

# St Mary's Newsletter

## Spring Term 2021-22





# Oxford University Trip

In March, thirty Year 12 students visited Trinity College, Oxford. After a long bus journey, the students arrived eager to learn about applying to the top universities in the country. They learnt about Oxford's application process and gained lots of tips for applying to competitive courses. The group then braved the rain to explore the city, visiting the Bodleian Library and many of the colleges.

The next day, the group made the most of some glorious weather to enjoy a visit to St Anne's College where they toured the libraries, common room, sun terrace and dining hall before taking part in a question and answer session with some current undergraduates. The two-day trip ended in the History of Science Museum where, among other fascinating items, the students looked at a blackboard containing lecture notes by Albert Einstein.

All the group enjoyed the visit, gained some useful ideas to prepare for their university applications, and were a credit to St Mary's.

**Miss Lamb**





# Mock Trials Success

A talented team of Year 12 students competed in this year's Bar Mock Trials Competition, which was organised by Young Citizens.

The budding barristers were tasked with preparing both the prosecution and defence cases for two criminal trials. The cases, both devised especially for the competition, were written to challenge the students in various aspects of the law and legal procedure. The first case involved a charge of witness intimidation and the second was a trial centred round an allegation of actual bodily harm.

St Mary's prosecution and defence teams performed brilliantly across both cases. They took on a number of roles, including that of barrister, court clerk and usher, and delivered a range of extremely well-prepared opening speeches and showed quick-witted thinking when cross-examining witnesses.

The students' ability to adapt their lines of reasoning was commended by the real-life judges, one of whom commented that the standard of argument and performance was at the level of an undergraduate. The judges also singled out St Mary's witnesses for being well-briefed and remaining very calm under questioning.

The competition gave the students a fascinating insight into the workings of a criminal court. All the team did superbly well in both their preparations and performances during a gruelling day. The sophistication of the team's arguments and the confidence with which they were delivered were a real strength and led the students to win two of their three trials.

A very well done to all the members of the team: Mert Alacam, Mason Bird, Maryelen Drossou-Smirnis, Jasmine Fenwick, Shariq Hadeed, Eleanor Kingham, Callum Liu, Kalay Mayan and Hollie Robson.

## Mr Anderson







## Art Department Update

Earlier this term, some students from Years 10 and 12 took part in virtual talks and workshops hosted by the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art. The event offered advice and information on the broad range of careers that are available in the creative industries. Our students attended talks from Atomhawk, Sail Creative, rapper Kay Greyson, Izzy Finch of The NewBridge Project, and the Baltic's curatorial staff.

In a separate initiative, Year 13 Fine Art and Photography students made a research trip to the Baltic where they enjoyed getting back into galleries to find inspiration from exhibited works. Ad Miniliti's bold and vibrant first solo show was a firm favourite. The students also made excellent use of the Baltic's fantastic library to find materials for their personal investigation projects.

The department has started a new Art Club for Year 8 boys. The students have decided what they want to create and have so far experimented with printmaking, stencilling, spray painting and digital art. They are looking forward to making some larger works to display around school.

Our Sixth Form mentors continue to impress with their maturity and creativity when supporting Year 11 artists. Since last autumn, the mentors and their mentees have met weekly to discuss coursework projects and to develop ideas and collaborative pieces of art.

**Mrs Tait**





## Chess Team Through To Two Finals

St Mary's has enjoyed amazing success in chess this term in two national competitions. In the regional final of the prestigious Under-19 National Schools Chess Championships, which was held late in March, the school's 'A' team beat the Royal Grammar School 4–2 in a nail-biting match. RGS has been the local dominant force in chess for decades and so this victory for St Mary's can, without any exaggeration, be defined as historic.

Daniel Francis, St Mary's Board 4, opened the score with a convincing win after claiming a rook. For a few minutes St Mary's threatened to go 2–0 up when Feitong Wu on Board 3 went ahead by a knight, but his opponent played an astounding sacrifice to win by checkmate. Equally thrilling was Hyunwoo Lee's amazing fightback on Board 6 when, looking down and out, he somehow conjured an attack that gave St Mary's a 2–1 edge.

On Board 5, Jonathan Jativa-Calle placed St Mary's firmly in the driving seat with a comfortable win. This meant that, with two games remaining, a single draw would suffice to end RGS's involvement in this year's tournament. However, St Mary's top player, Ciaran Macdonald, succumbed to a sustained assault and so everything rested on the outcome of the Board 2 encounter.

In a tense match, Alexander Johnston went into his endgame two pawns up but had to sacrifice his remaining rook to prevent his opponent from promoting a passed pawn. This created an unusual battle between a king and four connected kingside pawns against a king and rook. Thankfully, the marching pawns proved too strong and so, with seconds remaining on both clocks, the RGS player graciously resigned. With this win, St Mary's secured its place as one of only twenty schools – among them Eton, Winchester, Westminster and St Paul's – that will compete across two days this summer in the national final.

Less than a week after claiming this famous victory, and showing that success breeds success, Ciaran, Alexander, Feitong and Daniel won the regional heat of the National Schools Team Chess Challenge. This was held at St Mary's and involved sixteen teams, each containing four players, from nine schools who had travelled to Longbenton from as far away as Berwick and Hexham.

Going into the last of four rapidplay rounds, St Mary's 'A' – with a score of 11/12 – were in second place to RGS 'A'. However, St Mary's beat their nearest rivals by 3.5–0.5 to win the competition outright with a score of 14.5/16. The school's 'B' team – Hyunwoo Lee, Harry Keller, Alistair Craggs and Jan Siemens – also did well to finish in equal-fifth place on 11.5 points. The 'A' team will now compete in the national final of the Team Chess Challenge at Imperial College London in September.

**Dr Richardson**





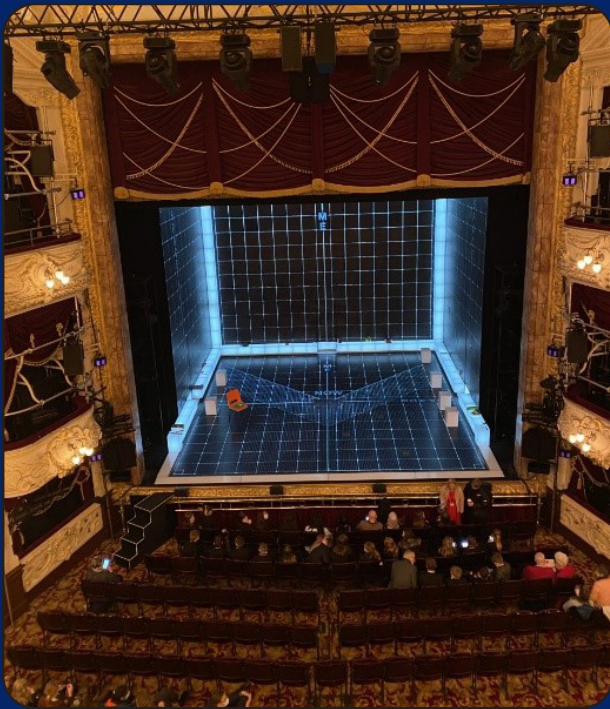
## Theatre Trip

Thirty-five Year 11 students visited the Theatre Royal in March to see a thrilling performance of *A Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* by Simon Stephens. This modern play explores the world of Christopher, a young man who sees the world differently to others, as he investigates the murder of a dog. The students are studying the text as part of their GCSE English Literature course.

From start to finish, with its incredible audio-visual effects and some very loud music, the play had the students on the edges of their seats. The actors used physical theatre to show us Christopher's inner world and this produced some spectacular moments, for example when he appeared to walk on the walls.

It was a real joy to see some live theatre for the first time in two years and this production had everyone smiling and talking. Seeing the play has really helped to bring to life the heart-warming story of Christopher on his journey of self-discovery. All the students have continued discussions in the classroom with their teachers as they analyse the text for their GCSE course.

**Mrs Nelson**



## Dance Club

Dance Club continues to be a vibrant and creative offering from the Drama Department. Every Tuesday lunchtime, the dance studio is filled with a positive and energetic atmosphere as the club's members choreograph and learn new dance pieces. Georgia Simpson and Holly Robson of Year 12 have led this extra-curricular activity with absolute dedication and have impressed staff with their leadership skills. They are warm and kind to all the younger students and come to each session fully prepared with new material to teach. Thank you girls and keep up the excellent work.



**Miss Plass**



# Design and Technology Textiles Club

Students in Years 8 and 9 have used a variety of techniques this term to develop ideas for their tote bags. They have explored using fabric paint, tie dye, sublimation print, CAD/CAM, hand embroidery, batik and appliqué to achieve some great effects. All the bags are unique designs and have been created with the support of Sixth Form students.

**Mrs Douglass**





## Debate Club

The History Department's Debate Club has continued to be a huge success. Its members have enthusiastically engaged with a range of different topics on, among other things, the length of the working week and the ethics of keeping zoos.

Some new activities have recently been introduced including 'Snowball Debates' in which students write topics on slips of paper. These 'snowballs' are given to other members of the group who write arguments that either support or counter each statement. The cycle continues as each 'snowball' is passed round the group. The students have also taken part in their own elections, forming their own political parties and presenting carefully considered manifestos.

A huge thank you is owed to Jack Johnson (Year 10) for helping to run Debate Club. He has been a huge support and has shown excellent leadership qualities.

### Miss Durham



## Horrible Histories Club

We have continued to enjoy the fantastic (and sometimes gruesome) facts that *Horrible Histories* present every Monday lunchtime. Disappointed you can't join us? Well, here are some facts to educate and entertain.

- Romans gargled human urine as a form of mouthwash.
- When King Henry VIII grew old, he became paranoid that people were plotting to kill him and so had the door to his bedroom bricked up at night for protection.
- Due to the build-up of gastric gases, William the Conqueror exploded at his funeral and covered the monks of Caen Abbey with his innards.
- Maria, the Georgian Countess of Coventry, loved lead-based make-up. Inevitably, this toxic metal made her skin fall off. She was so horrified, that she used even more make-up to hide the scars and eventually died at the age of 27.
- The Viking, Earl Sigurd the Mighty, cut off an enemy's head and hung it as a trophy from his horse's saddle. Unfortunately, while out riding, he grazed his leg on the severed head's teeth and died from the resulting infection.
- The stylish Incas used to make jewellery out of llama toenail clippings.

### Miss Germany



## Mandarin Class

A group of Year 12 students has continued to attend weekly Mandarin lessons with Sheng, their teacher from Newcastle University. This class is run by the university in partnership with the Confucius Institute. The students' Mandarin skills are improving and they are gaining confidence in understanding written and spoken Mandarin as they prepare for their HSK 1 assessment. This is a recognised qualification that could lead to a paid scholarship to study in China. As well as learning the language, students have also enjoyed investigating Chinese culture. They have learnt about festivals, created painted fans and made traditional decorations.

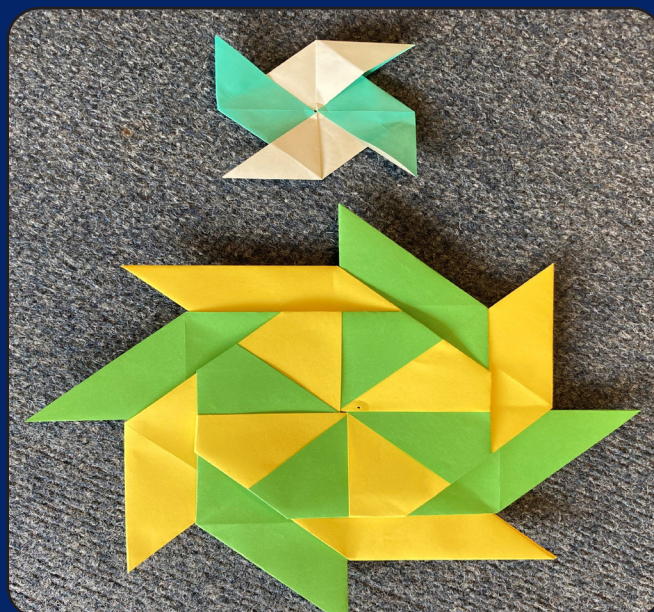
**Ms Mullan**



## Origami Club

The members of the school's Origami Club have made great progress since the start of the year. Among the creations have been a small spinner using one origami square and, recently made by Rayhan Siddique of Year 8, a modular eight-pointed ninja star that changes from a star to a ring and back again. It would be lovely to see a few more students in F12 every Week B Thursday lunchtime to make more folded creations.

**Mrs Howarth**





# The Sound of Music

When this year's school musical was announced, following a forced break of more than a year, staff and students reacted with great excitement. *The Sound of Music* is unashamedly sentimental, joyful and familiar. We were keen for our students to experience the very special pleasure of rehearsing and performing such a famous show, and we wanted our audiences to sit back, relax and be reminded of all the wonderful characters and songs that it contains.

It was particularly exciting to cast the von Trapp children and to give younger students the opportunity to play principal roles. The way in which the whole cast became like a family, supporting each other on many levels, was inspirational. We were amazed at how mature and talented the cast were, and we want to thank every student for their dedication and professionalism.

The school came alive during the week of the show and all the students performed at the highest level every night. The day after the final performance, the cast and crew enjoyed a 'wrap party' to mark their incredible efforts in what had been a very successful production.

## Miss Plass and Miss Stearman





## Intermediate Maths Challenge

The Maths Department is very proud of the students in Years 9 and 10 who took part in the Intermediate Maths Challenge, an event that was organised by the UK Maths Trust. The top 50% of all students who take the challenge receive Bronze, Silver and Gold certificates. This year, our 'Best in School Award' went to Year 9 student Alex Rudzenis. He also achieved an outstanding Gold certificate to add to the forty-five Bronze and fourteen Silver certificates that the group won. Well done to them all.

Mrs Howarth



## Maths Fest

In February, Year 12 mathematicians took part in Maths Fest, an all-day virtual event that was held for Sixth Form students to celebrate the subject. A number of renowned speakers spoke on a range of exciting mathematical topics and the students were inspired by what they heard.

Miss Marshall

## Year 10 Maths Feast

In March, eight Year 10 students from St Mary's – Ben Arend-Trujillo, Alan Biju, Rosalind Howell, Charlotte Johnson, Will Lievesley, Patrick McDonald and Joshua Sorensen – competed in the Advanced Mathematics Support Programme Maths Feast. They worked brilliantly in their two teams, using their mathematical, communication and teamwork skills to solve some extremely challenging problems. A total of seventeen teams took part in the competition and St Mary's did very well to finish in fifth and seventh places.

Miss Marshall



# Just.Is

The Just.Is group, made up of students from Years 7 to 12, has met this term every Thursday lunchtime to discuss the upcoming annual conference for local Year 5 pupils. After some serious debates, during which a range of topics including LGBTQ+, disability rights, climate change and racism were considered, a collective decision was made that the event – which will be called *My Mind and Me* – will focus on mental health. This is a major issue about which all the members of Just.Is are passionate. The theme will also be based on space and the universe in line with a brilliant idea from two Year 10 students, Ashley Antony and Emily Jackson.

In the lead up to the conference, the members of Just.Is have already planned their presentations and workshops, and have been assigned roles. The students are all very excited to welcome primary school pupils to St Mary's.

**Natalia Rozsavolgyi**



## Year 9 Netball

As we approach the end of the netball season, it is great to report that every member of the Year 9 team has consistently shown tremendous effort, commitment and a determination to succeed. The girls have attended training every week to improve their skill levels and they have developed a strong team spirit. They recently competed in the under-14 city championship tournament and displayed fantastic sportsmanship in all their games. Well done and we look forward to the start of the new season in September.

**Miss Gleadow**



## Year 7 Netball

We are coming to the end of the netball season in the Newcastle City League. The girls have all attended training sessions regularly to improve their knowledge and skills in the sport, and this dedication has been reflected in their match play. They have played a number of competitive matches and deserve to be congratulated for the fantastic sportsmanship and effort that they have consistently shown.

**Mrs Cormack**



## Year 10 Netball

This has been another outstanding year for the Year 10 netball team. Throughout the season, the girls have demonstrated talent and flair in their game play and have strengthened their ability to work successfully as a group. They have impressed not only with their collective determination to win, but also with their fantastic sportsmanship and dedication. Well done and we look forward to seeing more progress next year.

**Miss Gleadow**

## Year 8 Netball

Huge congratulations go to all the members of the Year 8 netball team for an outstanding season. The girls have shown how talented they are in league matches and the Newcastle City Tournament. Their determination and commitment to the team is a credit to the school and everyone is looking forward to next season.

**Mrs Cormack**



## Equality Group

Three Year 12 students, Celine, Filipa and Molly, have continued to lead a very successful Equality Group this year. The group meets every Monday lunchtime and over thirty students attend each week. The sessions are varied and the students engage in many different activities.

In a recent meeting, the members learnt about the history of the LGBTQ+ flag and the many variations that have been produced. They then discussed the different versions and their personal favourites. Some preferred the traditional Rainbow Pride design, which was created in 1978, whereas others preferred the Progress Pride flag from 2018. Having learnt about the history of the flags, each student then produced their own design to symbolise their identity, values and beliefs.

**Miss Lamb**



## Mindfulness/Craft Group

In the Mindfulness/Craft Group, we gather together to relax and reflect on things happening around us. We use these times to build and strengthen relationships as well as to create some level of self-awareness. We play a range of games and complete craft activities. Every activity is designed to improve our physical and mental health. The games also bring out our competitive natures and the joy that comes from taking part, and sometimes winning, is immense. We provide opportunities for everyone to tune out any distractions from the day and focus on the positives. We hope that, as we grow and spend time together, we will be able to become more aware of our thoughts and feelings, and thereby manage them instead of allowing them to overwhelm us. We look forward to welcoming more students as the year progresses.

**Mrs Ifeajuna**



## City Cup Trophy Win

A stunning 5–0 win against Benfield last term secured the City Cup Trophy for our Year 10 girls football team. This is an incredible achievement for the students who have represented the school this season with great positivity and professionalism. We are very proud of them.

**Mr Thompson**



## City Cup Final Success

The Year 11 boys football team enjoyed success against St Cuthbert's in the final of the City Cup at Newcastle Blue Star. St Mary's won 3–1 with two goals from Thomas Boothroyd and the third from Enock Lakpe Gogoua. All the boys showed an outstanding attitude throughout the match to end the season on a high note.

**Mr Thompson**





# English Schools National Swimming Championships

Erin Jones and Matthew Scott, both of Year 8, performed brilliantly in the English Schools National Swimming Championships. This event was held in Coventry in March and the two students helped the North East of England team win the overall competition. Matthew finished first in the 200 metre and 400 metre individual medleys, and third in the relay; Erin was second in the 100 metre breaststroke and 200 metre individual medley, fourth in the 200 metre breaststroke, and first in the relay. Congratulations to them both for their excellent results.

**Miss Gleadow**



# TICE Fashion Project

Design and Technology students in Years 9 and 10 pupils have recently worked for ten weeks on This Is Creative Enterprise fashion projects in partnership with the Royal Grammar School. Some opted for the challenge as part of their Duke of Edinburgh skills element; others just wanted to know more about design.

The students were given a number of options for their projects and chose the following: 'Muses and Movements', 'Retold Vintage', 'Romeo and Juliet', 'Go Back and Step Ahead' and 'Fable'. All the design briefs were described in detail and related to different aspects of the fashion industry.

Before starting their projects, the students attended a workshop at the RGS to learn about the industry. They were also given information on the key skills – including sketching and modelling, branding and presenting ideas – that are needed to succeed in fashion.

The students were guided through online presentations by people working in the industry and by academics. They even managed to visit the University of Northumbria's School of Fashion to work directly with the mentors and to attend sessions on, for example, fashion illustration, journalism, copywriting and photographic styling.

**Mrs Douglass**

