



# The QM Observer

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## 2019 BATTLEFIELDS TRIP

**SUKIRATH BAINS**

*Year 9*

In May, 42 QM pupils embarked on the annual expedition to the Ypres Salient in Belgium. The trip focused on the First World War Battles of The Somme and Passchendaele and included visits to Hill 62 and the Thiepval Monument alongside

Tyne cot and Langemark cemeteries. While visiting these places of remembrance, we were shown the unfathomable amount of death that had occurred. It was a grim reminder of how brutal the War to End All Wars was. In particular, the cemetery at Langemark, where 25,000 German soldiers are buried, most in a mass grave, left a lasting impression on us all, telling of the futility of such losses. Emotions in the aftermath were indescribable. The experience benefitted from staff knowledge of the monuments and areas around Ypres. After attending a remembrance ceremony at the Menin Gate, we enjoyed free time in Ypres and sampled some famous Belgian chocolate!

Overall, each student left Belgium with valuable memories and poignant reflection. Gratitude must be expressed to the staff in attendance; particularly the organiser Mr Reynolds.



Indian Forces memorial, Menin Gate, Ypres. It is dedicated to the 130,000 troops of the Indian Forces who served in Flanders during the Great War of 1914-1918

## LONDON WREATH LAYING

**PHOEBE PINNEY**

*Head Girl*

On 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019, the annual QMGS tradition of laying a wreath at the tomb of Queen Mary in Westminster Abbey was honoured by 40 excited Year 7 pupils, accompanied by staff and both the current and previous Captain of School and Head Girl.

The day began bright and early at 06:40, travelling via public transport from Walsall and arriving in London at around 09:30.

After a visit to Trafalgar Square and an engaging workshop at the National Art Gallery, the group walked past the Horse Guards' Parade and Downing Street to the Abbey. The service, led by Mr Langton, began at 13:15 and commemorated the founding of the school.

The eventful day ended with a sublime guided tour of Westminster.



## QMGS PRIMARY SCHOOL OUTREACH

**MR LANGTON**

*Headmaster*

The challenge of enabling social mobility is one facing all grammar schools.

For some time, we have considered how we might reach out to our community, but our successful Selective School Expansion Fund bid has now given us the platform we have been waiting for.

The School received nearly £2million for further site upgrades with a set target of 30% of our intake being of pupil premium status in 2020.

To achieve this, we have embarked on an ambitious project to reach out to primary schools in the town where we have traditionally received few entrants.

We have worked in partnership with QMHS and have collaborated with over

30 primary schools in some of the most deprived areas of Walsall.

In January, students from QMGS visited primary schools to meet Year 5 pupils and their parents. Four aspirations sessions followed in the latter part of the spring term, enabling these pupils the opportunity to come to the QM schools and engage in subject-based activities.

I am incredibly grateful to the QM staff and students who ran these sessions and it was brilliant to see how much they were enjoyed by the Year 5s.

In the summer term, we hosted a series of entrance exam familiarisation sessions, which, again, have been very well attended. I sincerely believe the project has set the precedent for years to come and will hopefully see the successful entrants of Walsall-based students in the future.

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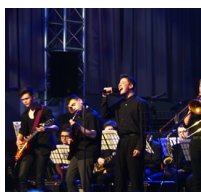
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## CHANGE YOUR MIND

**CAMERON HODGETTS**

*Year 12*

Around three years ago, the School Council launched an initiative to deliver mental health education as an entry for the annual Speaker's School Council Award. Since then, with the diligent efforts of Mrs McPhee and her team, the Change Your Mind project has evolved to reach a quarter of all Walsall primary schools, delivering sessions to over 1,000 Year 6 pupils! Excitingly, this has also attracted attention from the media, with an article being published in the Express & Star about our efforts. But the team's work is far from over. Mrs McPhee has big plans for the initiative, including the introduction of three new topics, a Change Your Mind twitter

page and website, and even more sessions to more schools across the borough. We at the Change Your Mind team are excited by this continued development, but it cannot be done without your support. Students, in particular those entering Year 12, are encouraged to get involved and participate in the project by signing up for it in Block E. The initiative is a fantastic experience, and a chance to develop both yourself and others. Those who are passionate about speaking, or about mental health, will find it a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding experience. Though Change Your Mind is not available to them, younger years are also encouraged to get involved with Rainbow Society and Wellbeing Society. See Mrs McPhee or Change Your Mind ambassadors for more details. Let's talk about mental health!



## VAISAKHI CELEBRATION

**MANVEER & HARJEET WILKHU** *Year 11*

On 28th April 2019, my brother and I co- led the Nagar Kirtan procession in Birmingham to commemorate the important Sikh festival Vaisakhi. As leaders of the Vaisakhi procession that

day, we walked barefoot from Ramgharia Sikh Temple, Birmingham to Handsworth Park. Overall, it was both an inspiring experience and unforgettable honour to serve our religion.

## ARMED FORCES DAY

**LUCY IRELAND**

*Year 12 Cadet*

Armed Forces Day is an opportunity for Britain to give thanks for the service by men and women of the British Armed Forces, past and present. On Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June, 6 QMGS cadets were invited to the Walsall celebrations to raise the flag of Armed Forces Day and express gratitude on behalf of QMGS CCF. We knew we were not only representing QM but the Combined Cadet Force overall. Ergo, it was a priority to ensure that our turnout and drill was of the highest calibre. This made it rather special for a lot of us as it was clear how important our part was. At 10:30, the ceremony began. We all

marched out and Sergeant Devraj Jheet raised the flag. After a moments silence for our fallen service men and women, the national anthem rang loud and at this point we realised we had done our CCF proud. Post ceremony, we were introduced to the mayor before taking photographs and helping ourselves to the refreshments on offer.



## EXERCISE DAWN CHORUS

**BEN WHITEHEAD**

*Year 12 Cadet*

Thursday 27th June saw a cohort of nearly hundred Year 9 cadets from QM travel to Swynnerton training area for Exercise "Dawn Chorus". As the culmination of training that these new cadets have received over the academic year, this



exercise was understandably rigorous and highly challenging.

During the exercises' first phase, cadets were required to tactically occupy their sleeping quarters, lead base patrols and perform a sentry duty late into the night.

The next day proved even more demanding for the cadets, running on less than 5 hours of sleep! Friday's activities included leadership tasks, orienteering, and the inevitable highlight of the day- the opportunity to fire on a live range. Overall, this year's exercise Dawn Chorus was another huge success, being thoroughly enjoyed by all involved. Once again, the contingent would like to extend its immeasurable thanks to the staff and senior cadets present.

## RAMADAN

**ABDUR-RAHMAN MIRZA**

*Year 13*

During the summer term, the holy month of Ramadhan started- an integral part of the Islamic calendar. Ramadhan involves fasting; abstaining from food and drink from dawn till sunset. We do this because it is a command from God, and it helps us to sympathise with those unfortunate in other parts of the world. Many Muslims in QM fasted throughout the month, with many even fasting during their exams. Although a challenge, being able to stick to our religious and academic commitments was definitely gratifying. Ramadhan also involves becoming closer to God. Subsequently at QM, many Muslims made an attempt to improve their character and conduct throughout this blessed month and intend to carry on doing so after it is over. We also saw a lot of new faces at the Friday prayer. It was extremely heartening to not only see Muslims put more effort into improving themselves, but also the respect and tolerance shown by pupils and staff alike towards all the fasting students. We would like to thank the whole school community for their support, especially the Headmaster for allowing pupils to talk about their experience of Ramadhan in school assemblies, and Mr Collins, Miss Naguthney and Mr Kolaric for their continuous help in organising the daily and Friday prayers.

## HAY FESTIVAL

**DOMINIC HALL**

*Year 10*

The 2019 Hay festival offered even more than last year for the 6 QM librarians who went with Mrs Walker during the May half term. After a long coach-ride to Hay on Wye, we were greeted by enthusiastic volunteers and several stalls offering everything from the latest books to vegan brownies. We were most entertained during the YA awards ceremony, where we saw interviews with all the shortlisted authors, apart from Katherine Webber, author of "Only love can break your heart". These interviews offered an intriguing insight into the background of each author and their work. Following the announcement of the winner, "Goodbye Perfect" by Sara Barnard, we returned to school massively pleased with what we had heard, experienced and read. Thanks must be given to Mrs Walker and the other M.A.T librarians, who put in an extensive amount of effort to run the trip.







## WELLBEING AT QMGS

### RAINBOW SOCIETY

**CERY'S WILSON**

*Vice-Captain*

January saw the launch of Rainbow Society, a student led club with the motive to create a socially inclusive environment for the whole school. Overseen by Head of PSHEE Mrs McPhee, several teachers across the school have been involved. The society includes a diverse group of people from the LGBTQ+ community, supported by others that want to be educated further.

Regardless of year group, gender or sexuality, members are empowered to discuss prevalent and important issues on a weekly basis. However, no one is pressured to speak in front of everyone nor are they pressured to speak personally about their identity. It is a safe and supportive atmosphere at each meeting.

In the meetings, student presentations are designed to create awareness on topics such as personal opinions on pride parades and LGBTQ+ representation in the media. A particularly significant week featured a presentation on Polari, the British secret language used by the gay community to safely communicate with one another in the early 20th century.

Hate and judgement has no place at QMGS and newcomers are encouraged to speak up for what they believe in.

The society meets every Friday lunchtime at 13.20 in Q9 and welcomes all.

### WELLBEING GROUP

**KARAMRAJ GAREWAL**

*Year 12*

This term has seen the well-being group progress significantly as a force for good at Queen Mary's. For example, an extremely successful samosa sale raised over £150 for Stand up to Cancer and the James Brindley Foundation. The well-being group is looking at now raising money for the Delicate Mind charity. Furthermore, motivated to improve the environmental condition of the school, they have been assessing eco schools with a view to a litter pick. Posters have been made to raise awareness for testicular cancer and general wellbeing across the school. Girls physical wellbeing has been supplemented via the introduction of the Red box project. The group is firmly committed to expanding upon the successes enjoyed this year into the next school year.

## JAZZ BAND AT LICHFIELD HOTEL

On Wednesday 20th March, the school Jazz Band were invited to perform as part of a monthly 'jazz night' at the Cathedral Hotel in Lichfield. We had lots of really positive feedback from the audience who numbered about 100. The band sounded great! Many thanks to Mr Dewhurst our brass teacher for conducting & organising this event.



## SPRING CONCERT

This year we held our spring concert for the first time at the new A3 Arena at the Forest Arts Centre. It was a marvellous occasion, once again unifying musicians from both QMHS & QMGS. As well as the usual joint orchestra, string ensemble, training band and jazz band, this year saw items from our 2 newest ensembles, the QMGS clarinet ensemble and rock band. Well done to everybody that took part.



Well done to Ben Thorn in Year 11 on passing his grade 8 trumpet exam. Great news!

Check out the growing list of QMGS pupils who've passed instrumental exams on the success page of the music website.



## LESSONS FROM AUSCHWITZ

**CHRIS McHUGH**

*Vice-Captain*

Listening to a survivor of the Holocaust, merely a few feet in front of me, I was aware that nothing could prepare me, mentally, for our visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau the following week. On 12th March we landed in Krakow at around 8am to begin the second phase of the Holocaust Educational Trust's 'Lessons from Auschwitz Project'. Guided around two of the death camps that had laid host to the state-sponsored genocide of

## THEATRE TRIP

**WILLIAM KEYNON**

*Year 8 Musician*

This year's theatre trip organised by the Music department took place on Tuesday 30th April to see the show Les Mis at Birmingham Hippodrome. It was brilliant. Following last year's visit to see Wicked, I hope this will become an annual event!

## CHOIR AT SYMPHONY HALL

On Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April, the school choir took part in a wonderful concert at Symphony Hall featuring a mix of song & dance items from young people across the West Midlands. The atmosphere was electric! Special thanks to Miss Onacko, Mr Sepede & Mrs Jahn for their participation.



## QM SKIFFLE GROUP

The Skiffle Group has had another very busy 12 months completing 13 public performances this academic year. Many thanks again to Mr Hughes for his continuous hard work and enthusiasm with the Skiffle band.



around 6 million Jews, the extent of inhumanity was hard to comprehend. Standing on the railway tracks leading into one of the camps, I looked to the left, the barbed wire fence stretching further than I could see. The same on the right. The scale filled me with an unexplainable sadness and anger – not towards what I had experienced – but humanity, and its terrifying capacity to hate. In the final stage of the project, a range of events are being coordinated in and around school, aiming to teach some of the 'Lessons from Auschwitz'



## CRICKET SUMMER UPDATE

Poor weather and a hectic exam season during a short summer term limited opportunities for the 1<sup>st</sup> XI. In T20 matches, they recorded victories against Alcester GS, OSH and KE Five Ways. Joe Millerchip (53) and Bilal Saleem (57\*) recorded half-centuries vs. Alcester GS and KE Five Ways respectively. Devansh Tandon (6 wickets) has been the pick of the bowlers with an impressive economy rate of 4.02 and best figures of 2-15 vs. OSH. At the KE VI Stratford 6-a-side Tournament, the team finished as runners-up, losing to Nottingham HS in the final.

The U15A team can reflect with great satisfaction on a highly successful season that resulted in two pieces of silverware. In the QMGs 10s Tournament, the boys defeated Wolverhampton GS, OSH and Lawrence Sheriff School to retain the trophy. Moreover, they defeated Denstone College in the final of the U15 Staffordshire Cup, a game in which Jacob Clarke produced a match-winning performance (74\* and 3-12). Jacob Clarke (214) & Oliver Green (140) both scored 100+ runs for the team with Millerchip (10), Smith (9), Clarke (8) and Patel (6) the leading wicket-takers. Clarke (132\*), Smith (97), Patel (67) and Millerchip (62\*) all impressed with the bat during House Cricket.

The U14s beat Wolverhampton Grammar School and Sandwell Academy in the Staffordshire Cup, only to be defeated in the final by Newcastle-under-Lyme School. Batting first, the team were in trouble at 18-5 before a brilliant innings of 56 by Y8 pupil Kavin Balakrishnan ensured QM reached 120ao. Despite a spirited display in the field, Newcastle knocked off the runs and won by 6 wickets. Shivansh Tandon developed as a captain and was the only performer to achieve the impressive feat of 10 wickets and 150+ runs in all competitions.

## SPORTS DAY

## TEMI OJERINDE &amp; SALMAN MOHAMED

*Captains of Houses*

Sports week is an integral part of the school calendar, met with enthusiasm not just from participants but every member of the school community.

During the week, students took part in events ranging from Handball to Touch Rugby and Football, with each year group succeeding in different sports.

The overall winner of Sports week were Darby whilst Gryphon proved a competitive second and Petypher and Aragon finishing as runners up.

The successes of sports week were emulated by Sports Day on the following Tuesday. Sports Day presented an opportunity for students to get involved with a variety of track and field events in support of their house coinciding with other activities such as Tug of War. The overall winners on the day were Gryphon, with



The U13s have demonstrated significant improvement this season. The highlight for the team was the U13 IOM Cricket Tour where the boys played 5 matches in three days. Kavin Balakrishnan (113 runs) was the 'Player of the Tour' and Callum Reeves was awarded the 'Teammate of the Tour'. Their development on tour provided a springboard for victories vs. Lawrence Sheriff School, KE Lichfield & OSH. The team were the Regional Winners of the Chance to Compete Tournament. Balakrishnan (232) and Callum Reeves (177) were the main run scorers with Nad Naqvi (11) the leading wicket-taker.

The U12s recorded notable victories vs. Lawrence Sheriff School, Highfields School, KE Five Ways and Aldridge School. They were semi-finalists in the Staffordshire Cup but won the QMGs U12 10s Tournament with victories against Wolverhampton GS, KES Birmingham & Stamford School. On an individual level, Yusuf Khan (217 runs x2 fifties), Aum More (147), Anhad Gill (122), Jeevan Bahia (120) & Hadi Ahmed (107) all scored 100+ runs with the bat. There was also depth to the bowling attack with Bahia (16), More (13), Jay Somal (10) and Dylan Desai (10) all displaying an ability to take wickets regularly.

Darby in 2nd place, Petypher in 3rd place, and Aragon in 4th.

The atmosphere on the day was consistently friendly and jovial, without a doubt influenced by the ice cream vans close-by. Good sportsmanship was displayed by all members of the school community in cheering people on and even running their last lap with them. Thank you to all sixth form referees and a massive well done to all the Sports week and Sports Day participants.



## HOUSE COMPETITION

**GURJIVAN SOHAL**

*Year 12 Organiser*

The Summer term of 2019 saw several Hunted events take place throughout the school building. The events were a new inter-house competition initiative and were a mock of the Channel 4 show "Hunted".

The events were part of a larger charity fundraising project in aid of Stand Up to Cancer and Cancer Research UK.

The matches saw a team of fugitives from one house hide around the school, aiming to move at least every 10 minutes and making it to the secret extraction point by the end of the session. However, they were careful to try to evade the elite team of hunters who had access to CCTV footage from around the school, allowing them to shadow their every move. The first few rounds led to Darby gaining the majority of the house points on offer, with Aragon close behind in 2nd place at the end of the second leg.

The final leg saw a huge mix-up of the results league, with Petypher making an appearance in 2nd place, Darby in 3rd place and Aragon storming into the league with 346 house points.

The team also held a samosa and spring roll sale to boost profits for the charity. The team of organisers were proud to donate over £700 directly to SU2C.

The entire team of volunteers would like to thank Gurjivan Sohal for his brilliant work in organising the events of this successful charity fundraising project. Huge thanks also go to Mrs McPhee, Mrs Mehta, as well as Tech Crew and all other Head of House staff members, for without them the events could not take place.

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