

St Mary's Newsletter

Summer 2016



The cover photos are taken from a selection of articles inside this newsletter

St Mary's Catholic School



As another school-year draws to an end, I am delighted to be able to introduce the Summer 2016 newsletter. Students from across all the year-groups have continued to throw themselves into the life of the school over the last term and they have made an outstanding contribution in so many different areas. I hope that you enjoy reading about some of their experiences and adventures.

As we go to press, a busy couple of weeks of end-of-year activities are coming to a close. We have had four excellent celebration events in school for our Year 7, 8, 9 and 10 students. It was a pleasure for me to present certificates to students for academic progress and attainment, as well as for their contributions to the sporting, musical, spiritual and wider life of the school. The celebration for Year 9 students took place in the evening, as it marked the end of a key stage for them, and it was absolutely wonderful to be joined by the students and their families and friends, as well as by many staff from our school. These events marked the culmination of the

students' achievements over the last academic year.

We had an excellent summer music concert with outstanding performances from singers and musicians, as well as from the school's choirs, orchestra and various bands. We have also enjoyed two fantastic Year 6 transition days – when we welcomed the new Year 7 students who will join St Mary's in September – and celebrated all the achievements of our Year 11 students at their truly memorable prom. Everyone is now looking forward to Sports Day, Activities Day, the Year 13 Prom, International Day and the end-of-year mass, which are all taking place during the last week of term.

Students have travelled far and wide this term, and have made very successful trips to Paris, Normandy and Taizé in France, enjoyed a cultural visit to Barcelona in Spain, and left for an expedition to the Philippines. There have also been visits closer to home, including trips to Holy Island, North Yorkshire, the Emmaus Youth Village in Consett, the Northumberland National Park,

Edinburgh, Oxford and Cambridge. I hope that you enjoy reading about all these exciting activities.

Finally, my immense thanks go to our incredible members of staff who provided our students with superb support over the course of the last term during the exam season. Our students worked very hard and deserve great success in the summer when results are published. Well done to every one of them for their efforts. Thanks also go to all parents, governors and friends of St Mary's for your continued support of the school. It is really appreciated.

I hope that everyone has a wonderful, peaceful and enjoyable summer break.

Emma Patterson
Deputy Headteacher
July 2016



A small number of this year's prize-winners with their awards

A-Level Drama Students Question Leading Actress

A-Level Drama students recently had the opportunity to take part in a question-and-answer session with professional actress Amanda Drew. The timing was brilliant as the students were preparing for their performance exam and the many tips that they received for learning lines, developing characters, and preventing or overcoming stage-fright were invaluable.

The students enjoyed the experience so much that they all bought tickets to see Amanda perform in *The Father* at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle the following evening. After the show, they were privileged to be invited backstage by Amanda who introduced them to Olivier Award-winning actor, Kenneth Cranham. As well as requesting autographs, the students also made the most of this opportunity to ask in-depth questions about the production.

Miss Stearman



Amanda Drew at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle with three of the students

A Year Spent Learning The Russian Language

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FORM



**GCSE and A-Level Russian students
ahead of seeing *Swan Lake***

It has been an exciting and busy year for the Russian students at St Mary's. Year 10 students started

Russian Language at a beginner's level in September and have all made fantastic progress. As well as focusing on the language, they have also incorporated as many cultural elements as possible. Three of the students wanted to share their experiences from the year.

Conrad Bell: "I would recommend taking Russian at GCSE because it is quite an unusual language which can set you apart from others. You also get the opportunity to learn about the amazing culture of Russia. For example, instead of a Pancake Day, they have a Pancake Week. My class also had the chance to go to the Theatre Royal to see *Swan Lake*

which was a great experience."

Rachael Young: "In May, our Russian class went to see a modernised version of Tchaikovsky's ballet *Swan Lake* at the Theatre Royal. It was a new experience for many of the students and it offered an excellent insight into both past and present Russian culture."

Robert Hill: "Earlier this year, we celebrated the Russian festival of Maslenitsa. This is the equivalent of Pancake Day, but it lasts a week. During the lesson, we learnt the vocabulary for ordering pancakes and tried lots of different toppings on our blini."

Miss Lamb

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SIXTH
FORM

Drama Club Success

The Drama Club has been a major success in the Performing Arts Department this year. Each week, fifty enthusiastic and very talented students from Years 7 and 8 have attended sessions which have given them the opportunity to work towards acting – often for the first time – in front of a live audience. Lauren Hastie, Katie Middleton and Ellie Brown of Year 13 assumed directorial responsibilities and did a fantastic job in helping the younger students to prepare and perform a series of plays during May. These productions were well-attended and showcased the amazing talent that we have at St Mary's.

In addition to their own performances, members of the Drama Club enjoyed a visit to the Theatre Royal in Newcastle to see a production of *Goodnight Mister Tom*. The Year 7 students already study Michelle Magorian's novel



Members of the Drama Club enjoy a break from rehearsals

during Drama lessons and therefore really appreciated seeing the story brought to life on the stage. As always, our students represented St Mary's

very well and they all agreed that the trip to the theatre was excellent and memorable.

Miss Stearman

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Young Scientists Lead The Way

A team of enthusiastic Year 9 scientists has been working on an exciting project with the help of Dr Jankowski since January. The Leading Edge project encourages young people with an interest in science to develop their skills and talents in the subject. This involves working in close collaboration with leading local academics in some cutting-edge scientific research.

The six students – Rory Bell, Matthew Brown, Anna Gallagher, Sam Jankowski, Tim Jones and Emilia Keavney – have been working with Professor Fiona Oakley and Dr Lee Borthwick from the Fibrosis Research Department of Newcastle University's Medical School. The students have researched the viability of a new and exciting model for drug-testing to be used in the treatment of liver and lung diseases. During their work in the research



In the laboratory with Rory, Emilia, Matthew, Anna, Sam and Tim

laboratory, the students handled a lot of up-to-date equipment with confidence and skill.

The students were also recently rewarded with a day-trip to London

to visit the Science and Natural History Museums and the prestigious Royal Society. This was the culmination of several months of scientific research.

Dr Jankowski

RE Visit To Holy Island

SIXTH
FORM

At the end of June, Year 12 students studying Philosophy and Ethics and the NOCN vocational course enjoyed a day on Holy Island. They visited Lindisfarne Priory, the central seat of religious power in the North of England over a millennium ago, and gained a sense of why St Cuthbert found this to be such a sacred place where anyone could undertake deep spiritual reflection. The students then went on a walk around Lindisfarne Castle, a much later addition to the island and a key fortification for the Tudors.

The Year 12s really enjoyed having the space for some contemplation and the time to consider where they are heading in the future. Maxwell Mak summed up the experience very well when he said that “Holy Island is a beautiful and tranquil place.” However, everyone agreed that a main highlight of the day was the football match during which Mrs



Mrs Conway and the Year 12 students on Holy Island

Conway scored a hat-trick to seal the fate of Mr Donnelly’s team.

Mrs Conway, Mr Donnelly and Mr O’Connell

YEAR
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Graphic Products Trip To Northumbria

Earlier this term, seventeen Year 10 Graphic Products students visited Northumbria University to see the ‘Reveal’ graduate show. This event showcased examples of final-year degree work and covered all the design disciplines that are taught by the university. The Year 10 students

were able to develop their awareness of what it takes to complete a high-quality degree in a design discipline. They also left with a wealth of inspiration and ideas to help them as they begin to cover the design elements of their GCSE coursework.

Mrs Clark-Hall



Year 10 Graphic Products students at Northumbria University

Young Writers On Retreat

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Three A-Level English Language students – Sophie Beadling, Alberto Castillo and Lakha Singh – recently stayed at a pirate-themed youth hostel at Boggle Hole, near Whitby, to take part in a literary retreat. The Year 12s explored the art of storytelling through a range of workshops that covered such things as characterisation and narrative-structure.

By the end of their stay, Sophie, Alberto and Lakha were suitably inspired by the landscape of the North Yorkshire coast and had each written a short story to submit as coursework.

Mrs Clough

A Musical Year At St Mary's

The end of the academic year gives us the opportunity to look back at the many music-related events that our students have taken part in since last September. It has been a very busy, but very rewarding time.

In October, a choir of sixty students performed at the launch of the John Paul II Award at St Mary's Cathedral in Newcastle. Led by Mr Richardson on piano, and accompanied by students on African Djembe drums, the singers gave a stirring rendition of the 'African Alleluia'. Presiding over the event were the Papal Nuncio, His Most Reverend Excellency Antonio Mennini, and Bishop Seamus Cunningham. This event ended with a reception at the Old Assembly Rooms where those students who had either performed or were working towards the award were warmly congratulated by both His Excellency and Bishop Seamus.

In November, the school marked Remembrance Day by holding a whole-school gathering in the Atrium. During the service, the chamber choir beautifully and movingly sang

John Rutter's 'The Lord Bless You and Keep You'. As has become tradition, 'The Last Post' was played at the end of a period of silence. The trumpet-player was Euan Restall of Year 12.

The autumn term ended with the annual Christmas concert and carol services. The concert was a real musical success, providing the opportunity for the school's ensembles, groups and selected soloists to perform a range of festive favourites in front of a sell-out – and very appreciative – audience.

At the start of the year, the Music Department contributed to a poignant event that was held on Holocaust Memorial Day when the chamber choir sang 'Bridge Over Troubled Water'. It also played an active role in the school's production of *The Lion King* with an in-house band of students and staff providing live, high-quality music during all the performances.

Moving on towards Easter, the choir was kept very busy through its

involvement in the school's Maundy Thursday reflections and in the Good Shepherd Mass at St Mary's Cathedral.

Even now, at the end of the year, our work is not done. The annual *Summer Showcase of Talent* and end-of-year mass are on the horizon and will provide further opportunities for our talented ensembles and soloists to perform a wide variety of music. Slots in the programme for the concert are becoming highly sought-after as we see more of our students developing their God-given talents. It is wonderful to see so many of our students engaging in music-making of all kinds and we continue to develop our programme of extra-curricular activities to support them.

Finally, a huge thank you goes out to everyone – students and staff – who have contributed to this year's programme of events. Congratulations to you all on your wonderful achievements and excellent music-making.

Mr Richardson



Mr Richardson and the choir at St Mary's Cathedral last October

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Spelling Bee Competition

At the beginning of July, Mehek Hathiramani and Aleksandar Vuletic – both of Year 7 – competed in the final of the Spanish Spelling Bee Competition. Organised by Routes Into Languages, this event was held in Cambridge at Anglia Ruskin University. Four other Year 7 students – Helen Biwer, Daniel Hall, Lauren Herbert and Bobby Ramsey – also attended the competition to support Mehek and Aleks.

The party of six students and two staff left Newcastle by train early in the



At Christ's College, Cambridge

morning of the day of the event and reached Cambridge with time to spare for a quick tour of the city. There was even time before lunch for a walk around the stunning grounds of Christ's College which was founded in 1505 by Lady Margaret Beaufort, the mother of Henry VII.

Over 75,000 students from across the country competed in the regional heats of the Spelling Bee and we were extremely proud that Mehek and Aleks were among only one hundred youngsters to qualify for the finals. In the competition itself, Mehek and Aleks each had one minute to pronounce and spell as many Spanish words as possible. They also had to do this standing in front of two judges and hundreds of spectators. Mehek and Aleks did extremely well and, not unnerved by the occasion, both spoke with accuracy and confidence and were fantastic representatives of St Mary's.



At Anglia Ruskin University

Everyone on the trip agreed that they had had an exciting and fun-filled day. The work now begins on preparing students for the Translation Bee Competition that will be held next year.

Miss Largue



YEAR
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Think Physics

Since January, a thirty-strong group of Year 10 students has been involved in a series of physics-related workshops. James Brown, of the Think Physics team at Northumbria University, has been visiting St Mary's and organising themed activities for the students. These sessions have covered a range of subjects: the scale of the Solar System and the maths involved in measuring distances across space; the composition of stars; the International Space Station and the British astronaut Tim Peake's experiences; and



careers in STEM. The students will also soon spend an afternoon at Northumbria University with James and the Think Physics team to learn how to apply a programming-language called Arduino in a real-life situation.

Mr Elliott

Languages Club

Languages Club has had another very successful term. Students have continued to meet on Thursday lunchtimes to broaden their knowledge of different cultures and the world around them. The two most popular topics this term have been Ramadan and the Cannes Film Festival.

Many students have also valued being given the chance to learn sign language thanks to our visiting expert Mrs Bell. This has been a really enjoyable experience and has given the students an insight into the importance of different forms of communication.

Miss Mullan

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Big Bang Fair Success

Seven Year 10 girls – Anni Glen-Findlay, Polina Kirkevich, Eleanor Mundy, Rose Nicholson, Erin Pennock, Christianne Salvatierra and Rachael Young – have competed this term with forty other schools in this year's Big Bang Fair at Northumbria University.

Under the supervision of Mr Elliott and Mr Turnbull, the students constructed a working-model of a hydroelectric power plant. They

took this to the event at the end of June and explained their project to other students, industrialists, visitors and members of the judging-panel.

After a long day of talking, demonstrating and explaining, the girls were rewarded with the 'People's Award'. After spending many weeks researching, testing and building their project, this was a highly deserved achievement.

Mr Elliott and Mr Turnbull



The winning team with Mr Elliott and Mr Turnbull

YEAR
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Mother Tongue, Other Tongue...

Earlier this year, a group of Year 9 students visited Newcastle University to attend Routes Into Languages' Mother Tongue, Other Tongue event. The day itself formed part of the launch of a national multi-lingual poetry competition. This was created by Routes Into Languages to celebrate cultural diversity and the many languages that are currently spoken in secondary schools.

During the day, our talented linguists took part in a series of language-learning workshops which included an introduction to Lithuanian. As well as learning new languages from native speakers, the Year 9s also had an opportunity to be creative and write some poetry of their own in French or in Spanish. They were then given the chance to enter their pieces into the national Mother Tongue, Other Tongue competition.

All in all, everyone enjoyed an exciting, jam-packed day of cultural and linguistic activities.

Miss Oliver

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Chemistry Outreach Day

The current Year 12 Chemistry students recently spent a full day at Newcastle University's Chemistry Outreach laboratory where they all successfully prepared and purified a sample of 3-nitromethyl benzoate. In fact, all the students achieved a purity in excess of 99% which is remarkable.

The skills that the students acquired during this session will be invaluable during their preparations for next summer's exams. They will also be able to include the results in their practical endorsement which is awarded alongside the new A-Level specification.

Dr Jankowski





Mary's Mercy

Welcome

We would like to wish you a very warm welcome to the second instalment of 'Mary's Mercy'. This section of the newsletter shares with you the details of a variety of events – all of which support the Catholic life of the school – in which our students have participated.

This term has been very busy with organising the Good Shepherd Mass, finalising a trip to Taizé, and completing the John Paul II Award. The enthusiasm of our students, and their willingness to be involved and to make a difference to others, is fantastic to see. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of them for their commitment in this area of school-life.

We do hope that you enjoy reading 'Mary's Mercy' and finding out more of what has been happening at St Mary's. We also wish you all a lovely summer holiday and look forward to welcoming you back in the new academic year.

Mrs Blackburn and Mrs Race

John Paul II Award Update

Saint John Paul II famously said to the young people of the world, "Do not be afraid." Throughout this academic year, fourteen of our Year 12 students have set aside their own fears and have taken part in the new John Paul II Award that is offered by the diocese. Many of the students have been busy in their parishes selecting music for services, designing new websites,

A Prayer For The Summer

Creator of all, thank you for the summer.
Thank you for the warmth of the sun and the increased daylight.
Thank you for the beauty I see all around me and for the opportunity to be outside and enjoy Your creation.
Thank you for the increased time I have to be with my friends and family, and for the more casual pace of the summer season.

Draw me closer to You this summer.
Teach me how I can pray no matter where I am or what I am doing.
Warm my soul with the awareness of Your presence, and light my path with Your Word and Counsel.
As I enjoy Your creation, create in me a pure heart and a hunger and a thirst for You.

helping with liturgies, and even doing some cleaning. They have also spent time each week volunteering in local charity-shops, helping at the nearby food-bank and, in the case of one student, working for the local Daft As A Brush organisation.

The students have worked tremendously hard and are close to

Plans For End-Of-Year Mass

As we go to print, preparations are underway for the annual end-of-year mass. The theme this year is 'Rest In God's Mercy'. This invites us to think about not only how we rest, but also how we find time and space to listen to and to reflect on the presence of God in our lives and the world. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity for everyone in school to open themselves up to the mercy and love of God.

During the final week of term, students will be invited to take part in three different workshops to prepare them for the mass. They will also have the opportunity to help create a 'sofa of rest' and to make some rosary beads that will be given out as gifts. The beads will help our community to pray for and to spread God's mercy in the world.

The mass is always a fantastic celebration of the successes of the year and this one will be no exception. We wish all those involved in the preparations much success and we pray that all our members of staff and students earn some well-earned rest over the summer.

completing the scheme. Over the summer, they will all be working on their reflective presentations and will soon share their experiences with the next intake of Year 12s. We are incredibly proud of the work and the time that they have given to the John Paul II Award. We look forward to them formally receiving their certificates and medals next March.

A Pilgrimage To Taizé In France

Early in July, Mrs Race and four students from Years 11 and 12 – together with a group from Our Lady and St Bede's school in Stockton – joined the community of Taizé in France for a week of prayer and reflection. On arrival, everyone was greeted very warmly by Brother Paolo, the monk who is in charge of welcoming English schools. Breakfast was taken and then it was time to celebrate mass with over two thousand other young people who had travelled from all over the world.

Every day that followed had an identical rhythm. Morning prayers took place before breakfast and then small groups met to discuss pieces of scripture. Midday prayers were followed by lunch and the afternoons were spent attending a range of workshops. Evening meal-times gave way to

end-of-day prayers and then many people headed to Oyak, the community's bar and social area.

The prayer-sessions at Taizé were very different to anything that the group had experienced before. They began with simple chants and, after one of the monks had read a piece of scripture, there was an extended period of silent reflection. The sessions ended with the brothers leading prayers for the world before the whole assembly sang more chants.

Throughout the week, the students grew in confidence and quickly made firm friends with people from many other countries. Overall, the pilgrimage was a huge success and everyone who took part returned to St Mary's feeling renewed and refreshed.



Brother Paolo with Mrs Race and the students from St Mary's

CAFOD Young Leadership Programme

A new and exciting initiative has been offered to current Year 9 students. From September, St Mary's will take part in the diocesan-wide Young Leadership Programme that is run by CAFOD's national youth team. It is open to all students regardless of their religious background. The aim is to equip young people with skills in leadership, to open their eyes politically, to help them understand the causes of poverty and social injustice, and to encourage them to play an active role in various initiatives in school. Through the programme, they will also become volunteers for CAFOD.

The students will need to be committed to the programme for a full year and to attend several training-days. These will introduce the Year 9s to the work of CAFOD, give them the chance to develop and discuss leadership skills, and explore possible resources to use in assemblies and fundraising campaigns. Each training-day will have its own specific focus and the students will also be given the chance to meet together to discuss what they would like to do.

This is a fantastic opportunity for selected students to take the lead in issues that they are passionate about. It will give them a platform to develop a variety of skills whilst enabling them to speak openly to their peers about some major issues. We hope that many of our students will take an active interest in this programme and we wish them a successful and inspiring year.

Sixth Form Festival – Hope Unseen

At the end of June, twenty Year 12 students joined over two hundred other sixth-formers from around the diocese at the Emmaus Youth Village in Consett for the annual Diocesan Sixth Form Festival. This one-day event formed part of the diocesan festival fortnight and was hosted by the Youth Ministry Team for the purpose of providing support for people on their journey of faith. The specific theme for this year's get-together was 'Hope Unseen'.

The day began with some team-building exercises and even some 'prayerobics'. The students were



then led in a time of praise and worship before Father Eamonn

Mulcahy gave a very insightful talk on the need in our world for both hope and mercy. He also shared his wealth of experience working as a missionary in Africa. Afterwards, in what was a highlight of the day, the students were invited to discuss what they had heard and to share their ideas about the concepts of mercy and hope.

The day was both insightful and thought-provoking for all our students. They thoroughly enjoyed the event and are grateful to the YMT and the Diocesan Education Department for organising it.

'God Camp'

In June, sixteen Year 10 students braved the cold, the wind and the mud to camp for two nights at the annual 'God Camp' which was held at the Youth Village in Consett. Along with hundreds of students from other secondary schools, they explored the theme of 'Love Undeserved' and were inspired by two guest-speakers who explained how their lives have been changed through God's mercy.

The stay also included plenty of opportunities for the students to demonstrate their dance, music and performance skills. They entered wholeheartedly into every activity and took away a great deal from every experience. As always, the Youth Ministry Team ensured that the students enjoyed a fun and lively festival whilst encouraging them to find their own way to speak to God.



Some of the Year 10s at 'God Camp'

Miss Plass

The Good Shepherd Mass Held

In April, the Good Shepherd Mass took place at St Mary's Cathedral in Newcastle. This was a great celebration of the fundraising that had taken place for St Cuthbert's Care in the local primary and secondary schools this year. The mass – which took as its main



St Mary's chamber choir at the Good Shepherd Mass in Newcastle

message the need to reflect on and respond to God's call – also commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of the charity.

St Mary's chamber choir provided the music and led the congregation in singing. This added greatly to what is always an uplifting service that provides an excellent opportunity for the Catholic community to celebrate as one. We very much look forward to next year's Good Shepherd Mass.

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A Rugby Day In Manchester

In June, twenty-five rugby-players from Years 8 and 9 took part in the RFU's 'Day of Rugby' in Manchester. The Year 8 team had a brilliant day, winning four and drawing one of five matches. These results were achieved through some excellent rucking and tackling

combined with terrific ball-carrying and support-play.

The Year 9s came up against some very tough opposition but rose to the challenge and lost only one of their three matches. As usual, the Kain brothers were excellent with Brandon Wilson, Josh Scott and Matthew

Brown also showing their terrific individual abilities.

After finishing the fixtures, everyone travelled to the AJ Bell Stadium, the home of Sale Sharks, to watch an under-20 World Cup fixture between New Zealand and Wales. For many of the students, this was their first experience of live international-standard rugby. The game was a thriller with New Zealand coming out on top 20–19 thanks to a last-minute penalty by All Black inside-centre Jordie Barrett.

The boys were fantastic throughout the day and represented the school brilliantly. Both sides have impressed in all festivals this year and we look forward to seeing them continue to develop next year.

Miss Gleadow and Mr Hook



What's Happened In The Library?

The Library has continued to grow this year with the addition of hundreds of new books and has – as always – proved itself to be a popular and busy place. Since September, the facility has attracted over 45,000 individual visitors and, once again, has processed the loan of more than 5,000 books. These are very impressive figures which testify not only to the Library's popularity with students but also to the strong reading culture that is an important part of the school.

Plans are already in place for the arrival of the new intake of students in September and arrangements have been made for some exciting events. At the top of the list is a visit to St Mary's by best-selling children's author, Dan Smith. The Library is also working closely with the English Department to organise a book fair before Christmas.

On the chess-scene, this has been

another exciting and competitive year with the Library once again offering students the chance to take part in the Delancey UK Schools Chess Challenge. The first, school-based stage of the competition attracted over forty competitors – all of them very keen to grab a share of the £20,000 prize fund – and ran from January to March.

After seven rounds of matches, a total of seventeen students – led for the second year in a row by Mark Broughton (Year 10) – qualified for the regional finals in May. By all accounts, those students who were able to compete at the RGS were exceptional, and Mark and two other students, Edmond Kelly (Year 7) and Mrugaya Mulay (Year 9), scored enough points to make it to the Northern Gigafinal. This was held in Manchester in mid-July and all three students

performed admirably. One particular cause for celebration is that Mark ended the contest as the top under-15 player from this region and progresses to the Gigafinal in August.

Dr Richardson



Mrugaya Mulay with the trophy that she won in May at the regional finals

YEAR 11

The Physics Challenge

A group of Year 11 students recently took part in the

Physics Challenge, a competition that is run by the University of Oxford. It involves sitting a formal examination that tests students' knowledge and understanding of scientific concepts whilst encouraging the study of physics in particular.

This year, St Mary's attained two gold awards through the efforts of Owen Bell and Shafiat Dewan. Owen achieved a result that placed him in the top ten students of the entire competition and earned him the honour of a visit to Oxford to collect his award in person. The school also collected thirteen silver and thirteen



Shafiat Dewan, Mr Turnbull and Owen Bell

bronze certificates, a tally that placed St Mary's well above the national average.

Mr Turnbull

SIXTH FORM

Geographers Tour National Park

Year 12 Geography students enjoyed two days of fieldwork earlier this year when they visited the Northumberland National Park before heading up to Edinburgh. The trip to Scotland allowed the group to investigate the impact of volcanic activity on the landscape of the British Isles. Geologist Angus Miller guided the students around the world-famous Arthur's Seat, a volcanic batholith that is found right in the heart of one of Europe's greatest cities.

The students were also able to investigate the local geology and to see, in Holyrood Park, Hutton's Section. This feature was named after the eighteenth-century geologist James Hutton after he used it to prove his theories about how and when this planet was created. Finally, the students visited the attraction Dynamic Earth which allowed them to take a trip through geological time.

Mr Gamesby

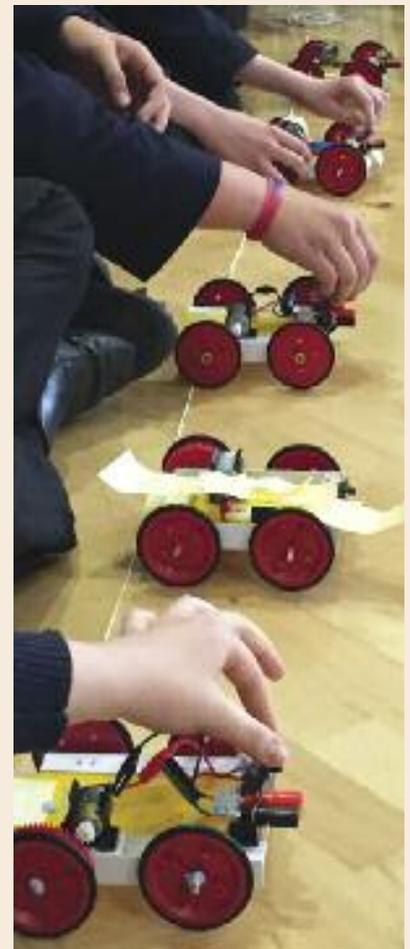


The geographers photographed in front of Hutton's Section

Energiser STEM Event

At the end of June, sixty Year 9 students were given the opportunity to take part in an engineering event called Energiser. This was run by a charity called the Smallpiece Trust which promotes careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The challenge for the students was to build a small solar-powered vehicle that could travel over a certain distance in a straight line. Thankfully, all the students were able to accomplish these things. They also used the event to discover more about related careers and the pathways to these that can be taken.

Mr Elliott



Cars lined-up at the start of a race

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Boys Rugby Competition News

Earlier this term, the Year 7 and Year 8 boys rugby teams took part in the Emerging Schools Festival at Wallsend RFC.

The Year 7s played Churchill in a 60-minute fifteen-a-side fixture. This was easily the longest and most significant match that many of the students had ever played. However, the team

make good ground, he darted down the wing, beat several players with his fantastic turn of pace, narrowly outran the defence, and scored a sensational solo try in the corner. St Mary's then defended well and deservedly won the contest 5-2.

The Year 8s played three fixtures against Kenton, St Cuthbert's and Churchill. They started with a good victory against a strong Kenton side.

tackle. Alex also managed to score two fine tries to help St Mary's complete the win.

St Mary's performed brilliantly again in the next game against St Cuthbert's and quickly opened up a lead thanks again to Alex and Ben. Some excellent organisation in defence nullified the St Cuthbert's attack. Luke Devlin was particularly outstanding and disrupted the opposition at each breakdown. Thanks to a try from Kevin Palliser-Bosomworth, St Mary's recorded a fine 3-0 victory.

In the final match of the tournament, St Mary's played Churchill in a winner-takes-all contest. Still tired from their previous game, the Year 8s started slowly and Churchill quickly earned a well-deserved try. However, the more experienced players organised and rallied their team-mates very effectively, and – thanks to Alex Warton – St Mary's went level with only three minutes to go. Barely a minute later, Ben Jubb ensured that St Mary's were the overall winners of the festival after he scored a match-winning try in the corner.

Mr Hook



quickly adjusted to the greater space and extra players to play some very good attacking rugby.

Sam McDonald was responsible for the try of the match when he stole a loose ball at the halfway line. Quickly seeing that he had the chance to

Ben Jubb scored a fine individual effort from the first kick of the game after bursting through the defensive line. Admittedly, St Mary's did then struggle against some big and powerful players until Kevin Palliser-Bosomworth and Alex Warton took responsibility for making the first

Table-Topping Tennis Triumph

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This is the first year that St Mary's has entered an under-13 girls tennis team into a league competition, but that did not prevent five Year 7 and 8 students – Ria Caven, Thea Cowie, Amy Henderson, Jade Hogarth and Grace Taylor – from topping the table. The girls played superbly well in their singles and doubles matches, and won all their contests against Kings Priory, Dame Allan's, Churchill and Westfield to take the title. The matches were played on a range of surfaces and the girls came up against some difficult opposition. However, their determination to win and their skilful play proved too much for the experienced competition.

Miss Hillon



Year 12s Plan For Success

Following an intensive exam period, students in Year 12 spent the final weeks of this term focusing their minds on planning for the future. This process began with a UCAS Launch Day in June when students were guided through the online Universities and Colleges Admissions System. This is such an exciting time of year for students in my year-group as they begin their university journeys.

Early in the new academic year, there will be a UCAS information evening for parents. This will ensure that students are provided with effective and consistent support throughout the entire application process.

Mrs McEwan

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Students Spot The Next Design Trends

At the end of June, twenty-five Year 10 Textiles and Graphic Products students attended a fascinating talk by trend-analyst, Hannah Matthews. Hannah explained her educational background and discussed the path that had led her to a career with the forecasting company, Trend Bible. Trend Bible is a consultancy firm for huge national and international companies, advising them on the direction that they should take when it comes to fashion, homewares, gifts and children's merchandise. The talk was very informative and gave the students an invaluable insight into one of the numerous careers that students can aspire to in the design industry.

The students also took part in a group-based workshop activity during which they had to produce tactile

mood-boards that were based on those trend-drivers that Trend Bible had forecast as being the 'next big thing'. All the groups produced excellent boards and will be able to use this experience to develop innovative and unique designs for GCSE coursework.

Mrs Clark-Hall



A mood-board created to represent the 'Celebration' trend-driver

Athletics Club News

St Mary's has had an extremely successful athletics season this year. The Athletics Club has been very popular and many students have shown a keen desire to represent the school in a range of competitions. It is worth noting that many long-standing school records have been broken both during PE lessons and in external meetings. Among those individuals who have recorded notable results this year, the following deserve a special mention: Kristan Beech (triple jump), Joy EYZE (100 and 200 metres), Exodus Guangul (hurdles) and Archie McConnell (800 metres) of Year 7, and Mia Collins (high jump), Josh Collinson (800 metres) and Phinehas Zozo (high jump) of Year 8.

Miss Hillon



Josh Collinson leads the way in a race at Gateshead Stadium

YEAR
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Students Try To Crack Turing Code

In April, six Year 9 students travelled to Manchester University to take part in the Alan Turing Cryptography Competition. The students – Lucy Hobbs, Anna Hodgson, Ellen O'Brien, Hannah Pountney, Rebecca Scott and Martha Wylie – spent an afternoon trying to solve three very tough codes in a contest with other schools. The students also attended a lecture titled 'No, The Aliens Are Not Trying To Kill Us' which offered a fascinating insight into how modern-day technologies work.

Although the team did not win the code-breaking competition, it was a pleasure to see them apply their mathematical skills to real-life situations while working brilliantly as a team.

Miss Greenwood

University Open Day Experience

As part of our work in encouraging Year 12 students to begin planning for their futures, they were allowed to attend open days that were held early in July at Newcastle University and Northumbria University. These events presented an excellent opportunity for students to gather information regarding various degree and foundation courses, as well as to get a flavour of life as an undergraduate.

The Year 12s were able to tour the two campuses to see for themselves the facilities and accommodation that each university has to offer. They were also able to talk to admissions tutors about individual courses, as well as get some advice about the whole process of applying for a place.

We do hope that the students found the day useful in helping them to make an informed decision as to whether or not they want to apply to Newcastle, Northumbria or, indeed, any other university.

Mrs McEwan

Under-15 Girls Cricket Tournament

In June, the under-15 girls team attended the Northumberland Schools Cricket Tournament. The girls played six fixtures and did amazingly well. The effort shown by the students was outstanding and, despite not qualifying for the final, they all thoroughly enjoyed the day. All the girls deserved to be congratulated for their excellent and determined performances.

Miss Gleadow

YEAR
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Junior Detectives Solve The Case



A Year 9 student helps the young sleuths search for crucial clues

Who needs CSI or NCIS when Year 4 students are assigned to the task of identifying the killer of the Head of Science, Mr Ben Flower? The cerebral young super-sleuths from our feeder

primary schools courageously accepted their mission and, under the expert guidance of more than fifty Year 9 volunteers, carried out a range of scientific experiments. These included the analysis of various fibres, fingerprints, footprints and types of hand-writing.

The different teams' commitment and cooperation – combined with generous helpings of dark humour – were commendable and enabled the junior detectives to crack the case.

So, who killed Mr Flower? Now, that would be telling!

Miss Rees

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YEAR
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Under-13 Girls Rugby News



The under-13 girls team – Mariyah Ahmed, Thea Cowie, Hannah Crowdy, Helen Dooner, Jasmine Ghajar, Kate Lievesley, Megan Lucas, Chloe Mason, Ellen Parker, Grace Taylor, Paris Warden and Lily Young – recently competed in the RFU's rugby festival at Kingston Park. The girls played seven matches against teams from other

local schools, winning four and drawing two. Considering the relative inexperience of the team, this set of results represented a superb achievement. It reflected the excellent attitude shown by the girls throughout the day and their willingness both to tackle hard and to be involved with the ball.

Mr Hook

Raising Aspirations

YEAR
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SIXTH
FORM

After all the exams had been completed, a group of Year 11 and Year 12 students set out for Oxford to experience what life at one of the world's leading universities is like. This trip is an annual event and forms one part of a comprehensive support package within St Mary's for students who aspire to study at Oxford or Cambridge.

The students were lucky enough to stay at Magdalen College and St

Anne's College. Given the highly competitive nature of the Oxbridge admissions process, the students were encouraged to find out more about life at an ancient university by visiting as many other colleges and academic departments as possible. They were all extremely positive about their time in Oxford, and we do hope that the trip has helped them to form their future plans.

Mrs McEwan



Bonjour La France – Ici St Mary's!

Earlier this term, a Year 9 French class enjoyed a Skype call with students at our partner school, St Laurent, which is located close to Paris in Lagny-sur-Marne. This was a very exciting experience for both schools and gave all the students who were involved an important and fun opportunity to develop their respective language skills. Both groups asked and answered questions about their likes and dislikes, their hobbies and their experiences at school. Our students said afterwards that this was a great opportunity for them to use their French in a real-life situation and they felt great that the students at St Laurent had understood them.

Mrs Connolly



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Paris Sports Tour

Forty-three students from the Year 8 and Year 9 football and netball teams represented St Mary's in Paris in May. On the first full day of a four-day visit, and after seeing some of the city's most famous sites, all the

On the next day, the whole group attended a football training-session that was delivered by members of Paris Saint-Germain's coaching staff. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed this experience and took away many tips to help them that evening against two



students headed over to the British School of Paris for the first fixtures.

The Year 8 netball team, captained by Grace Taylor, had a very successful afternoon and won two out of three oppositions. This set of results was equalled by the Year 9 netballers who, under the leadership of Lucy Hobbs, only lost to a very experienced team. In the football competition, the Year 8 boys, who were captained by John Carr, won their fixture 5-3 and the Year 9s, led by Aidan Williams, won their match 7-0. All the students – netballers and footballers – played tremendously well and proudly represented the school.

very strong local teams. Nevertheless, despite applying some new tactics and playing very well in their respective matches, both the girls and the boys were narrowly beaten.

The final day of the tour was spent at Roland-Garros, the home of the French Open. Here, the students saw some world-class tennis stars like Jamie Murray, Heather Watson, Aljaz Bedene and Feliciano Lopez in action. This tremendous experience brought this successful first sports tour to a fitting end.

Miss Knott

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YEAR
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Un Long Voyage Formidable

At the end of June, fifty intrepid students from Years 7 and 8 – all accompanied by Mr Boyle, Mr McGee, Miss Mullan, Mrs Nelson and Miss Oliver – set off for Normandy. The excitement was palpable and, despite the prospect of having to endure a long journey, spirits were high as everyone looked forward to four action-packed days in Northern France.

After many hours on the coach and a rocky ferry-crossing, which helped to prepare the group for the rollercoasters at Eurodisney, we finally arrived at our destination and were greeted by our enthusiastic guide, Hannah. We instantly made ourselves at home in an idyllic château by ordering dinner and taking part in a treasure-hunt.

The next morning, after a few pains au chocolat and croissants for breakfast, the students were ready to go to Laval Market and impress the locals with their French. They took great delight in chatting with a local bee-keeper about his honey, ordering crêpes and macarons, and picking up new vocabulary from the fruit and veg stalls. When it was time to go, it was clear from all the purchases that had been made that the students' confidence in speaking French had grown massively.



Three of the party enjoy themselves at Eurodisney



At the Roland Réauté chocolate factory

After a short journey by bus and a quick picnic, we next found ourselves at Refuge de l'Arche, a sanctuary for injured animals. This provided us with a rare opportunity to see some wild animals up close and to feed them their mid-afternoon snacks. Who knew that monkeys were so fond of popcorn? Our final pit-stop for the day was the Roland Réauté chocolate factory where we learnt the tricks of the trade and sampled the many tasty delights that were on offer in the gift-shop.

Back at the château for the evening, and after a meal that included snails and frogs' legs, everyone donned stripes and berets for a French-themed quiz and fashion show. A lot of thought had been put into the costumes and the students could definitely teach the French a thing or two about being *à la mode*.

The next day was filled with a variety of outdoor activities that included swimming and archery. A visit to Le Mont Saint Michel was also arranged and the sun shone on us as we walked through winding streets and made a very peaceful visit to the abbey. This was the perfect way to

relax before preparing for our final hectic day in France which, for obvious reasons, was renamed Disney Day.

Preparations for the visit to Eurodisney began on the bus with screenings of *Toy Story* and *Ratatouille*. As we approached the gates to the theme-park, there was definitely some magic in the air. Everyone was keen to explore the place and to ride on the Space Mountain attraction as many times as possible. For many, Eurodisney was the highlight of the trip and it provided a fitting end to our stay in France.

The students were left with some amazing memories from their four days abroad. As one of them commented, "This was an amazing experience that I will never forget." Another student also remarked on how everyone had discovered so much about the French language and culture in such a short space of time.

The members of staff who were on the trip would all like to thank the students for their wonderful attitude and positive enthusiasm. They made it a truly memorable experience.

Miss Mullan

University Maths Challenge



Professor Henderson presents Matthew with his certificate

Over the February half-term, students in Years 7 to 10 were given the task of completing Newcastle University's Junior Maths

Challenge. This entailed a series of difficult mathematical problems which tested students' numeracy skills and – at least in my case – patience. On returning to school, the completed work was submitted and everyone waited a few weeks while the answers were checked.

As one of the students at St Mary's who achieved the best marks, I was invited to attend a ceremony at the university early in May. The evening began with an entertaining lecture on higher and lower spatial dimensions by Dr Martina Balagovic. Immediately after this talk, all the competition-winners were presented with certificates and other prizes by Professor Robin Henderson, the Head of the School of Mathematics and Statistics.

I felt very proud of my achievement especially as I was the only prize-winner from Year 7. The other top students from St Mary's were George Atkinson and Daniel Young (Year 8), Lucy Hobbs (Year 9), and Patrick Caragay, Robert Hill and Rachael Young (Year 10).

Matthew Hill (Year 7)

Farewell To Year 11

Many of our students will be looking forward to the long summer break but, for Year 11s, the next few weeks represent an agonisingly long wait for GCSE results to be issued. Although we say a final farewell to a small number of students who are continuing their education at college or who are joining the world of work, we are delighted that the overwhelming majority of Year 11s will be returning to St Mary's as sixth-formers in September.

Whatever the next step may be, we are proud of the whole year-group and, as Head of Year 11, it has been a particular privilege for me to work with these students. Since joining St Mary's nearly five years ago, they have developed into hard-working, passionate and confident young adults who have achieved many great things and have contributed greatly to the life of the school.

As is the tradition, all the Year 11s attended two significant and important events that were held on one Friday early in July. In the morning, the leavers mass proved to be a very emotional experience as the students reflected on their time at St Mary's and members of staff congratulated them for everything that they had accomplished. Then, in the evening, the prom gave everyone the opportunity to celebrate in style. It was especially pleasing to see so many parents sharing this event with us at the start of the night.

I am sure that the students will continue to be excellent role-models and, for the many who will be returning to St Mary's in September, I know that they will continue to make a valuable and varied contribution to all aspects of school-life.

Mr Henson

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On The CREST Of A Silver Wave

Congratulations to Year 11 students, Owen Bell and Matthew Nicholson, for achieving their Silver CREST Awards in Science. This scheme, which is organised by the British Science Foundation, recognises successes and enables students to develop skills in project-based scientific work. Owen and Matthew worked extremely hard on a project to design a probe to explore Mercury and even received positive feedback from the managing director of a firm that designs satellites.

Dr Wood



Owen Bell collects an award for science



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