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A Verulam School Publication

Issue 14 February 2014





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Music at Verulam



The Verulam school music department has made great progress over the autumn term: The Abbey service, the music clubs every lunch time and after school and the many events hosted in the weeks running up to Christmas including the candlelit Nine Lessons and Carols. There was more to come in the spring term, like the Solo Concert, the yearly SASSMA concert and the numerous other Spring music events.

Weekly music lessons are happening day in, day out as more and more people want to sign up for lessons. Also the music department run the Verulam school music blog at verulam-schoolmusic.wordpress.com and Pinterest page. One of the main musical events of the spring term was the Solo Concert. This is where students apply to be able to play in the concert and the concert is all made up of student performances. The head of the music department, Mr Southorn, gives up his week's lunchtimes and

after school time to run ECCO clubs for our benefit. Many clubs, including Music Tech. and Junior band on Monday lunchtime and after school respectively, still have many available spaces so feel free to come along and ask if you can join.

Many people learn a musical instrument for a challenge, for pleasure or because of school reasons. All songs use an instrument of some sort, from a computer generated synthesiser to a massive double bass, so why not make it your own goal to learn an instrument? Popular choices include the keyboard or a version of an electric guitar, but don't miss out

the drums or a completely homemade project instrument. Many professional instrument makers learn to play the instrument and some of them start by making it out of scrap, so why not give an instrument a try this year?

Matthew Stevens



Are films of books dumbing down great literature or opening up the classics to a new audience?



Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Pride and Prejudice, Lord of the Flies and the Chronicles of Narnia. All great classic literature turned into huge Hollywood block busters making millions of pounds.

The costumes are beautiful, the actors even more so, the scenery is stunning and the action is smooth. But where is the intellectual rigour? The viewer is told and shown exactly what is happening, led step by step through the film, hand held like an illiterate pre-school toddler who needs to be guided through every challenge.

Reading classic texts is hard.

Wuthering Heights was written in 1847. The story spans 50 years and covers the lives of 16 characters. The relationships are complex and overlap. The reader

Grammar and vocabulary can be challenging as old words and grammatical techniques are grappled with. Clauses and sub-clauses are used extensively. One sentence from Wuthering Heights would be three short sentences today. Classic literature is hard to read but this can be the attraction as the reader feels their mind grow with the challenge.

Hollywood producers have taken classic literature and brought it to the big screen. The curved, 3D screen of the IMAX amphitheatre. This full technicoloured experience wows the audience with computer generated graphics, stuntmen, world famous actors and stunning scenery from across the globe. However, the literature is dumbed down and spoon fed to the audience.

Take Tolkien's Lord of the Rings for example. Three



needs a family tree to keep track of how the characters interact. Heathcliff is linked through friendships, marriage, loving relationships and hateful relationships to nearly every character in the book. The reader needs to hold this information in their mind, tracking the twists and turns of the plot. The intellectual challenge is huge. Plot, sub-plot, counter plot intertwine to make the story engrossing. Set in an unfamiliar past the reader needs to delve into their imagination to visualise the story.

volumes taking Tolkien 12 years to write. Complex plot developed with 30 main characters. The film has to make cuts to fit this epic fantasy in to the film. Plot threads are missing, characters' words cut and the scenery is New Zealand. I wonder what Tolkien would have made of this? And why not add some songs as well? Victor Hugo's Les Miserables, a heavy weight French novel, has been brought to the screen with characters singing their way through the tragedies of the French Revolution.

But should it just be one or the other? Do we have to choose between books or films? Is there a line in the sand where one literary vehicle is better and more high brow than the other? Is there room for both written word and film to help readers and audiences enjoy their literature, to fire their imaginations?

War and Peace is a novel with 1,225 pages. It is written in Russian and French and is based in a country and time completely unfamiliar to our society. The cultural references are hard to imagine and the reader could get bogged down in concepts and lose the thread of the story.

The novel, hard to lift off a table, has been transformed by film. The film supports us in our understanding of Russian people and Russian culture as it guides us through Tolstoy's maze of characters and landscape. So, films can open up challenging classic novels to a new

audience who might never have heard of the authors let alone wanted to read the books.

The Hobbit has grossed over a billion dollars and been seen by audiences across the globe. Its spectacular scenery, interesting characters and plot twists and turns have introduced Tolkien and his work to a whole new audience. Probably most have never heard of Tolkien or his books, but they have now.

Do we have to choose between books and films? I agree, the great classics have been changed to fit a 90 minute film that appeals to today's cinema audience. This could be regarded as dumbing down. But it could also be seen as opening a door to the world of great literature.

Surely, the ultimate aim is for someone to watch the film and be inspired to then read the book.

Ewan Zielinski



Film or Book?

Film or book? It is a question that has no real answer; just your opinion. In my opinion, I prefer books because if you're reading a book and you didn't understand something you can flip back a few pages and read it until you understand. On the other hand, in a film if you're at the cinema and you don't understand something you can't ask the cinema to replay that bit.

Another reason is that in books you can really feel emotions for the characters: happiness, grief, sadness, horror. But in films I find it a little bit hard to feel as much as in the books. For example in 'The Hunger Games' a character dies and a lot of people I know said that they cried. However, in the film, I don't know a single person that felt that much emotion.

But there are a lot of good things about the movie and book, such as, if you read a description you might imagine it differently to how others see it, but if you see it in a film and discuss it with someone you have both seen the same thing so you know what you are both talking about.

The main advantage of a film is that you read a book that's five hundred pages long and it will take you about ten days (for me anyway!) but in a film you can watch every single one of those five hundred pages in two hours.

Freddie Merriden



Midges

To begin with, they have a horrible habit of hanging around in gangs, managing to get into your mouth and eyes, even when you keep them closed and sort of clog up all your breathing, which is really annoying. Then they have their food source – your blood. They bite you and make you scratch yourself, which is completely unnecessary.

But if we get rid of midges, won't it damage the food chain?

Not at all really. They feed on blood, so no animals are going to breed out of control from lack of predators and the only thing that ever eats them are swifts and they have many other food sources. In fact, midges only make up about 7% of a swift's diet, so it wouldn't be too much of a loss without them.

Do you have any other problems with them?

Yep. There is always a risk that they could end up carrying diseases, like the mosquito.

Alex Jenkins

Mosquitos

Mosquitos are irritating, harmful and deadly insects that kill millions of people every year. Malaria, a mosquito borne disease, causes 207 million illnesses and 600 thousand deaths annually. Three billion people live in areas where they are living with the threat of contracting this deadly disease. How would you feel about mosquitos if you were living with this threat?

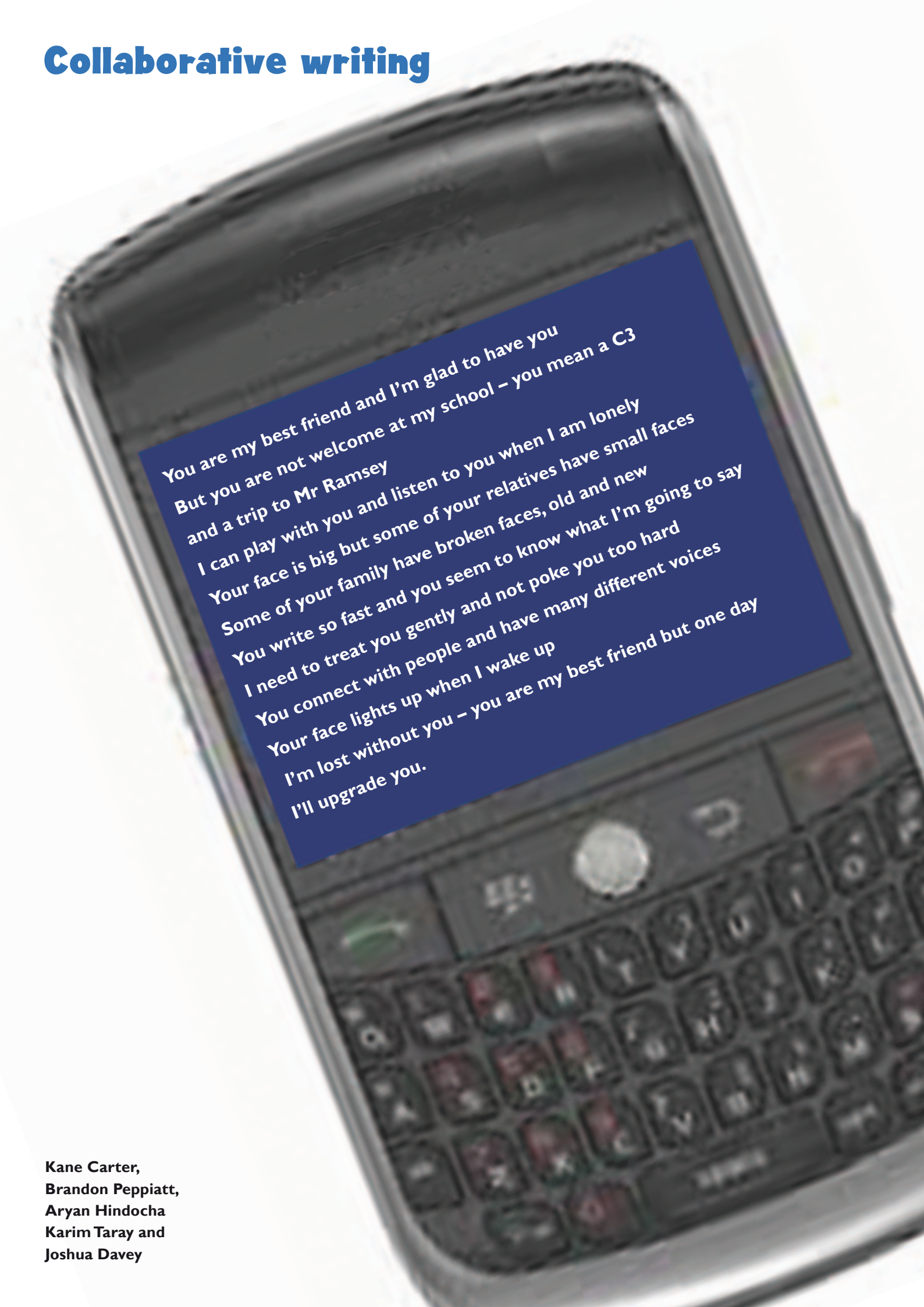
Isaac Keeley

Politicians

The whole point of a debate is to sort out a problem, to find a solution for the masses and not to aim for your own party's gain. Politicians manage to miss the whole point of a debate with their miniscule minds, and instead manage (somehow) to turn it into an alchemy of shouting, put me down, stupidity, ignorance, arrogance – the list goes on and on. It turns into an almost animalistic display, with supposedly civilized human beings talking over the top of each other, and the most common phrase in a debate being 'LET HIM FINISH!' Not even a please or a thank you. I fail to remember the last time an intelligent comment was made by a politician or a logical argument. Even if one of those was made they'd only be met with jeers by the sheep that are politicians.

Alfie Upjohn Lee

Collaborative writing

A black mobile phone is shown at an angle, with a blue rectangular overlay containing white text. The phone's screen is dark, and the keypad is visible at the bottom. The text on the overlay is a poem or collaborative writing piece.

You are my best friend and I'm glad to have you
But you are not welcome at my school – you mean a C3
and a trip to Mr Ramsey
I can play with you and listen to you when I am lonely
Your face is big but some of your relatives have small faces
Some of your family have broken faces, old and new
You write so fast and you seem to know what I'm going to say
I need to treat you gently and not poke you too hard
You connect with people and have many different voices
Your face lights up when I wake up
I'm lost without you – you are my best friend but one day
I'll upgrade you.

Kane Carter,
Brandon Peppiatt,
Aryan Hindocha
Karim Taray and
Joshua Davey

The Centraal Station Murder

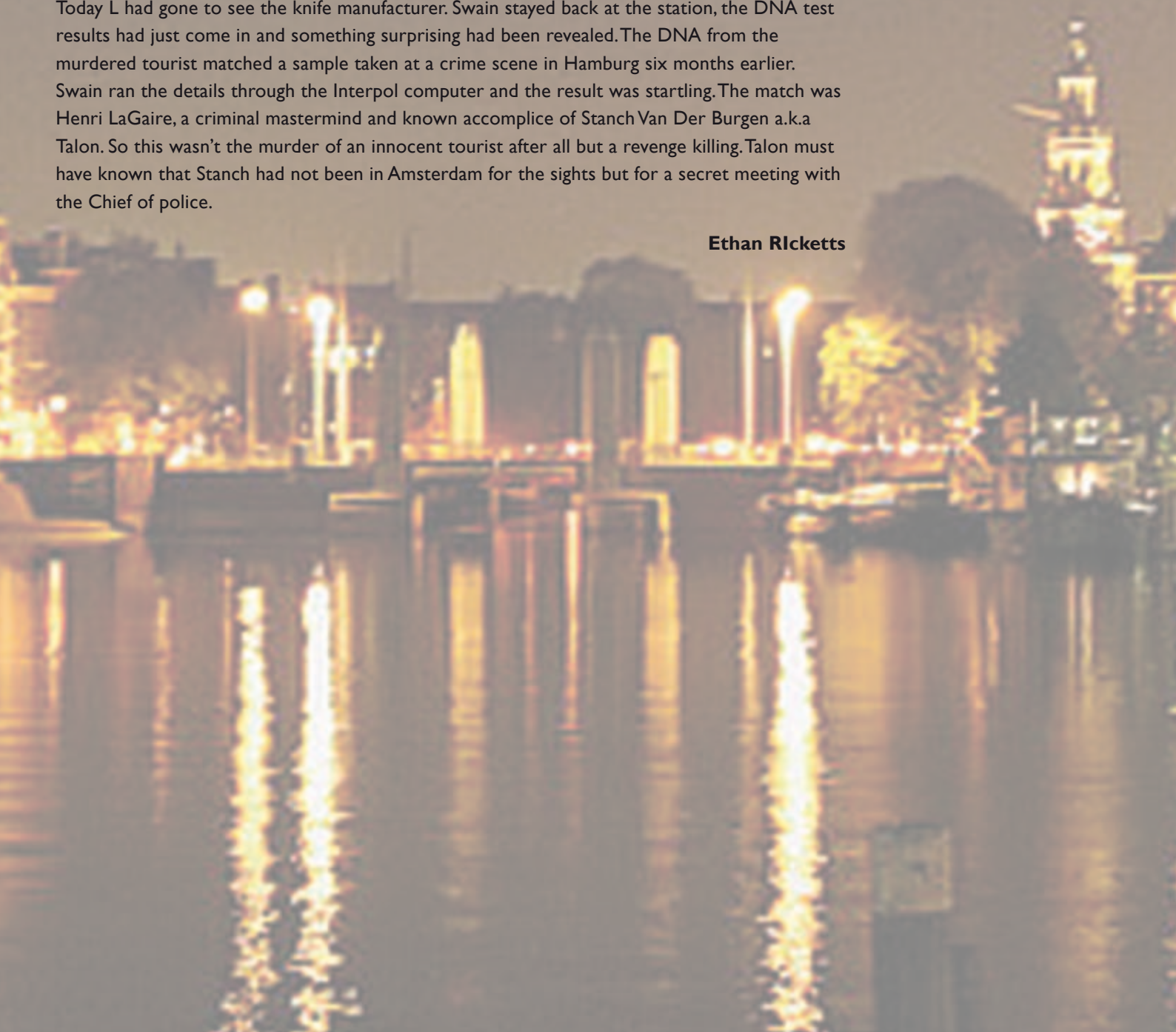
Moonlight shone upon the canals of Amsterdam, the merry sounds from the pubs and restaurants seemed to be the only audible sound. The Centraal station, Amsterdam's main terminus, was deserted at night unlike during day time. One lonely traveller walked to the platform, awaiting his late train to the airport, it had been a long day and his legs were so exhausted he could barely stand but he still had 10 minutes to wait. Another train arrived and a man who looked to be lost in his own thoughts got off and headed in the direction of the shivering tourist, bumped into him and then carried on his way. The weary traveller felt a burning sensation in his stomach; he looked down. A sharp silver knife was lodged in him! He tried to find his phone but fell down to the platform, dead in the cold night air. The only trace that was left was a knife with one word carved on it that brought fear to any detective, Talon.

Swain walked down the alley, he was tired after a hard day's work with L, now he saw why they called him the "super detective". However he enjoyed work, had solved several cases and had recently discovered more information on the Centraal Station murder. This case had puzzled many officers but it seemed that he and L had got the furthest.

Swain had examined the knife, nothing unusual, it had been checked with UV for fingerprints, none, he had checked everything. But yesterday, after hours of hard work he found a clue, a small, encrusted name under the layer of blood the name: 'Katra Knives'.

Today L had gone to see the knife manufacturer. Swain stayed back at the station, the DNA test results had just come in and something surprising had been revealed. The DNA from the murdered tourist matched a sample taken at a crime scene in Hamburg six months earlier. Swain ran the details through the Interpol computer and the result was startling. The match was Henri LaGaire, a criminal mastermind and known accomplice of Stanch Van Der Burgen a.k.a Talon. So this wasn't the murder of an innocent tourist after all but a revenge killing. Talon must have known that Stanch had not been in Amsterdam for the sights but for a secret meeting with the Chief of police.

Ethan Ricketts



Rugby: Verulam vs Beaumont (Year 8)

It was a cold day, dew had settled over the pitch and a slight chill ran through the grass. A deadly battlefield. We didn't really know what to expect. The last couple of times we had played Beaumont we had made easy work in decimating their defence. But today was different. We could sense it in the air in the changing room. Pride and glory was at stake. They were stronger than before and our form was shaky, having lost four of our last six games. They had quality players, we had quality players: it all just depended on who stepped up to the challenge. Everything but the pitch was equal.

The first ten minutes were a slog, as they pushed forward, it was obvious we had forward dominance but they had key players in the back line. We eagerly fought for the ball and were quickly awarded a scrum. Our attacking line quickly made pace down pitch but their back line easily broke down our plays, tiring the forwards down to a standstill. Much of the first quarter possessions were contested and eagerly fought over. We gained much advantage from the slope. Our wingers made good use of it and quickly broke away from their first tier defence. Just as we reached the 22, we made a silly mistake and were forced into losing possession, but were awarded a scrumage on their 5 metres for an accidental knock on. We quickly pushed forward and with an early scrum, out No.8 broke through their line for the first try of the match.

After this successful conversion we were 7-0 up and it looked like we had forward dominance over Beaumont.

For the remainder of the first half we were kept in our half. Our opponents were clearly unhappy about the score line. It was tough but after a turnover scrum our flyhalf kicked it for half time.

We lined up to receive in a 3-4 formation. During the break we had assessed our performance and ways to improve. We had also learned that they only had two big threats for us to worry about. As we received the kick we made good headway up the pitch with good ball carrying and contact off loads. Just as we seemed to be getting away, we conceded a scrum for offensive scrummage holding. They quickly took the advantage and pressed our wing but he slowly pressed them back closing up our open space and trapping them in contact. We were quickly awarded a penalty. Just as our outside centre made it to the 22 he was brought down. Six faces passed but we eventually cut inside their full back and our loose prop smashed his way to the try line. After a second successful conversion we were 14-0 ahead. As their full back received we pushed as a line and broke down play for a penalty push. They intercepted and gained the ball. Their wingers quickly passed it down the field. We regained possession and made a break for their line with a clearance kick. Their scrum half caught it and cross ran through our defence but was broken down at our 22 on the touch line. From there we were caught unprepared as their centre dashed through our forwards for a try! Demoralised but still in the game we lined up for the kick 14-5 the score.

As we entered the final 10 minutes, they advanced straight

through us and with quick work from their right wing who had run straight down the line for the second try to Beaumont. It was now a very close game at 14-12 to us. With 2 minutes on the clock we made an almighty push for their half. Slowly coming to a standstill as we met seven faces at their 22. With a mighty heave at final play we accidentally turned over ball but quickly forced them into clearing it for the final whistle.

It had been hard, but the battle was over. Both teams had given their all and the field, like us, lay in tatters. But our touch poles stood tall in the wind and with the victory the blue and yellow flag poles stood firm. As our motto embroidered on our shirts instructs, we 'did our duty'. The battle was won for Verulam.

Tom Edwards