



# The QM Observer

## 2021-22 PSLT

I was fortunate enough to be able to talk to members of the PSLT about their role in the school as well as how they feel about their respective roles. To become part of the PSLT you have to go through a rigorous application process which includes examining what motivated you to become part of the PSLT, and past experience which is relevant to the position you're applying for. This also includes an interview with the Sixth Form team and the Headmaster if you want to become a Vice Captain or Captain of School.



Samuel Bankole, one of the vice captains, spoke about how the experience of vice-captain is stressful but rewarding in itself and experiences such as attending the QMA dinner and being recognised by other students around school coming up to you and greeting you. Samuel also spoke about the various roles and duties they carry out. One day a week, they lead a duty team with a teacher that is responsible for smooth running of break and lunchtimes. Daniel Ndaty, the current captain of school, spoke about the PSLT being a huge honour with lots of hard work and responsibility. One of the perks of being part of the PSLT is that you can attend the alumni dinner where the PSLT are given a chance to meet with past pupils and start connections. Daniel was able to speak with the chair of governors and get in contact with former Marian and MP, Dr Ben Spencer.

*Kaylan Chau-*

## Year 13 SHAKESPEARE TRIP

Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust and Hall's Croft were the destinations of the Year 13 English trip to learn more about England's most famous playwright – William Shakespeare, 'The Bard of Avon.' Arriving at Hall's Croft, originally owned by Shakespeare's daughter, Susanna, we were treated to two fascinating, informative, and interactive lectures on 'Hamlet' to bolster our A-Level studies. Lunchtime was spent convivially chatting in the less cultural setting of McDonald's.

Following this, we perused the gift shop but were a little discouraged by the tourist prices and returned to



Hall's Croft for the remainder of the afternoon where we discussed, analysed, and considered alternative interpretations of 'Hamlet.' Gaining fresh perspectives of the play and insightful critical commentary was a beneficial experience and we thank Mr Dryhurst for organising this excellent trip.

*Thomas Hayden*

## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Last October, it was Black History Month. This month continues the discussion of Black people and their contributions by encouraging the study of their achievements all year round. Movements like Black Lives Matter have sparked a commitment between many individuals about educating others and themselves about Black culture.



Our school has celebrated BHM by holding a competition for the best BHM poster. We also held a year assembly led by the Year 12's where we addressed this month and Mr. Fadden emailed us about inspirational figures and poems about black history. We also have had Black History Month poster competitions in which many pupils participated in. At Queen Mary's we have truly embraced this year's Black History Month's theme: pride. Being proud of our heritage, and celebrating others.

*Tim Toni Idrissu*

## EDITORS/ DESIGN EDITORS

Alberta N'Guessan   Veena Patel  
Savina Kataria   Sasha Shadrourh  
Oran Lally



## CHRISTMAS CONCERT: VIRTUAL

Once again, we've sadly had a term with disrupted rehearsals due to covid and we were sadly unable to hold our annual live



Christmas Concert and the scheduled senior soloists concert. This hasn't however stopped us making music and I'm really pleased to say, most music rehearsals have continued this term, all be it in year group bubbles. Towards the end of term we began recording the various groups in preparation for an on-line concert, and special mention must be made here to Tobias Roberts and Will Kenyon (Year 11) who oversee the recording studio bookings. Their help and expertise was much appreciated. It has taken a significant number of man hours editing all the various items together, but I'm delighted with the finished product. I hope staff, pupils, friends and family will enjoy watching it. I'd like to say a HUGE THANKYOU to everybody who took part – it wouldn't have been possible without everyone's support. Let's hope we can put on a live music concert in the spring term! The concert can be found on You Tube (search for 'QMGs Christmas Concert 2021.') Let's see if we can beat last year's viewing figures of 652!

*Mr Vause*



## ALEX WHEATLE MBE VISIT

This October, Queen Mary's invited Alex Wheatle MBE, an award-winning author to host writing workshops, offer out book signings and give talks on his experience as a successful black writer. Students were able to sit and talk with Alex in an informal setting and listen to his thoughts surrounding society, his books, and advice for aspiring authors from the perspective of an activist, foster child and experienced black writer. When asked on tailoring to those who don't understand working class life, Alex admitted he did, as "the books are not written for them but for them to understand." In regards to his personal life, Wheatle described music and poetry as a form of positive expression and a positive outlet for the feelings of abandonment he had experienced.



Hearing from such a renowned Black writer was truly a refreshing experience. He showed us that he really related to us as teenagers, expressing his feelings about what life was like as a teenager in the 80s. We were able to understand how, from a working class immigrant background, he was able to make his mark on the world by writing about the experiences he had and always aspiring to be greater and to do great things. He also helped us to broaden our knowledge on the Brixton Riots by telling us his version of events. It was a great learning experience as every pupil and teacher present during his talk was able to feel comfortable in asking questions. Above all, we are extremely grateful to have had such a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to speak to Alex Wheatle and hear his background and his muse for writing.

*Alberta N'Guessan and Kevin Nkeng-*

## THE LIBRARY AND GETTING INVOLVED

The QMGs library has been subject to many changes this academic year, in efforts to adapt to the circumstances of a pandemic.

Alongside physical resources such as books, pupils can reserve books online and have them delivered to form rooms. Year 7 was noted as having frequented the library more often than the other year groups, which has facilitated their assimilation into the school. The library has over 13 000 books within its possession.

Amongst those currently promoted are the works of BAME writers — which draw upon varying themes and experiences — as well as members of the LGBTQ+ community. This reflects the inclusive nature of the school and is fundamental in maintaining a tolerant and diverse ethos.



The Book-Trust challenge was a key event that has been recently organised, where KS3 students have the ability to earn house-points (and confectionery) upon reading six books from a list of selected writings.

Moreover, the school is running a Readathon organised by Mr Dryhurst to encourage students to raise funds for Reading for Good.

The library is appreciative of any donations that can be made by the school community, in support of this cause.

*Bilal Adnan and  
Haider Sadiq*



## NEW KIT, NEW SEASON

The school recently updated the Games kits thanks to the new head of PE, Mr Hitchen. The new kits feature a flatter look that bodes a resemblance of previous QM kits, keeping the traditional school colours. A reversible element provides a convenient and more hygienic alternative to bibs.

Year 7s found that it stood out from a sea of schools, largely in part to the use of school colours and the lack of the standard issue stripes you'd expect. Reversibility of the kit was mentioned to be the greatest benefit.

**Sasha Shadrourh**

## SENIOR HOCKEY

After a year of missed fixtures due to the pandemic, the senior hockey teams have had an impressive season so far. Under the new captaincy of Ratanjot Boparai, the 1st XI has quickly developed great chemistry, helped by reliable top goal scorer Harkaran Dhillon and an influx of fantastically talented players from Year 12, despite missing out on senior experience last year. This has resulted in a number of strong performances, including a hard earned 3-3 draw against Adam's Grammar; a tense 1-1 draw against a disciplined Warwick side; a pleasing 4-0 win over Old Swinford Hospital; and an exhilarating match against rivals Bishop Vesey's ultimately ending 2-3. Furthermore, the 2nd and 3rd teams have delivered some excellent results, with the highlights being an incredible 8-0 victory for the 2nd XI over Adam's Grammar 2nd XI and a 1-0 victory for the 3rd XI over Derby Grammar 1st XI. The senior hockey teams have made considerable progress already and can be excited for more success in the future.



**Aidan Burns**

## RHIANA AND ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

In September 2021, our prestigious Year 13 student Rhiana Burrell had achieved third place in the Senior Girls Heptathlon English Schools Finals, awarding her a bronze medal. Her awards did not stop there, as she received a silver medal for long jump at the English Schools Finals, as well as earning the Senior Girls Individual Award for her outstanding performance at the QMGs Sports Day. Not only did she manage to achieve this incredible award, but she broke two school records in the process. She set new records for the 100m and Shotput with 12.9secs and 11.33m, which is an immensely proud achievement at such a young age. When asked on the highlight of her sporting career, was the British Championship. Rhiana then went onto explain how it was an amazing experience to compete against older Olympic level athletes, and came in fifth place as the youngest there! Rhiana's track record is surely impressive, and so when questioned on future aspirations for her athletics career, she states that: *"In the future, I hope to get into Olympics programmes in University. I am currently volunteering for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, and I would love to perform at the 2024 Paris Olympics!"*

**Nandini Parekh**

## SKIFFLE GROUP

The Skiffle Group perhaps is most exclusive to Queen Mary's. Led by Mr Hughes, students play a variety of folk music, performing locally in Walsall and Aldridge, but has also performed at the National Memorial Memorial Arboretum. Instruments vary from your traditional acoustic guitars and snare drums to wash boards, kazoos, and even a tea chest bass.

Simple universal chords across each instrument provide a unique experience for musicians and crowds, alike! The Skiffle Group have over thirty songs that they can play in their collection. With all the simplicity and fun, the Skiffle Group is an incredible opportunity for anyone in Queen Mary's Grammar School. For anyone considering to join in, the next term is a perfect time to start! Thank you, Mr Hughes for the Skiffle Group at Queen Mary's!

**Zayan Pannun**



## DRAMA MAKING A RETURN

As Thornton Wilder said, "I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms" and that is why Mr Williams pushed for drama to make a return to Queen Mary's. This new drama programme not only increases the self-esteem and confidence of our pupils, but it also allows them to expand their cultural awareness as it takes them through multiple different histories of traditions and backgrounds. It opens up new dimensions that delve deep into new emotional experiences and it further allows them to discover empathy and identification, whilst increasing their literary skills and becoming more articulate.

When it was first introduced and promoted, not many of our pupils attended. But now as the weeks go on, we see more and more going to discover the intricate dynamics of plays the theatre. We have seen its popularity grow and our students becoming more comfortable on the stage, something that fulfils us with pure joy. It will benefit our pupils as they continue to grow, and we are thrilled to now be able to offer them this great opportunity to flourish.

**Katy Mae Stanistreet**



According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, it will take another 100 years to achieve gender equality based on the current rate of progress. Bold steps must be taken in society to ensure that everyone, regardless of what gender they identify with, feels valued and has access to equal opportunities. In an ever-changing modern world, it's vital that attitudes not only change into become more open but that concrete plans are made to increase diversity in all its forms. At school, the Rainbow Society is open for the LGBTQ+ community and their allies, and it is important that conversations surrounding gender identity take place so that we can understand and support each other. In an academic year that has seen the first female Captain of School, it is evident that progressive changes are happening and it is everyone's responsibility to continue to work towards a fairer society, where everyone feels able to make their voice heard.

**Amy Fox**

## HOUSE UPDATE



Starting a brand-new academic year, the QMGS House system has been more determined than ever to involve students in all manner of inter-house competitions. With the house basketball in early October, Petypher took a swift lead in the Year 7 competition. Gryphon triumphed in the Year 8 competition, before Darby won the Year 9 competition; Aragon managed to break a losing streak in the Year 10 competition by beating Petypher to first place. This year also saw the return of Girls' House Netball, with Petypher coming in first place. These shows of sportsmanship demonstrate the enduring and competitive spirit of Queen Mary's students despite the current situation with Covid. Aside from friendly house sports competitions, the QMGS house system actively engages in philanthropy, to help better our local and global community. In late October and early November, QMGS students were 'Generous in approach' by donating over 1197 items to this year's food bank collection, helping disadvantaged families around our local area. As always, the collection was run as a house competition, with Aragon donating the most items. Taking into account all of this term's house activities, Darby is in the lead with 3964 points, followed by Gryphon with 3772 points in second. Aragon are closely behind with 3756 points, and in last place is Petypher with 3661 points. Finally, on behalf of the whole school community, I would like to extend my thanks to Mrs Mehta and the pupil heads of houses, who facilitated these events. Thank you!

**Harry Sharma**

## A COVID-19 UPDATE

Despite the current unfortunate circumstances we are facing with Covid 19, we remain optimistic and continue to work around the challenges. We acknowledge that a changing situation, both nationally and locally, has meant that local governments and schools have had to implement further restrictions but this has not greatly affected school life as we continue to progress in the academic year whilst ensuring the safety and wellbeing of our students. Assemblies have returned to a virtual format, the library and canteen are now year-group divided, and masks have become compulsory across school. Whilst the situation certainly is not what was expected or wished for, hope is not lost; vaccination efforts have now commenced within school, a key step in ensuring that restrictions can safely be lifted sooner rather than later, and as for now, all international trips (including the now USA-bound ski trip) are still going ahead. So, as the school looks to the future, what remains clear is the need, as has been demonstrated so well the past two years, for resilience in the face of continuing difficulty and unity as a school community as we continue to battle the pandemic.

**Thomas Sharma**

## SWIFTS, AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

Swifts, one of the most amazing birds on our shores are in trouble. Their numbers have seen a massive decline of well over half in the last 20 years and are now on the amber watch list. Swifts spend just three months of the year in Britain. A swift holds the record for the fastest proven flight, recording an impressive speed of 69.3mph in a recent study. They are also the symbol of Walsall Football Club. Sadly, like lots of wildlife, their habitat is being destroyed and their numbers are plummeting. They nest in holes, up high and especially like old buildings which have these nooks and crannies. Unfortunately, these holes are being filled in or knocked down. There is something we can do to help: school has installed two nest boxes, up high above the reception entrance ready for when the swifts return from Africa next May. The same family tends to come year after year to their nest: QM doing its small bit for the environment- maybe you could help too? Look out for them over the years ahead.

**R Reynolds**

