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A Verulam School Publication

Issue 18 April 2015





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School Council update

The School Council this year has been repurposed as the Student Voice. In collaboration with Mr Hall, it was decided to have one representative for each form from years 7 to 10 to appear on the council. We thought that this would create a fair committee where each year group would be equally represented. At the beginning of the year, new reps were elected in each form across the school ready to start meetings after October half term. The first appearance of the Student Voice reps, however, was when, at the annual Thanks-giving service at the Abbey, they carried forward banners depicting £50 notes which symbolised the money that had been raised for charity by the students in the school. This highly iconic and traditional event of the school's was a terrific way to show that the Student Voice did, in fact, represent the students. This was another of the changes made to the council.

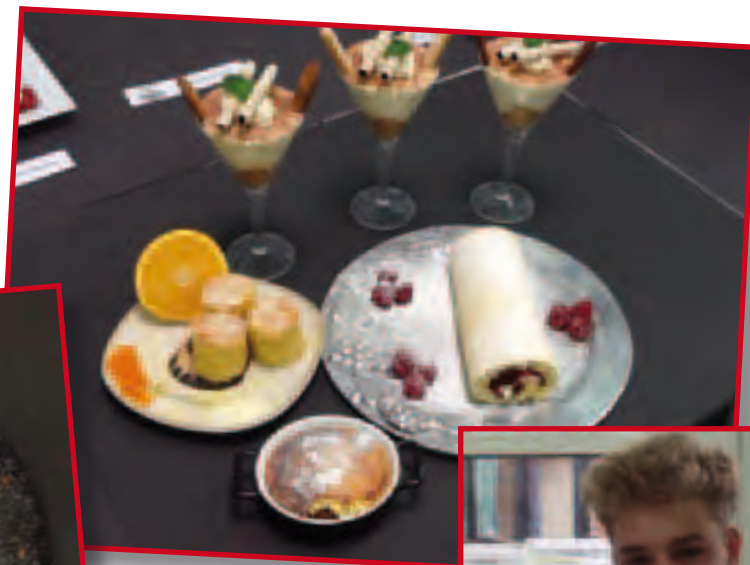
In the past, the school council; has been run by a teacher. This went against the whole ideal behind having a student council so we decided to have it run by sixth formers. Kindly, Stefano Asciana, Spencer Caminsky and Christina Cogley have agreed to help me run the council. This team of sixth formers understand, better than the teachers, what the students are thinking and their opinions. Hopefully this will make the council more effective in decision-making.

Meetings began after October half term with the opportunity for the brand-new council to spend £500 on what they chose. This preliminary amount was granted to the council with the view to give it a kick-start.

The reps asked their forms for a list of possible projects to spend the budget on and fed back to the council. Through debate and research, the reps came to the decision to spend some of the money on new footballs for each form group in the school, a much needed investment. As Verulam is a boys' school, footballs are in constant demand! The students decided that, by spending under the budget, we could put the excess towards our next budget, increasing the options for spending on future projects. This independent thinking and coming up with ideas is a promising sign, showing that the pupils are getting involved and are relishing the opportunity to make a difference. This is what I wanted to achieve: a student voice with actual influence.

Another change has been more frequent meetings. The Student Voice now meets weekly on Tuesday mornings. Having a weekly meeting allows faster progress and for meetings to be shorter allowing students to not miss any lesson time. A common situation is for a school to enter the new academic year with an ambition to have a good school council, only to later let it fade out through the cancelling of meetings and to just give up. I am determined, however, not to let this happen to this Student Voice and to maintain a motivated council right until the end of the year and into next year. So far, it seems we have achieved this because we are more than half way through the year already with plenty of positive energy for improvement still evident in the reps! Time will tell if the council will maintain this level of commitment from all, but at the moment the signs are very positive.

Duncan Kennedy



Rotary Club Debating Competition

Why the Internet Needs Refurbishment

The Internet. What a tool, what a token, what a topic. A stroke of brilliance from a man living right here in the UK, it's your partner, a necessity in your daily routine, the backbone of modern society today, and the digital age we seem to be living in. Most people don't even get out of bed in the morning before checking their emails, Facebook, Twitter, weather or news, or all of them at once. Yes, it's fantastic, a virtually free encyclopaedia of knowledge you sometimes never even knew you wanted to have, but is it really all smiles and celebrations? Is the internet really perfect? Deep inside, everyone knows it isn't, those little things preventing the internet from really crossing the threshold of true innovation, true brilliance, and true perfection. In fact, that frustration really makes you want to pick up your computer, phone or tablet, throw it against the wall and never look back, and that, is why the internet, as we know it today, needs a bit of refurbishment. Here are three things we all know about, in and around the web -- logging in, emails and what I like to call "the tough stuff"- which really... push your buttons.

Firstly, it's the very strenuous, yet frustratingly, always necessary, process of logging in. Okay, let me break this down for you. After reaching the login screen, you type in your email address as the username - easy, nothing to it. Next... is the password. Right. Contrary to popular belief, passwords are more than just some secret word you've coined to keep your stuff private. Due to the brain boxes of the world deciding to use the word 'username' as their username, and the word 'password' as their password, getting hacked and not understanding why, websites like Mozilla firefox have decided it's a good idea for your password to contain... a plethora of different characters. So as if remembering your passwords is bad enough, you now have to create ones that must contain an uppercase letter, a lowercase letter, a number, and probably a hieroglyphic, a roman numeral, and a partridge in a pear tree. Thanks Mozilla. Anyway, you carefully create your password, note it down somewhere you hope won't go missing, and proceed to the next stage: the security question. Just in case your password isn't secure enough, the security question is the last line of defence, asking you to pick a secret word based on a list of questions. The problem is, the answers... are impossible to remember. Picture this: What is the last name of your favourite childhood friend? How am I supposed to remember the last name of my favourite childhood friend? Who is my favourite childhood friend? What was I thinking the moment I made this code word? Ugh! You end up just using the same security word for every security question ever kind of defeating the purpose. It's not safe, but you remember it. Finally, after ticking off the terms and conditions (what they entail, we will never know), you confirm everything, wipe the sweat from your brow, and slump back into your chair. It's over. You've done it, but clearly, the login process is way too strenuous, making it the perfect aspect to be refurbished.

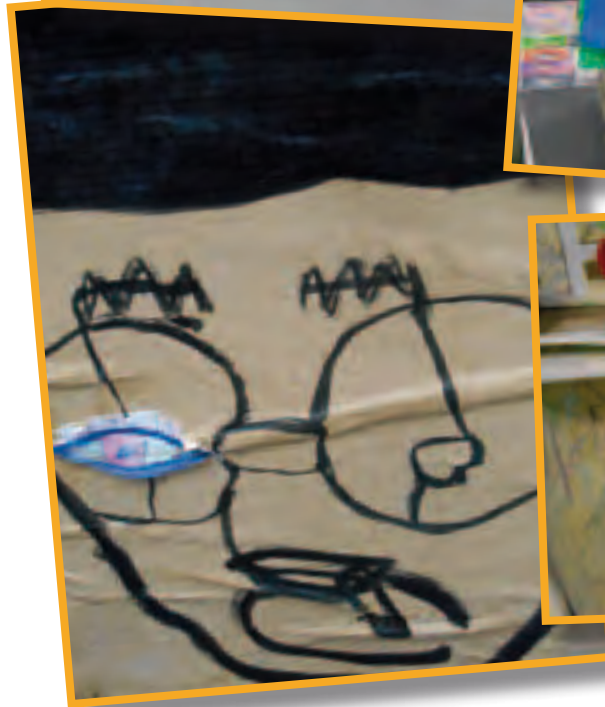
Once we've logged into our website we encounter the second problem: emails. Sure, they're controlled, private and free for everyone, but therein lies the problem. See, some emails... are more powerful than you think. Some emails, have more leverage in your life than any other means of fate. Some emails are so strong, they can singlehandedly kill your closest family members, or give you millions of pounds, just by sharing them to five other people. What are they, you ask? Chain; emails: the bane of human existence, able to change the fate of the universe... if you don't share it to others. For example: "This picture is cursed, and this girl (insert scary photo of scary girl) is hiding in your closet. If you don't forward this to twelve people, she will kill you in your sleep." First of all, why does a little girl in my closet care about whether or not I've forwarded an email? Why would that prevent her from killing me? You'd think she'd do it anyway. Second, what kind of person would go out of their way, to create something like that? Terrorising the lives of others, for cheap entertainment? You could ask the same about horror movie makers, or the guy who made up clowns, but to sum up, this was not the best idea. Along with spam emails, from websites you've probably only clicked on once by accident, problems with email need to be fixed.

Thirdly, it's the tough stuff. Aside from the bores of logging in, and the perils and annoyances of email, the internet can be very dangerous. Viruses - impossible to track, and very difficult to get rid of, they attach themselves to files and destroy hundreds of hours of work. Then there's the threat of people, who aren't who they say they are in social networking, claiming to be younger than they really are, with different motives than they say they have, easily able to access everything they need to know about you to do real damage, and that, in itself, is definitely wrong. If nothing else, stopping child predators alone is the most important thing on the internet, that needs to be dealt with.

To sum up, from the strenuous process of logging in, to spam and chain letters on email, to viruses and child predators, the internet does have its flaws, which is why I feel refurbishment is needed. However, just because the web has flaws doesn't take away from the fact that it's one of the most important advances in technology, ever created on earth. If you can't see that, every second as you forwards an email, or log into a website, it's you - not the internet- who truly needs the refurbishment. Thank you.

Spencer Caminsky

Art Exhibition KS3



Year 7 CED - Macbeth

What I really enjoyed about the English Curriculum Enrichment Day was the play that Mr Brownlie produced in the hall. It was really fun to watch all the pupils in other forms do the play with the help of the teachers. They put on an amazing play by Shakespeare. The play is called 'Macbeth'. The characters in this brilliant play were Macbeth, Lady Macbeth, Banquo and his son, Macduff, Lady Macduff a messenger and three witches. There were also some soldiers, guards, murderers and King Duncan and his two sons. The play was really good because the teachers encouraged the pupils to do their best and not to be shy.

They even had boys producing sound effects and music on one side of the room and a stage manager organising props on the other side. The three witches were very good because they really got into character and they weren't shy. They did their best because they had to work hard to be convincing witches. I really have enjoyed the English Curriculum Enrichment Day!

Matthew McLoughlin



Year 7's CED was based around the play 'Macbeth'. While the play is about villainy and scary prophecies, the day was extremely fun and we have learnt more about Macbeth and Elizabethan England. The whole day has been fantastic but the highlight has to be the Macbeth play performed by members of the year group. We learnt about the story of Macbeth while telling the story ourselves – I was stage manager.

It started with the witches telling Macbeth that he shall be King and while the performers were a bit shy at first, they soon got the hang of it. Everybody laughed at the performances because it was friends performing which was unusual. When my turn came to hand Macbeth the dagger I couldn't wait to see Macbeth murder the King!

'The King is dead!' shouted Macbeth, and I hung a red cross on the wall to signify Macbeth's first murder of the play. As the climax of the play approached, I had hung over five red crosses on the wall. In the finale Macbeth was finally killed.

This has been an extremely enjoyable day and now I can't wait to make my Macbeth Top Trumps cards.

Thomas Williamson



The Macbeth play was enjoyable in many, many ways. It was interactive, funny and full of suspense. Around 35 students were chosen to perform the play and I think that this contributed to it being enjoyable. I think it made it more exciting to watch because it was funny seeing students in a boys' school pretend to be female but this is what would have happened when Shakespeare wrote the play so it was quite realistic. It made us laugh to see our friends play female roles though.

I really enjoyed the play because the actors did not actually have a play script to look at. This meant they were able to sort of change the play a tiny bit although it still had the same key points. By adding bits the actors could make the audience laugh. I also think that the play was good because it was not done by professionals. When I say this I don't mean to say it wasn't good, but I do mean to say that it was a bit unpredictable. Now, I knew we were going to see the play, but I thought that we would have visitors performing the play and that would mean us knowing exactly what would happen and yes, it would still be fun to watch the whole thing, but it was even more exciting performed by students.

Jermaine Ehigaitor

During the year 7 CED year 7 witnessed a fabulous day with many different and unique activities including a stunning performance by Mr Brownlie and Mr Jordan.

The performance was the play, 'Macbeth' by William Shakespeare, it was tense all the way through. It started off with Macbeth and Banquo coming back from the heat of battle, and meeting with the three witches, who made prophecies. The witches name him Thane of Cawdor and minutes later a messenger hails him 'Thane of Cawdor'. Macbeth then writes to his beloved Lady Macbeth explaining the events that have just befallen him.

Returning home, Lady Macbeth and Macbeth plan to speed the prophecies up by killing the King so that Macbeth will be King sooner. They place sleeping powder in the drinks given to the guards and then stab King Duncan and frame the guards.

The play ends with Macbeth being slain and Malcolm becoming King of Scotland. The rest of the day was a thrilling experience. I personally enjoyed it and I know the rest of my Form did too.

Alex Morley

Today, so far, it has been really fun and I have enjoyed 110% of it. First of all, my favourite activity: we had to create a leaflet about crime and punishment in Elizabethan England using information we were given. It was really interesting to hear the sort of things that would happen to someone if they committed a crime. Also, I

enjoyed the performance in the hall. It was amusing to see some of my friends up on stage – especially the one dressed as Lady Macbeth!

We also had to think of disgusting words for a spell like the witches' spell in Macbeth. I found that very fun but also quite challenging because we had to put them together in sentences and create a chant – at some points it was quite revolting!

I can't wait to make my Top Trumps cards based on the characters from Macbeth and then we will have a go at playing Top Trumps with another Form using the cards we have made.

Kai Henry-Smith



Punctuation Ninja vs. The Bookworm

It was a dark and stormy night (well, that is how stories normally begin, isn't it?) in London and the British Library was closing. The staff were busy ushering late people out of the doorway and the security guards were donning their night vision goggles. The great Library was quiet, oh so quiet, the only sound being the footsteps of the guards and the slurping of the warm cocoa they were drinking. Oh, and the sound of something sinister slithering along the floor. None of the security guards heard a thing, saw a thing or even smelt a thing. Maybe, this was because they were dead. If the guards had been watching more closely before they had died, they would have noticed that there was unexplained slime on the floor. They may have also noticed the poisonous spikes that had been shed in their cocoa. The mysterious, sinister thing that had shed the spikes was slithering along the floor, up the section "A" bookshelf and into the first book, which was entitled "A or An? When to use them"...

Next morning was nice and sunny. The temperature was a good 25°C and London was as busy as ever. The curator of the British Library happily strolled to work in his office at the top of the magnificent building. He walked up to the grand doors of the Library and opened them. The first thing he noticed was the fact that all the guards were slumped against the pillars and their cocoa mugs were lying broken on the floor. He thought that he might call the police, but decided to call an ambulance, as nothing obvious had been stolen. After dialling 999, he went to section "B" and took out one of the books to check it was still safe. The punctuation was gone! He fainted.

"Mr Curator! Wake up, Mr Curator!" said a voice. The curator sat up. He saw his assistant, Lai Berry, in front of him. He was sitting on a chair in his office. For a second, he wondered if it had all been a bad dream and his precious books were safe. "Hey! What's the meaning of this?" yelled a man from behind the door. The curator walked to the door to find a red-faced man in a suit standing there. "I took out a book, and it had no punctuation in it! Not a single full stop!" he bellowed. "If you don't do something about it, I will sue you because I am a shouty businessman and that's what I do!" he added. The curator fainted again. One hour later, several paramedics were standing around him and downstairs, the police were searching the books. Only seconds after the curator recovered, a policeman rushed upstairs to tell him that almost all the punctuation was missing from his books. He was about to faint yet again, but suddenly, there was a "whoosh" behind his back. He turned around, but then there was another "whoosh" coming from where he had been facing. A final time he turned around, and there was a man standing there. He was not exactly the normal sort of a man who goes to the British Library to check out a book from its extensive collection. He dressed in a dark purple bandana, a dark purple belt and generally dark purple everything. All of these clothes were covered in full stops, exclamation marks, question marks and all sorts of punctuation. Then, he spoke. "I am the Punctuation Ninja. Silent as a full stop, surprising as an exclamation mark." At this point, he did a stylish-looking move for no reason in particular. "I was summoned to save the punctuation in your library and I will, by the Power of Punctuation!" he said to the curator.

"Err..." the curator, paramedics, shouty businessman, Lai Berry and policemen stuttered in unison. "Well, if you're looking for that punctuation thief, you should try the only book still in one piece, "Zebra Spotter's Guide"," said the policeman. Before he could say any more, the Punctuation Ninja was flicking through "Zebra Spotter's Guide". He turned to the last page and found a spiky, green stick. He wondered for a few seconds why a spiky green stick was stuck on the last page of a book, but then he saw that there was a full stop on the end of it. He looked closer and found that the stick was EATING the full stop! The stick began to grow, and grow, and grow, until it was the same size as him! Now, the Punctuation Ninjashed down the corridor, but an alarm went off. "Unauthorised personnel in the area! Activating defences," blared a speaker. Several spikes flew down the corridor. The Punctuation Ninja leaped over them. He carried on running down the corridor, until he came to a corner. As he turned the corner, he came into a long, wide corridor with spiked walls and a door at the end. The floor was built of grey stone. As he ran down the corridor, He had unknowingly trodden on a pressure plate. CRUNCH! The walls began to close in. The Punctuation Ninja zoomed down the corridor. He got to the end and went through the door. Through the door, there was a pillar with a small, spiky pebble. "This must be the Spiny Stone," thought the Punctuation Ninja. He took the stone and ran back out before any more traps could get him. Outside, the Bookworm was blocking up the door to the Cactus Vault. The Punctuation Ninja punched a hole through the door and threw the Spiny Stone into the beast's armoured belly. Cracks appeared in the plating. Spines shattered. CRACK! All of the Bookworm's "indestructible" spiky shell came off and it died instantly. It spat out all of the punctuation, which dropped to the floor at the Punctuation Ninja's feet. The curator came down from his office to congratulate the Punctuation Ninja, but he had already put the punctuation back into the books and was gone.

Joseph Britten

School play: 'The Odyssey'



"The Aftermath" - a personal viewpoint

The baby-boom post war overpopulation led to deprivation in less developed areas benefiting the wealthy. As the aftermath of the infamous U.S. economy and that of other Superpowers occurred it includes unfair distribution of wealth leading to many issues. All the potential we had seized from the boom has been wasted. Regardless of this we still continue to nourish and care for the less developed, creating a bubble of self satisfaction around us as we dwell on our "acts of justice" while we create weapons of mass destruction which aren't put to use, but are silent symbols of power deluding great empires into the thought of being eternal.

Creating wealth isn't the solution, it will simply be unevenly distributed and increase the discrepancy within social classes across the globe. Is the problem systemic?

Potential revolution may occur if the banking system internal to the dominating superpowers was exposed, as stated by Henry Ford. We are blinded by the "generosity" of most banks, which seem to offer us cheap credit and large loans when our assets boom in price. It is a scheme to produce wealth out of nothing. If one was to create or print money it would be considered 'counterfeiting', but if a private bank was to systematically generate wealth out of nothing it is perfectly acceptable, in fact it would be considered abnormal not to take advantage of the opportunity available.

The blame for this wealth generation is directed at the consumers who are told their wage claims are too large and that they are aspiring to own property that is completely out of their financial reach. The nature of auxiliary goods in our contemporary age is such that one is encouraged to strive to achieve status and recognition, causing us to disregard our actual current assets. The desire for auxiliary goods is easily manipulated by private banks and firms who give out loans to the hungry consumers.

The greater majority of the population consists of us, consumers, every day working men and women and students who are a specific generation of "brainwashed" scapegoats, cleaning up after our predecessors pollution of the financial system. We are taking on the responsibility of a previous generation as if it were of our own doing. Any individual who is seen to promote change on a national scale is ridiculed and portrayed as having the intention to exploit yet another area of our economy.

As wealth is created and injected into our economy it may lead to inflation or devaluation of our currency, workers with fixed incomes would face debt in an attempt to afford what they once were able to. Those with savings would be able to buy less, resulting in the population having to turn to loans. Where are these loans



to come from? From the same institutions that circulate money into the economy, the same institutions that single-handedly devalue our current income - the banks. In essence this cyclical regime simply makes it harder for one to climb the social ladder, creating two real extremes. A very good statistic that explains this exploitation is as follows: 97% of the money in the world today is in fact, debt.

From this we can understand how Communism and Marxism posed such a threat to the West. They were portrayed as a “disease” to the capitalist societies. Would we be under a form of ‘Soft Communism’ if it didn’t face decline and deterioration within the Soviet Union during the 1980s?

No system lasts forever, it’s truly inevitable, capitalism is currently facing troubles of its own, recessions are more common, controlling inflation and injections of cash into the economy that devalue our assets is a threat we come across more often than before. Resources are becoming more constrained and the stereotypical assumption that if you lack resources you can always just expand your capacity, employ more no longer holds true.

Are we to sit here and obey neoclassical values and norms, expecting the government to distribute solutions to all of our problems?

Contrasting with Henry Ford’s hypothesis of immediate revolution if banks were truly exposed, surely revolution would occur if we stopped funding these huge institutions that now, as a result of our “cooperation” are the foundation of our economy?

Are America and the U.K. realistically the true socialist capitals at heart? Surely Capitalism isn’t the government bailing out banks who are down in the gutter or themselves facing decline. How is it we can put a single institution’s aspirations before our own Nations? This suggests we are truly a corrupt democracy. In my eyes it’s the start of a plutocracy.

Armaan Hindocha



The National Cross-Country Championships

This year’s National Cross-Country Championships were held at Cofton Park, Birmingham. There were boys and girls’ races for age categories from under 13 to an Adult National Trial with top places qualifying to represent Great Britain in the International Cross-Country championships which will be held in China.

In the under 13 category over 300 boys took part from counties across the U.K. including teams across the country from Scotland, Wales, Yorkshire and Cornwall. I was proud to represent Hertfordshire for the first time having qualified third in the county trials in early January.

The course was very undulating and the start was treacherous as the 300 boys stampeded down the hill to the first corner with many falling. I survived the start only to be tripped from behind going up the first hill and then accidentally my hand was trodden on and spiked by another competitor. I lost my good position in the field, but got to my feet and continued.

True to its reputation: ‘Cofton quick sand’, the course was an excellent test of stamina and the winter rain made the course heavy. I managed to work my way back through some of the field but the competition was tough and I finished just after midfield.

I realized when I had finished, the extent of the spiking to my hand and had to then go to the first aid and recovery tent where my hand was cleaned up and my finger had to be glued and stitched by the medical team.

It was an amazing experience and I am proud to have run for my county. It was a day I will never forget; I am especially proud to have gained my first County Vest.

Now that the cross-country season has come to an end, I am concentrating on track running events with the St Albans Athletics Club.

Stefan Martin



