



ST ALBANS SCHOOL

HIGHLIGHTS

CCF TRIBUTE FROM RETURNING OA

Former CCF Under Officer, former Hertfordshire Lord Lieutenant's Cadet, but now Major Adam Shindler OA, was the Inspecting Officer at the CCF's 114th Annual General Inspection.

Returning to the School fifteen years since his last AGI, Major Shindler was eager to review the parade and wide range of activities organised for the day.



In the years since his History degree at Cambridge, he has been working in military intelligence, serving several tours in Afghanistan. Having been promoted to Major in 2015, he is now a policy advisor to the Assistant Chief of the General Staff based in London.

With such a wealth of experience, he was in a strong position to judge the quality of drill on the parade ground and the enterprise of cadets in each of the carousel of activities, ranging from command tasks, through shooting, to code-breaking. He was deeply impressed by everything he saw, appreciating the way in which the senior cadets organised and led the activities and the encouragement and leadership they are given by Major Everitt, RSM Wilson and the CCF staff.

He was proud to return and see the CCF in action again. Speaking to the cadets at the end of the day, he praised the integrity, courage and commitment demonstrated by everyone involved. Again this year, the cadets included a contingent from our CCF partner school, Marlborough Science Academy.

'I have been impressed throughout the day by the integrity, courage and commitment shown by all cadets.'

Major Adam Shindler



Braving Welsh Weather

Rain, mist and high winds were a feature of Duke of Edinburgh trips at the beginning of the Easter break. In the Brecon Beacons, fifty students preparing for their Silver Award managed to remain cheerful while enduring some appalling weather conditions. It was a similar story for over thirty Gold Award students in northern Wales, as they tackled the hills of Snowdonia in driving rain, poor visibility and wind which at times made even standing a challenge. Having experienced such conditions in training, both sets of pupils will be hoping for more favourable conditions when they undertake their assessed expeditions later in the year.

A further group of both Gold and Silver students were also in the Brecon Beacons at the end of the Easter holiday and enjoyed much better weather, being able to enjoy the vistas of the south Wales national park.

Cadets on Target

The Emsall Trophy, which is the Hertfordshire Schools' shooting prize, has remained in St Albans' hands after the seventh victory in succession. There is talent in depth in the School, allowing the entry of six teams into the competition, while the quality of personnel suggested that any one of three of these teams was in with a chance of taking the trophy. On the day it was the B team of Piers Dorward, Will McKay, Josh Oliver and Lucas Spencer who were successful, beating their rivals in the A team by one point. Special mention must go to Matt Crossley and Piers Dorward, who both shot a perfect 100.

FIRST FORM PERSPECTIVE



Taha and Tom are relishing the opportunities available in the historic School

Tom Lancaster and Taha El-hamri are two First Formers with just over two terms under their belts after arriving, Tom from an independent school, Taha from a state maintained primary school. They had slightly different expectations of St Albans before they arrived. 'I thought it would be more focused on learning in the classroom, with less sport, but in fact it's much

more balanced,' says Taha. Tom's priorities were different: 'I expected most people to be taller than me – and they were!'

Getting Used to Things

It took the boys a little time to get used to things when they arrived. 'I kept getting lost, trying to find all the classrooms,' says Tom, while Taha adds 'It seemed very big and took a couple of weeks to get used to everything.'

New Subjects

New subjects have proved exciting, both boys being enthusiastic about Latin in particular. Taha says, 'It's great getting to learn about the Romans,' while Tom adds some telling detail. 'Some Roman soldiers came into School,' he says, 'and told us all about the army, the sewers and how they cleaned themselves with olive oil and scrapers.'

They have also enjoyed the challenges of German, though Tom says, 'It's not as hard as it first seems, as there are some similarities to English which makes it easier to learn.'

Drama a Favourite

Drama is clearly the favourite subject for both boys. Tom loves acting and

They are both grasping lots of the opportunities the School offers, with Taha representing the School in both rugby and hockey – he loves the playing fields at Woollams. Tom is a musician, playing French horn in the Wind Band and Concert Band. 'It's great when we play interesting pieces,' he says, 'like playing the *Dr Who* theme in the Spring Concert.'

Memories

Tom and Taha are agreed on their best memory so far. They both went on the Christmas markets trip to Cologne and relished the experience. 'That was great!' they confirm. Trying out their German while shopping in the attractive markets with their friends was a thrill. They are looking forward to their Pen Arthur trip at the end of the First Form and are picking up on rumours. 'Apparently we are dropped off at a place called the Circle and have to walk miles,' says Taha.

The Future

Further into their future, they are looking forward to going into town at lunchtime when they are Fifth Formers and are anticipating taking part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. 'You go exploring,' said Tom, while Taha adds, 'and you also work with the community.'

Advice

And their advice to a boy considering entering the First Form? 'We're really glad we came,' they say. 'It's not at all scary; the teachers are really helpful and friendly,' Taha says. Tom adds, 'There are lots of interesting things to learn and you are surrounded by historical buildings.'



Tom enjoys playing with the Concert Band in the Spring Concert





MUSICIANS EXPLORE DIFFERENT RHYTHMS

The musicians of the School enjoyed many opportunities to demonstrate their skills and entertain audiences over the Spring Term. Events included entries into the St Albans Young Musicians competition, where the Chamber Choir jointly topped the Vocal category with their performance of 'The Dying Soldier', while Thomas Hillman won the Secondary Piano section and was runner-up in the Strings. There was also a wide range of highly skilled performances at the Senior Scholars Concert, where the most unusual piece was the ironically titled 'Fnugg' (meaning 'delicate snowflake') by Øystein Baadsvik, with Zoe Horne's virtuoso display including singing and beat boxing into her tuba.

The Joint Schools' Concert brings together students, teachers, parents and friends of St Albans School and St Albans High School for Girls, the

two communities combining their musical talents in large scale works for orchestra and choir. This year the concert in St Albans Abbey featured Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem*, which was given a powerful performance by the two hundred members of the Joint School's Chorus and Orchestra under the baton of Mr Mick Stout. From the beautiful recurrent melodies of the woodwind and strings, the depth of the bass pedals on the organ to the stunning climax of the final blessing in the seventh movement, the ensemble created a balanced, dynamic tone while remaining sensitive to the composer's score. Thomas Hillman made his debut as leader of the orchestra, while Tom Dilley supplied the ground-shaking bass notes from the organ. Jeramiah Joshua Wallace, after only two lessons, made a very successful debut on timpani, showing that such

Zoe Horne demonstrated impressive versatility on the tuba

an evening gives opportunities for new skills as well as providing a stage for the celebration of musical achievement in the two schools.

The Jazz Evening is always a hot ticket in the Spring Term. From the twenty-strong Jazz Band, through smaller groups of instrumentalists and vocalists to solo piano, the evening's entertainment provided a wide range of student talent before the professionals took over in the second half, in the shape of the Bill Readdy Trio. A key feature of the professionals' set was their generosity in giving opportunities for students to play with them – Jeramiah Joshua Wallace taking over the drum kit with gentle brushes to accompany James Lear singing 'Misty', Gus Laws-Mather singing 'Georgia on My Mind' and Isabella Sibtain giving a soulful, swinging rendition of 'Summertime' on the sax.

DRAMATIC CHALLENGES



A Level Drama students have a reputation for producing raw, challenging work and this year's examination shows demonstrated that the tradition continues. The Lower Sixth AS group chose an extract from Shelagh Stephenson's compelling play *Five Kinds of Silence*, which explores the tensions in a family, uncovering a history of abuse. Basing their performance style on Steven Berkoff, the group shared the roles fluidly. All performers had a chance to explore the psychopathic control of the family patriarch and all too were able to show cowering vulnerability, explaining why this family was driven to murder. Staged in a strict square, which emphasised the imprisonment of the family as well as police cells where the daughters were questioned, the students choreographed a fluid, compelling piece of theatre.

The Upper Sixth A2 group performed the devised piece which was the culmination of their practical studies. Their stimulus was a picture of Tracy Emin's notorious artwork 'My Bed' and the bed was centre stage, playing a crucial role in an exploration of lovers, brothers, friends, betrayal, abuse and mental health. A crisply scripted play, it overturned its romantic opening to reveal a much darker undertow to the relationship between two young lovers, and mined the way that abuse can be hidden and endured. The abuser's mental decline brought the group together again, but the play offered no resolution, avoiding easy clichés of a happy ending in a mature, thought-provoking production.

Working with Words

Different events at opposite ends of the School promoted literature, both spoken and written. First Formers spent a day in the company of poets and storytellers, challenged to play and experiment with language by John Mole, Dai George and Fred Sedgwick. In John Mole's session, the boys added to a communal story, sentence by sentence, each contributor uncertain about where the narrative would go. Dai George encouraged the students to evoke a sense of particular place and create 'Childhood Tracks' by exploring sensory memory. In Fred Sedgwick's

group, the pupils altered perceptions by describing a famous person as an animal or a plant, pushing their power of description.

Sixth Formers met to celebrate the musicality of poetry and to hear the finalists in the national Poetry by Heart competition. Mr Pat Taylor spoke to the audience about his own experiences of reading and writing poetry, recalling his days as a schoolboy where he was first encouraged in the craft of writing. The five finalists had the challenge of reciting a Shakespeare sonnet

and a twentieth century poem. Each delivered the complexities of Shakespeare's form and language in a way which showed their understanding and sensitivity, and chose a wide variety of more modern poetry. In a close contest, the panel of judges, led by poet John Mole, selected William Drake as the School's winner, for his performances of Shakespeare's 116th sonnet and Patrick Kavanagh's poem 'Epic.' The evening ended with a talk and reading by John Mole, giving students insight through an informal 'story and two poems', as he put it.



John Mole reads from his work

Strides in Girls' Sport

Lower Sixth Former Rebecca Parlour had a taste of international sporting action over the Easter break, selected for the Wales U19 lacrosse team. In a closely fought home internationals competition, Rebecca's Welsh team lost to England 24-9, though the scoreline was not a reflection on how well the Welsh girls played. Against Scotland, they fared better, scoring 25 to the Scots' 4. 'It was a fantastic experience,' says Rebecca, 'even though I suffered slight concussion, falling after a push. An experience like this competition really gives you the motivation to keep on working hard.' Head of Lacrosse Miss Vicky Sandell was delighted with her pupil's progress. 'It's an outstanding achievement, one to be incredibly proud of,' she said.



Rebecca Parlour, international lacrosse player

Girls' football, though in its infancy at the School, has also received a boost, with training sessions led by coaches from the Arsenal Ladies Team as part of the FA's Premier League Women and Girls' Programme. Our girls receive coaching every Wednesday and have two fixtures to play before the exam season.

The girls enjoying a football session with Arsenal Ladies



Furley Plays for Scotland



Fifth Former Cameron Furley was selected as part of the 50-strong U16 rugby squad for a training camp and 6 day festival of rugby in Wales. He was a key contributor in a match against Wales, which Scotland won 47-5, with seven tries scored by the Scots. The aim was to develop individual and team performance, with players assessed not only at the festival but at the preceding training camps. The opportunity was a great experience for Cameron, developing his rugby skills on the international stage.