we got to sit inside 'RNLB *Ella Larsen*', an all-weather lifeboat. One moment that stood out to me was the view from the top of Foel Cynwch, the hill the Precipice Walk wraps around. The view was simply breathtaking.

Overall, the Farchynys trip was an exciting and memorable experience. My favourite part was 'chilling' in the dorms because of the fun and silly moments I shared with my class. If I had the opportunity to go again, I would want to get lost in the forest while orienteering with my friends.

~ *Surya Chauhan*