

the Abingdonian

january 1998

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The Abingdonian
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My thanks to all those pupils and colleagues who contributed to this issue of *The Abingdonian*. Far too much material arrived to be included in this issue, which has as it is overflowed its intended bounds.

The pupils who helped with this issue, to a greater or lesser extent and in different ways, were:

W.L. Bowden, M.R. Brown, C. Dugan, N. Gray, A.K. Hulse, S. Karim, R.D.S. King, B.L. Longworth, J.P.W. Lucas, E.G. Macdonald, A.J. Morris, N.R. Warmingham and J. Zwart.
SH (editor)

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House reports

Mearns'

by RSKM

A survey of the termly report cards shows that much good work has been done since the beginning of September against a background of good humour and purposefulness. The tone for much of this has been set by Peter Given, who as House Captain has been establishing a trend with the help of his team.

Paul Batchelor did much to arrange practices for the inter-House singing competition. He managed to get a number of back-up instrumental sessions in with David Gee on the piano and Matthew Legg on the guitar. Matthew was his usual irrepressible self as he tried to tame his guitar for the benefit of the singers and on a number of occasions was able to provide a satisfactory support to the House choice, *I Got Rhythm*. Thanks to the sterling support of Mr. Elliott (much valued) the piece was performed with more character and resolution than usual. With just a little more zip and collective enthusiasm there is little doubt that we could sweep the boards: perhaps next year.

The part song, on the other hand, went even better. The acknowledged talent of a number of the members of the House in all three years was not allowed to go to waste and their rendering of the pop-

ular Sixties tune, *Yesterday*, was decisive in the competition. Matthew Hawksworth, Mark Iles, Stephen Atkinson, Paul Gardner, Nicholas Fuggle, Edmund Finnis and Roderick Morris were ably led to victory by Thomas Herford. Well done one and all.

A further notable distinction was Paul Batchelor playing hooker for the First XV towards the end of the season; a rare distinction, and a tribute to his skill and commitment. Paul's example has been seen to good effect in the lead he has given a number of Third Years who are playing at present with considerable style and gusto: Jacob Rowe, Simon Osborne-King, Richard Meunier and George Stratton.

The new régime of orders has, on the whole, been well observed and the benefit has been readily observable in a better standard of care and maintenance in the House. The pool table has been recovered and refurbished with £138 of House funds. We were intrigued to see how our exchange guests from Grenoble showed themselves to be adept in exploiting this resource.

In brief, it has been an active and creative term of some achievement and we look forward, much encouraged, to the challenges of the coming year.

Fishpool's

by J Persaud

This term has been a particularly busy one for the members of Fishpool's. It saw the arrival of the new Third Year, appointment of new House Stewards, and the election of L. Whibley as House Captain, with A. Apps and S. Nickson as his deputies.

This has also been a successful term for the sportsmen of the House. Fishpool's is not often associated with sporting achievement, but this did not stop us from having many members of the A teams, as well as a large representation in the B and C teams. Particular congratulations go to L. Whibley and P. Garrick, captains of the Senior Colts and Junior A teams respectively. We also congratulate S. Balch, N. Hambridge,

L. Hughes, M. Beckett, J. Farrands, W. Gervers, R. Kershaw, A. White, T. Kingham and R. Balch, who have all played for an A team.

Music has also played a major part in House activity. At Half Term we entered the House Singing. Our Swahili work song may not have won, but practising and performing were enjoyed by everyone.

Finally, there have been many informal activities taking place. For example, many of the Fifth Year have been playing basketball frequently, and many members of the House have been involved in skateboarding.

We look forward to an equally varied and busy time next term.

Crescent

by R Franklin

This is the least favourite term; it is long, and for new boys it is all new. But for all that this has been a very successful and happy term in Crescent. We were delighted to win the House Singing Competition with an excellent performance of *Brown Eyed Girl*. Phil Makings, Alex Pike and Alistair Heather danced away, really bringing the performance alive. Congratulations must go to the whole House for a really spirited song, but particularly to Oliver Smith and Howard Watkinson for painfully taking us through rehearsals without a teacher. The judge commented that we all seemed to be enjoying it, and for once the judge was, I think, right.

Academically, there have been ISCO tests for the Fifth Years and Oxbridge interviews for the Upper Sixth. This year six of us are involved in these, which is a great achievement for the House. Oxbridge applicants are Fred Dutton (History & Ancient History), Phil Makings (Philosophy and Theology), Oliver Smith (Theology), Roger Franklin (Biochemistry), Shahid Karim (Medicine), and John Church (Chemistry).

The seniors in the House have been very involved in the running of the School this term. Five of the Upper Sixth are School Prefects, myself and Phil Makings being appointed at the beginning of this term. Oliver Smith and I also organized the Politics

Dinner, which was a great success.

In Glyndwr there has been a lot of activity as the maintenance staff refurbish our rooms. The results are excellent, though that is of course not to say that the other rooms are not delightful in their own way... Nick Kennedy gave our new room a particularly special initiation on his eighteenth birthday, but I do not think that an explanation is suitable here. It is hoped that soon all of Glyndwr will be refurbished following a meeting of the Governors in the House.

This term we say good-bye to Hugh Laurie and welcome the newly-transformed Dr. Sharp. Hugh has been an ever present force in pubs around Abingdon, also of course discharging all his duties. Congratulations also to Mr. Sharp on his obtaining a PhD. We also welcome Dr. Gunn as the first Lower Sixth tutor for all of Crescent; he seems to have fitted well into the House.

At the end of the term we congratulated John Church and Fred Dutton on being appointed House Prefects. I am sure that they will enjoy the privilege. Finally, thanks to Matron and Tristan Evans for organizing the House trip to Laser Quest, which was great. If I remember rightly, James Hayden was the top scorer; in fact all the lower years did well, making the Sixth Form look pretty awful.

School House

by FCB

We started the new academic year by welcoming eight new members of the Third Form, four new boys to the Fourth Form and Messrs. Jeremy Taylor, Ben Figgis and John Beasley to the tutoring team. Mr. Beasley has responsibility for our Lower Sixth form in anticipation of the newly-organized tutor system, which will separate the boarders and day boys. Francis Malone-Lee is Head of House and Alvin Donald the Deputy. The House is over-full with fifty-six boys, and we have had to convert the television room into a bed-sit, but we hope that this situation will not continue for too long.

At the start of term we were given a full report by Andrew Stewart and Mr. Slatford on the very successful joint Abingdon School and St. Helen's expedition to Roumania. Their task to build a children's playground and to transport all manner of toys and useful items for orphaned children was a tremendous success. Later in the term Matron, ably assisted by Richard Capper and others, made and sold pancakes on Open Day and were thus able to make a considerable donation to charity.

There is much to report about a wide range of activities. A number of boys have contributed significantly to Chapel and Boarders' Choirs this term. In the last week of term the boarders' carol service was of a much higher standard than in the past, and a large number of School House musicians took part in two concerts of marathon proportions. On an individual level Kelvin Cheung went to London to take an Advanced Certificate of the Associated Board in piano studies, and Timothy Mak is preparing for a public concert with the Reading Symphony Orchestra when he will play a violin concerto by Prokofiev.

Members of School House continue to achieve much in sporting activities. The versatility of the present generation is epitomized by Robert Bryniarski,

rugby-player and oarsman, who led a successful Ten Tors team and now with Nicholas McConnell hopes to go to Greenland with a British Schools expedition. Francis Malone-Lee did well in a recent arduous Tour de Trigs.

Nearly half of the House have represented the School at rugby this term. Congratulations are in order to Matthew Thomas who represented Oxfordshire and Andrew Stewart who played in nearly every match for the First XV but was the only regular member not to score during the term! Among the Junior Colts debutants this term was Sameer Ismail, impressive on the wing or at lock, and Charles Maeng providing an anchor for the Third XV front row. We continue to supply most of the School's badminton players, with Victor Lee an accomplished player and efficient secretary.

Bonfire night was less well attended than in previous years but was much enjoyed. We had a Middle School outing to Laser Quest and McDonalds later in the term which was most popular, Messrs.. Skjott and Rabindran zapped their housemaster and tutor almost out of existence. There has been little enthusiasm for trips at a weekend, though a few boys had an enjoyable time in Wales with a Waste Court party during the exeat.

We bid farewell to Lucas Haberkorn, our Scholar from Bielefeld, who has added a mature and polite presence to the House this term. We have enjoyed having him here and I understand that the hockey players were very keen to secure his services for next term; however he has to return to his studies in Germany. It is also farewell and good luck to James Gowing, returning to Australia and to his studies in Veterinary Science. He has been a cheerful presence around the House and in the Sports Hall and has contributed much to the life of the School; he even furthered our links with St. Helen's.

Waste Court

by TLW

This has been an exciting but exhausting term. We began the year with the pleasing news that all of the leavers in the summer had obtained the grades required for places at their first choice universities. The Fifth Year day boys also had similar success to report; most of the boys had taken some GCSE exams and all obtained A or A*, a fact which bodes well for the coming summer.

The House has been near to full capacity this term. All Sixth Form spaces were taken, until David Wyndham-Lewis left us to follow his parents in their move to Kent. We wish him well. He is due to be replaced by a Malaysian scholar next term. We have seventeen junior boarders on our books (one short of full), although much to our regret, we have now lost Michael-Luke Jones to the day side, his family having moved to Abingdon. We hope that the new intake next year will see us continue the recent upward trend in numbers. We said farewell at the end of term to our resident Australian, Ben Kirkman, who will be missed by all.

The two major events of term within the House

were the dig and the Wales expedition, reported on elsewhere. In addition to these, however, the boys have been very heavily involved in all areas of the School, sport and music being most notable. It is particularly pleasing to see how well the Fifth Years have remained involved this year in their "Other Half". Despite academic pressures, they have not only fortified their other activities, but also begun to look very promising academically. With the Upper Sixth making good progress, the Lower Sixth settling in with maturity and flair and the younger boys showing bags of enthusiasm, I am confident of this being a very successful year.

Looking forward, a major preoccupation is preparing the House for the intake of Middle School scholars next September. They will, as at present, be administered by Mr. Elliott, the Master of Scholars, but affiliated to Waste Court. We are modifying and redecorating parts of the house this coming summer so that the scholars will have the home which they have lacked so far, whilst the boarders also receive improvements in their living conditions. We just hope that all goes smoothly.

Wilmore's

by L Moss

It has been another productive term, with pleasing academic progress complemented by accomplishments on the games field and elsewhere. Many members of the House have represented the School in various fields. The House spent the early part of the term working on its entry for the Singing Competition, *The Gas Man Cometh*. Thanks to the hard driving of Mr. Garnier, the initial lethargy was overcome and we improved considerably. The final performance was very creditable, despite two failed introductions by our resident pianist. The judge clearly did not understand that this song does not command a regular slot on modern radio, and his expectations were possibly higher than they might have been.

Turning to sporting achievements, the House provided seven members from the Third Year for the rugby A XV. C. Thomson and M. Browne scored three tries each, P. Timberlake two tries and J. Hedges one. D. Procter scored a massive fifty-two points for the B XV.

Outside the School, P. Timberlake was selected to play for the Oxfordshire U15 hockey side and attend the South of England trials. W. Burdall, who repre-

sents the School in sailing, raced in the Abingdon regatta and achieved fourth position.

In the Fourth Year, K. Shaikh, D. White and S. Allen played for the Junior Colts A XV, D. White scoring two tries. K. Roche scored a try for the B team, and he was also selected to play for the County U15 hockey side.

B. Grady, T. Coe and S. Curran, in the Fifth Year, played important roles for the Colts A XV. R. Holman scored six tries for the B XV and also turned out for the Fourth XV in their victory over Pangbourne. J. Dando scored three tries and three conversions for the C XV.

Away from the spotlight, E. Webber, N. Page and P. Slater have all played for the U16 badminton team. A. Wilson performed extremely well for the Schools Challenge team, and is described by Dr. Zawadski as a "future leading light".

Looking ahead to the next two terms, N. Moffatt, S. Woodcock, S. Curran and H. Mackenzie have been busy preparing for the rowing season. H. Mackenzie has been invited to join the Great Britain U18 rowing squad's warm weather training camp, and is going to Spain with them over the holidays.

Classics trip

Getting up at three a.m., after arriving home at nine the previous evening from a CCF night exercise, was not my idea of fun, but since our coach left at four-fifteen it had to be. After last-minute packing my Dad drove me to the coach park and I arrived to a hive of activity. After checking that everyone was there, our group of thirty-one boys, five teachers, little Thomas Fishpool and his two penguins set off for Heathrow.

**a report of the Classics
Department trip to Rome
and the Bay of Naples,
October 24th-31st,
by J Wood**

We arrived in Rome to a glorious day and were met by our tour company's enthusiastic representative. For most of us this was our first time in Italy and we soon had our first taste of what we had come to see; while driving to our hotel in the centre of Rome we saw the Colosseum and the Palatine hill. After settling into our rooms, which were cramped (to say the least), we were out again almost straight away. Our hotel being extremely well placed, it was only a short walk to our first site, Trajan's column. This beautiful, hundred-foot tall, carved marble column was certainly an impressive way to kick off. This was followed by a proper walk around the Colosseum, where we imagined what it must have been like to be a spectator watching games in the arena. We then went to see the church of S. Pietro in Vincoli (St. Peter in Chains), where we had our first taste of the street vendors who were at every site which we went to throughout the trip. Some of our party found it hard to restrain themselves. This was an impressive start to the trip, which was followed by an excellent evening meal in the Café Gran Strega. In the evening we again went to Trajan's column, but seeing it by night was even better as the carvings stood out even more.

The next morning we were up early, and after a totally inadequate breakfast set off to Ostia, the port of ancient Rome. As the site was marshy, it has not been built on since ancient times and the town is remarkably well preserved. We saw the theatre, offices for trading companies throughout the Roman world, an underground temple to Mithras and many more features of a Roman town. After time to explore on our own, we returned to the centre of Rome to see the Pantheon. This spectacular church, built in around AD 130, has an enormous domed roof with a hole in the centre (intentionally so) and must have been one of the best sites of the whole trip. From here it was a quick walk to the Piazza Navona, which consists of houses built around the shape of the Emperor Domitian's stadium. Filled with painters and people offering caricatures, it had a very nice atmosphere. The evening excursion was a trip to the Spanish Steps

and Trevi Fountain. Here most of those who went threw coins into the water, as it is said that those who do this will one day return to Rome.

After a much needed sleep (with extra time in bed thanks to the change from summer to winter time) we set off the next morning to the Palatine hill, where the Roman emperors had their palaces. With its commanding views of the city and extensive ruins we got a picture of what it would have been like to be an emperor. There were great banqueting halls, huge living quarters and the Circus Maximus only a short distance away. The Roman forum was our next stop, and we were allowed to wander around on our own to take in the site and look at the ruins of the hub of the Roman world. After looking at some more temples we made our way to the Tiber Island. In ancient times the ford here was the only way to cross the river Tiber, and this led to the development of Rome. After crossing a bridge built by the Romans, we spent an enjoyable half hour soaking up the sun and listening to the river. This was to be our last day in Rome, and so with a little time to spare we headed back to the Pantheon for another look. On arrival Mr. Hullis announced that he was going to a good ice-cream shop, but (trying to put us off) that there would be a ten minute walk to get there. Having heard that the ice-cream was better than Mr. Hullis was letting on, I decided to go with him. The ten minute walk turned out to be two minutes long and the ice-creams were so big and so delicious that we all had two!

After the large amount of walking the previous day, Monday provided a welcome rest as we had to travel to Sorrento. We did however see one site during the coach journey south. This was Hadrian's Villa, a huge country complex built at huge expense for the emperor. In this villa, Hadrian had everything he wanted: baths, banqueting halls, lavish guest accommodation, temples and much more. We even lay down in the very place where Hadrian and his guests would have lain to dine. Ironically Hadrian was advised that the climate in the area was not good for him, and he only went to the villa a few times.

On arrival in Sorrento we settled into our new, three star hotel and had supper. After an excellent meal we were able to go out and see the sights of Sorrento. This friendly town provided plenty for us to do on this and the following evenings and was a perfect place in which to have our base, even if it was quite a way from the sites which we wanted to see.

The next day provided our first real disappointment. Two of the three temples we were going to see at Paestum, along the Amalfi coast, were shut and so this part of the trip was cancelled. The glorious weather of the past few days had also given way to rain and wind. This did not dampen spirits, however, as we were going to spend the whole day in Pompeii, one of the highlights of the trip. Having learned all about Pompeii in the *Cambridge Latin Course*, most of us could not wait to see it for real. We saw extremely well preserved streets and houses (including the house of Caecilius), the theatre, amphitheatre, temples and, among many other sights, plaster casts of Romans killed in the eruption of AD 79. The wind was bitterly cold on this visit and many of us were not quite adequately dressed.

Wednesday was a dismal day, and going around Herculaneum, the second town destroyed by Vesuvius, was not much fun. We did however see some of the best-preserved Roman buildings in the world and even some charred wood dating from the

eruption. Our next stop was not on the schedule, but proved to be one of the most rewarding. It was the villa of Nero's wife Poppaea Sabina, and contained the best wall paintings which we saw on the trip. There were beautiful colours for the important areas and for the slaves' areas, plain old stripes.

At this point it looked as though we were not going to be able to go up to the top of Vesuvius because of the weather, but on Thursday afternoon the skies cleared for us. After visiting the Naples Museum, which housed some of the best mosaics from Pompeii and even some Egyptian mummies, we set off to the top of the mountain, entertained by our opera-singing bus driver. The view from the top was amazing, as we could see the whole of the Bay of Naples. We were so high up that there was even some snow lying on the ground, and we could have a small snow-ball fight on the walk down. The trip therefore ended on a high note.

The next day, after another four hour coach journey, we boarded our flight home. After a reasonably good flight (with only a one hour delay) we arrived back at Heathrow tired but happy, only a short coach journey from home. It had been a fabulous experience.

Thanks must go to all the staff who went on the trip, but especially to Mrs. Fishpool for organizing everything and to Mr. Hullis for the brilliant talks which he gave at all the places we saw. It seemed that there was no end to his knowledge.



Earthwatch

Tim Myatt spent the first fortnight of September in Indonesia, helping Earthwatch construct solar ovens. The following report comprises notes from his field diary.

Day One

Abandoned beside the road on the outskirts of Matram with kit the weight of my body mass, I crawl to the nearest hotel. Inside I am offered drinks and a room, both of which I decline; I have solar ovens to build. The owner informs me that there are no taxis left and I must rent his car to drive to the other side of the island. Speaking none of the language, and having no desire to end up with a hotel reception telephone through my head, I gratefully accept his generous offer to drive me there "for a small fee". He disappears, and this is the last I see of him for half an hour. He and his son return and load me and my bags on to an enormous Land Rover. His son, for whom it is evidently a novelty to drive this beast, then drives me at breakneck speed to the Melewis Beach Hotel for a mere 75,000 Rupiah.

The hotel is deserted except for two figures sitting under a palm tree. I walk over and introduce myself; both of them are on the project. The hotel manager, Slamet, arrives and shows me to my room. Also in my room is Chay, a 21 year old American girl. I am not going to complain but, Indonesia being an Islamic country, I am moved to a room in the middle of the beach, balanced on a concrete pillar in its middle, on my own. Trying to ignore the enormous gecko on the wall, I crawl into bed.

Day Two

I am awoken by Slamet banging on my door. He has brought me a breakfast of fried rice and chili. I take a few mouthfuls and realize that it is drastically going to reduce my life expectancy if I eat any more. I climb down from my room and meet the other Earthwatchers.

A whole day of introductions, welcome lunches and speeches ensues. Herliyani Suharta, the project leader, welcomes us. In the evening some of us go for a very long walk along the beach. It is amazing to see how far the locals go out to sea to collect seaweed for their tea. Tired and contented, my head swimming with the new culture, I go to my room.

Day Three

I meet the three Indonesians who I am to build the ovens with. I have no hope of remembering their names. We are shown the bits of plywood, mirror and glasses from which "we" are expected to build the ovens. They then disappear for lunch and come back in the afternoon. I find a plan, in Indonesian, and that afternoon we mark out the boards. This proves to be more difficult than expected. The Indonesian National Curriculum evidently does not cover the

concepts of "parallel" and "square". By sunset we are ready to start cutting; however, dinner is called and my Indonesian friends retire home. Dinner consists of seaweed, rice, corn and fish. In the evening I finish my last Mars bar. What will I do tomorrow?

Day Four

Sawing is completed around lunch time by most groups. Mine, however, contains two females, and Muslim culture has deemed it improper for them to saw. Only one power saw is available and the queue to use it extends into tomorrow. In the 90% humidity and temperatures of 35°C in the sun, the other member of the team and I finish cutting at around three o'clock.

Day Five

Today construction proper begins. We glue and nail the outer box together and let it set. The women spend most of the day sanding the saw marks and smoothing edges. Once the box is dry we attempt to fit internal supports. We find that we have cut them too big, and have to spend most of the afternoon sanding them down and filing the edges.

Day Six

The more energetic members of the tribe arise at the break of day and head off to the local fish market. The more committed members fit the inside of the ovens and begin to build the second shell. When the others resume work, smelling strongly of fish, most groups have at least one oven forming. The next step is to cover the bottom and side plates of the oven with aluminium. We spray the aluminium black with flake spray so that it will absorb the light and heat up. After dinner (fish and rice) the guitar appears and we professionals show the inexperienced members of the project how to sing the blues. This is a really fun evening because by now the group has moulded together. The only drawback is a strange grumbling in my stomach.

Day Seven

At 4:30 a.m. my bowels erupt, and I spend the remainder of the morning on the toilet. I consume Imodium capsules in mammoth quantities and go through three toilet rolls in five hours. Determined not to be hampered by this, we set out on our day of rest to explore the locality with Herliyani as our guide. We visit some of the local silver factories, a waterfall, complete with swimming pool, and a weaving village. This rams home to us the nature of Indonesia's poverty. On the house opposite, buckled under its enor-



mous weight, is a six foot satellite dish. Villagers who had worked for several months to weave precious metres of cloth had brought the enormous satellite receiver for their television rather than feed, clothe and educate their children.

Day Eight

This morning the team splits into two groups. One of the women and the man in my group focus on fitting the glasses and the mirrors to the ovens and the other women and I build the oven doors. This is an incredibly difficult task, because the door's front face has to be angled so as to absorb as much heat as possible.

Day Nine

The ovens are approaching completion, with only the mirrors and the top glass plate to fit. I spend the day coating the oven doors in aluminium and spraying the insides black. Some groups have difficulty in making the oven door fit into the frame; nothing that three hours filing will not solve.

Day Ten

At last we get to fit the final pane of glass. First, we stuff the outer shells with cotton fibres collected from the pods of local trees. This is very sticky and manages to get up your nose and all over your clothes. By lunch time we are set to seal the top pane in place with the rubber sealant. This is completed successfully; however one of the less bright members of the group attempts to nail the glass to the wooden frame whilst the rest of us are at lunch. This oven is therefore only capable of reaching 145°C in testing. The rubber sealant is unable to stop the crack from spreading;

however the oven still works, as there is often little need to heat to above 120°C. We turn the ovens over and screw castors onto the bases. In the evening we venture into Selong to view the night life.

Day Eleven

Today the final touches are made to the ovens; handles are screwed on and mirrors glued in. I help Marie's group to finish their door, and this takes most of the day. Outside the local women are testing the ovens. Most of the sixteen reach about 180°C at noon and keep this temperature up for about four hours. I get some much needed sleep and prepare for tomorrow.

Day Twelve

The closing day of the project. We have finished early! The final testings for the ovens are the same as yesterday's temperatures. We are all told to wear our Earthwatch T-shirts and shine our shoes because the Indonesian Minister for the Rôle of Women in Society's First Secretary is coming to close the program. The locals take this very seriously. The best band on the island arrives, and flagpoles ten feet high are driven into the ground. The local women have prepared samples of all the test foods for the notables to try. When the Minister's Secretary arrives the band starts up and the locals start to cry and scream. The afternoon is taken up with closing speeches and ceremonies.

In the evening the people of the village lay on a brilliant display of Sasak dancing, stick fighting and theatre. This culminates in them demanding that the Earthwatchers sing a song. The only song which we all know and can remember is Old Macdonald. The crowd think that this is hilarious and that all westerners are mad.

Mynydd Ddu

The plan was to take three minibuses of boys to walk the most remote mountain in South Wales, and to introduce the boys to climbing and rope-work in the indoor centre at Llangorse.

**a report of the Waste
Court Expedition to
Mynydd Ddu, Wales
(The Black Mountain)
on October 11th to 12th
by TLW**

Two groups were to stay overnight, visiting the climbing centre on the Saturday. The third group would rendezvous with them on the Sunday morning in order to do the walk and then move on to the climbing centre for the evening. Arriving at the climbing centre on the Saturday, things were not looking good. It had been raining hard all day and the hills were cloaked in heavy cloud.

Worries about the weather were soon forgotten, the boys rapidly caught up in the excitement of the climbing and abseiling, the staff able to relax and watch from the viewing gallery, whilst the centre's personnel took the boys through their paces. Watching them, it was fascinating to see how quickly their confidence grew. Trepidation soon gave way to eagerness and enthusiasm, boys soon happy to scramble and dangle fifty or sixty feet above the ground. The staff enjoyed their coffee, from reassuringly stable chairs. Whilst nearly all of the boys thoroughly enjoyed themselves, two (Dylan Sivarajah and Thilo Schulte) had particularly exciting experiences. Having ascended the rope ladder to the centre roof, both engaged in indecent amounts of celebration. The instructors responded by commencing the boys' return journey abseil without warning and with a section of "free fall". Decorum was restored.

After a night staying in a bunkhouse in Talgarth, we awoke to a clear morning, the peaks shaking wisps of

cloud into the warming air. We drove west, met the third bus, and made our way to the mountain. We split into two parties, tackling the ridge in opposite directions, swapping bus keys half-way. The climb commenced in fine weather, brown ramparts standing proud in the clear, blue sky as we clambered our way up their sides. On top, the weather remained clear for a brief period, the Powys hills stretching, sun-dappled, to the north. Barbed comments began to be directed my way:

"We bring full kit and waterproofs, but it's always sunny! Mr. Waters says it rains up here; I think he's lying! My backpack is heavy. Why have I got all this kit?"

I looked north. The sunlit Powys hills were vanishing one by one, a grey wave sweeping silently towards us; the mists of Arthur approached.

We worked our way along the great, cliff-edged mountain, its north face scalloped by long-vanished glaciers, reaching the rendezvous as the weather closed in. Cloud flowed up the cliff face, rolling and billowing over, scattering rain onto us. The waterproofs were useful after all. After a moist lunch, we descended, the weather clearing again, to give us good views of the towering ridge that we had just climbed, set beside the shimmering waters of Llyn y Fan Fach.

We sorted out the return travel arrangements, and by ten thirty we had returned safely and were very glad of hot food and comfortable beds; the only proper way to finish off an exhilarating, but exhausting weekend.



Amputee Sunday

Mr. Mearns has been concerned with the land mines problem for nearly a decade. In 1994, with some friends, he set up a small operation to train amputees in Cambodia.



The purpose of the scheme is to enable men and women who have survived land mine blasts to use their dextrous abilities in intermediate technology. These people are largely subsistence farmers who can no longer till the soil, and so they wish to learn such basic skills as machine and transport repair and maintenance, sewing, tailoring, beauty and hairdressing, and so forth. The training centre is in Pursat, Cambodia. The operation is a registered member of the Charities Aid Foundation.

In the aftermath of Princess Diana's death at the end of August, Mr. Mearns elected to make his work known to the School, and he invited them to make a contribution by taking part in various structured activities. A date, Sunday 12th October, was settled and was named Amputee Sunday.

Staff and boys alike offered suggestions, and these included cycling, canoeing, football, touch rugby and many others. On a bitterly cold day many braved the elements and took part for up to four hours beginning at 2 p.m. A tuck shop and the kitchens were opened to supply the boys with nourishment during the afternoon and the School Jazz Band entertained

them in the Dining Hall. The cycling was organized by Mr. Henderson and about twenty boys set off for the White Horse at Uffington. There was trick cycling performed by Guy Coppock at the front of School, and a bath of baked beans in a paddling pool was kindly donated by Tesco. First Peter Thomas ventured into the orange gloop, followed by Mr. Pettitt, who on the promise of a shower afterwards stripped off and showed everyone how to wallow in style. However, the winners of a prize draw were unable to enjoy their wonderful prize of a trip in a hot air balloon as the air currents were too strong.

At the time of writing, the amount raised was a magnificent £5,200 and rising. It is likely that much of this money will be spent on completing the roof of the centre's kitchen and building some latrines.

Mr. Mearns was particularly grateful for the leadership and example shown by the Prefects and the Heads of School in generating interest in the cause. Many gave generously, and the Staff were particularly supportive. In particular thanks are due to Mrs. Fishpool as organizer of charitable activities and to Mr. Slatford as Comptroller General.

An account of a charity fund-raising event, held on 12th October, in support of the Cambodian War Amputees Rehabilitation Society International, by N Grey

Waste Court dig

“What’s a human rib bone doing in your housemaster’s flowerbed?”

**a report of the
archaeological dig of
Waste Court garden,
September 19th to
October 4th,
by SH**

The question came from an archaeologist based at York University, visiting Waste Court in December 1996. We could not give her a solution to the puzzle at the time, though legends about Waste Court do include the old “plague pit” story. Spurred on by the chance find, TLW and his wife kept a careful eye on the flowerbeds over the next few months, and eventually a stock of Roman and Saxon pottery, as well as a human toe bone, emerged. Our archaeologist friend grew increasingly interested, and later spotted the top of an old door in the wall of the cellar. It looked as though we might have an interesting story to unearth.

When it was decided to dig a pond in the corner of the lawn, the archaeologists leapt at the chance to dig the hole “properly”, expecting to find a few fragments of pottery and to investigate the early history of the house itself. Thus it was that a dig took place in late September, conducted by Mrs. Patricia Excell and Mr. Robert Evans, with much help from members of the School. None of us expected to find anything spectacular.

Initially, excitement centred on the cellar, where a cursory inspection of the floor surface turned up a fragment of window tracery from the Abbey, complete with mason’s mark. The next day’s makeshift resistivity survey revealed a brass medieval shoe buckle of a similar late medieval date a few inches under the lawn; already the dig looked like being a success without a hole having been dug. However, a start was soon made on removing turf and topsoil. It became clear that the

lawn has at some stage been lowered, taking out the post-medieval layers to a large extent and disturbing the layers below. The initial trench produced a little bit of medieval pottery before the diggers hit the natural soil surface about a metre down. Excitement was dying as the finds refused to appear.

However, we were wrong to be disappointed, since almost immediately two rows of stake-holes were found in the natural surface, suggesting a fence. The medieval finds thus far suggested that this was the back garden of the original house. As a Classicist I pretended to be pleased with a medieval fence, but I was vocal in demanding a Roman cemetery (TLW wanted an amphitheatre, but he is an incurable optimist).

The team decided, for want of anything better, to follow the line of stake-holes before getting back to the interesting stuff in the cellar. They never did make it back down there, for the very next day a dark patch was revealed as they dug down to the level of the stake-holes. This new layer proved to be Roman, and as the day wore on a stone wall was revealed lying over the line of the stake-holes (which, because they are below the Roman level, must be Iron Age, not Medieval). We were about to stop for the day when observant boarders spotted a round object in the surface of the wall; it proved to be a spindle whorl, a stone doughnut-shaped object used in wool production. It was an emotional moment; the wall could not now be any later than Anglo-Saxon, and the quality of the stonework strongly suggested Roman handiwork.





Clearing the wall took time, and a JCB had to be brought in to investigate its extent. When the archaeologists went home for the weekend, the wall lay almost fully exposed, and it was left to two pupils and myself to tidy up the surface for photography and drawing. For amateurs, we did quite well. Ed Lewington uncovered a piece of metal which is believed to be a Roman fibula brooch, John Walford found two pieces of Roman pottery in a context which confirmed the wall's Roman date, and even TLW spotted a Roman nail as it tumbled from a spadeful of soil.

But all was not well. The "wall" did not seem to go anywhere, despite the abundance of mortar in the soil and stone everywhere. It was about now that my prayers for a Roman cemetery were answered, as it became suddenly apparent that our six-foot long, east-west aligned "wall" was, in fact, a typical Roman cist grave. The significance of the brooch and spindle-whorl now struck us; they were probably grave goods for a female burial. Investigating further now seemed a daunting prospect. However, at some time in the past, perhaps the medieval period (giving rise to the legend of the plague pit?), the grave had been emptied and its covering slab broken. No human remains were found.

All that remained, therefore, was to tidy up the trench for Open Day. We should have known better. It is an immutable law of archaeology that something exciting will always turn up on the last day. As Mrs. Excell trimmed off the edge of a layer with a spade, Mr. Evans yelled "STOP". Projecting from the fill was

the rib-cage of a baby's skeleton.

After permission to lift these remains had been granted by the coroner, Mrs. Excell excavated the baby on Open Day. As a bone specialist, she was especially pleased, particularly since she had found another such skeleton a few months before and had never believed that she would be so lucky again.

These remains and others are now in York for detailed examination by one of the world's leading specialists, Don Brothwell. The grave itself lies beneath the new pond. However, much remains to be discovered, and though we have begun to answer the question about the human rib (which may have emerged from another Roman grave under the flowerbed) many more problems remain unsolved. Is this the Roman cemetery or just a family burial plot? Does Lacies Court really, as seems extremely likely, overlie a large Roman house? Only detailed survey can tell us, which, thankfully, need not involve lifting a single piece of turf; the gardeners will not forgive us for destroying any more of the lawn.

One last point deserves mention. It is rare for a dig to have the majority of its soil sieved by hand to reveal every last bit of pottery. At Waste Court, pupils were queuing for the chance to sieve, and the recovery rate of finds was amazing. The boarders became enormously adept at spotting Roman and medieval pottery, to the extent that the archaeologists ran out of bags for the finds. Even on the last day, as we back-filled the trench with the little remaining unsieved soil, one of the boys found a fragment of skull...

Academic reports

'A' levels

In the summer 1997 round of examinations, two Certificates of Excellence were awarded by the Oxford and Cambridge A level board to candidates from the School. These certificates are usually award-

ed to no more than three candidates in each syllabus. Adrian Howkins was awarded a Certificate of Excellence in Geography, and Ee-Lu Hew in Economics.

Mathematics

**a report of the school's
mathematicians'
performances in the
Mathematics Challenges
and Olympiads,
by PKHR**

Boys who scored highly this year in the UK Junior Mathematical Challenge qualified for the Junior Mathematical Olympiad. From the Second and Third Year, Jonathan Mak, Jacob Rowe, Christopher Johnson, Matthew Cullen, Robin Wood, Mathew Browne, Sam Higazi and Josh Farrant all achieved this distinction, and Jonathan Mak came in the top twenty-four in the country, winning a silver medal.

In November we entered thirty Lower Sixth, thirteen Upper Sixth and one Third Year further mathematician for the annual national Senior Maths Challenge competition, out of a total entry of 28,941. The paper set was generally thought to be tougher

than usual; nevertheless our results were extremely good. One Gold certificate was awarded (6.6% of the total entry), twenty-one Silver certificates (12.9%) and seven Bronze certificates (20%)

Stephen Brookes (the Third Year) scored the highest mark for Abingdon and was ranked ninety-ninth in the entire country. Our highest-placed Sixth Formers were Jonathan Tarasewicz, Timothy Mak and Andrew Perry. The above mentioned and seven others have been invited to take part in the first round of the Mathematical Olympiad in January. We wish them well in that event and congratulate all those who took part in the challenge.

History

**a report of the activities
of the History Society,
by RGH**

There was no over-arching theme to the Michaelmas meetings, but at least one of the assembled historians mused on the title "Control Freaks through the Ages; from Henry VIII to Erich Honecker". Dr. Steven Gunn, Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, analysed the grievances of Henry's northern subjects, testimony to the ever-tightening grip of the early Tudors ("The Pilgrimage of Grace and the development of Tudor government"). Mr. Timothy Garton Ash, Fellow of St. Antony's College, Oxford, has personal experience of the tentacular reach of East Germany's

political police: deemed a British spy, he was one of the six million people who attracted its unwelcome attention ("Inside the Stasi files"). Mr. Garton Ash's talk was punctuated by extracts from his own file, a revealing document, nearly two inches thick; the entire Stasi archive, we were told, would measure a staggering 111 miles.

Professor Paul Langford, Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, has kindly agreed to visit us again next term; his subject, the politics of eighteenth century England, will afford something of a contrast.

Modern Languages

Russian Exchange

An October we were pleased to welcome a delegation of eight boys and six girls from Moscow English Grammar School, led by Olga Karp and Natalya Rochanova. This visit, the seventh of its type, was planned in partnership with Oxford High School. The delegation visited a variety of places including Blenheim Palace, the Oxford Story, Warwick Castle and Stratford. They were given an official reception by

the Lord Mayor of Oxford and a guided walking tour of the city by a former pupil of their own school who has lived in our area for a number of years. They seemed particularly appreciative of the rock opera *Tommy* at the Apollo Theatre, but the informal concert which they gave in the Charles Maude Room was equally appreciated by all who attended, not least for the insight which it gave into Russian culture.

**a report of the visit,
in October, of fourteen
young Muscovites,
by GCR**

'Le Mariage de Figaro'

In September, ten members of the Lower Sixth French sets attended (with girls from St. Helen's) a production of *Le Mariage de Figaro*. Although many know of the Mozart opera, there is less opportunity in this country to see Beaumarchais' vivacious comedy on which the opera was based (Beaumarchais also wrote *The Barber of Seville*, turned into an opera by Rossini). The play was considered subversive in its day, in pre-revolutionary France, especially because of its attacks on the nobility and the establishment; however, as a judge, a spy, and harp teacher to Louis XV's daughters, Beaumarchais was clearly not an overt revolutionary.

Théâtre Sans Frontières performed the play twice

to capacity houses in Oxford, including various local schools. The company used a simple travelling set to full effect, making the most of a limited touring cast by doubling up parts and cross-dressing. Period costumes and cheerful music added to the effect.

Lively performances were given by those playing the engaged couple, Figaro and Suzanne. These characters use every trick to outwit the playboy Count, who is bored with his own marriage but nonetheless suspicious of his wife's relationship with the young, mixed-up, Chérubin. Thanks to the schemings of the Countess, involving a variety of disguises in the final act, true love finally triumphs: *tout finir par chansons*.

**a report of a LVith visit,
in September,
to Beaumarchais'
'Le Mariage de Figaro',
by A Cooper**

'The Chairs'

On November 11th, Eugene Ionesco's *The Chairs* was on the menu. A small group of Lower Sixth French students went to see the Théâtre de Complicité/ Royal Court Theatre production at the Oxford Playhouse, starring Richard Briers and Geraldine McEwan.

Bizarre. That was the first word which sprang to mind. Perhaps too bizarre, some thought. It was certainly unconventional, though I must admit that I liked it. The acting from Richard Briers and Geraldine McEwan was superb. Some of the lighting and sound effects were also very good, such as the opening sequence, where there was a very realistic impression of the reflections on the water at night and sounds of water lapping against the shore. There were also some very funny moments, especially

Geraldine McEwan's misuse of words and the moment when she appeared on opposite sides of the stage almost at the same time; we later discovered that she had an understudy who ran across the stage a couple of times.

The one disappointment was a period of about ten or fifteen minutes in the middle of the play when the old couple were talking to the first guests. At first it was quite clever, but it became a bit monotonous. Luckily this did not last long, and our slight boredom disappeared as the play moved towards its frantic climax. It was fortunate that the production was in English, because it would have been difficult if we had not understood all of the dialogue; some of it was hard enough to understand as it was...

**a report of a LVith visit,
on November 11th,
to Ionesco's 'The Chairs',
by B Longworth**

Biology

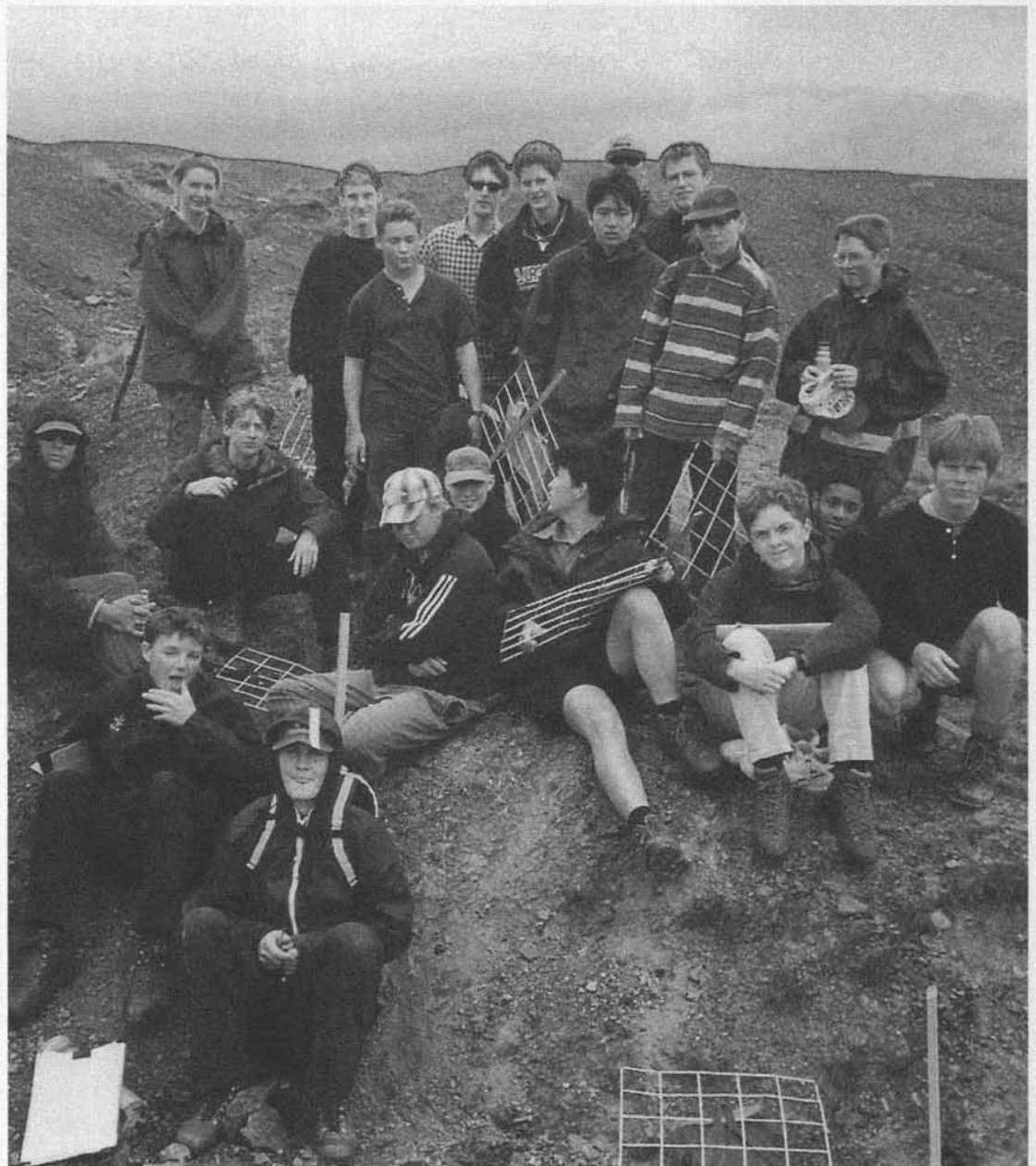
Field course

**a report of the UVith
visit to Abergavenny
during the summer,
by R Franklin**

In late July, forty-two of the forty-nine boys currently taking Biology A level in the current Upper Sixth went on a field course to Abergavenny in fine weather. The trip was organized by ADW and he, PJW, TRW, TG and SPD all attended.

The purpose of the trip was to get experience of practical ecology and in the process complete most of our A-level practical requirement. We had the use of

the field centre with its own staff, who were all very helpful, one in particular being a big hit. Mr. Davies kept the workload up (as ever), not just for us, but for the teachers as well who marked it all at the time. Whilst the emphasis of the trip was on work, it was enjoyable nevertheless, the daily excursions taking us to some very beautiful places and the weather keeping kind almost throughout.



Lectures

TG took a group of Lower Sixth boys to visit Pembroke College, and he and SPD took a group of twenty-five boys (Fifth Year and above) to hear a lecture in the Psychology and Zoology Department of Oxford University.

Genetic fingerprinting is one of the greatest advances in applied chemistry of our age. Not all of us know what it is, but all of us have heard about it in one way or another. Its practical applications, from forensics and immigration disputes to conservation biology, are vast, and who better to explain its discovery, the evolution of its intricate mechanisms, and its future, than the father of genetic fingerprinting himself, Professor Sir Alec Jeffreys.

The lecture "From Antarctica to Chernobyl", was well attended by numerous students and academics.

Sir Alec started the lecture at layman level, assuming little knowledge of genetic fingerprinting, and built up to phenomena such as mini-satellites and their role in genetic fingerprinting. He then brought us up to speed with his latest research on mini-satellites, indicating that they could act as "the miner's canary of the mutation world... sentinel markers for radiation damage". He explained his discovery that long-term doses of low-level radiation (previously thought to be far less damaging) cause mutations of the DNA in cells. The mechanism previously thought to explain the mutations in DNA through radiation does not take this into account, and this was "one of the big challenges of the future".

I would like to thank Mr. Davies and Dr. Gunn, on behalf of the boys, for the time and trouble they took in organizing the trip.

**report of the lecture
given by Prof Sir Alec
Jeffreys to the LVith,
by S Karim**

Speakers

This term, the department continued its tradition of inviting speakers to run sessions for pupils interested in medicine or the applications of biology in the "real world". This year, the programme was expanded and girls from St. Helen's and the Convent were invited. Numbers rose as a result, and two of the three talks this term attracted an audience of more than sixty. This term's talks were "Murder, Maggots and Mummies: an Introduction to Forensic Entomology" by Dr. John Kennaugh of the University of Manchester, "Glycosylation" by Dr. Daryl Fernandez of Oxford Glycosciences in Abingdon, and "Is Medicine What We Need?" by Dr. Sarah Stewart Brown, Director of the Health Services Research Unit.

Dr Stewart Brown's lecture started with a definition of health. Each group was asked to give its own definition and, very surprisingly, one group came up with one that was exactly the same as that of the World Health Organization. Dr. Stewart Brown then told us that most of the improvement in health over the last century can be attributed, not solely to medicine, but to other advances as well, such as improvements in housing standards and hygiene.

One example given was the decline in tuberculosis (TB) cases: before 1840, one third of the population died of TB; by the time that the bacteria which

causes it was identified in 1880, numbers of deaths were falling, and, when the vaccine and effective treatment were introduced towards the middle of this century, TB infections had already fallen to a fraction of their lower levels. The fall had been due, almost entirely, to better housing. Interestingly, now that homelessness is increasing again, so too is the incidence of TB. Similar cases were also made for diphtheria, typhoid and other epidemics.

We were also made aware of "Sudden Baby Death Syndrome" (SBDS) which, we were told, kills more babies each year than are saved by paediatricians. This syndrome is caused by babies being laid on their fronts and it is ironic that while so much money was put into researching the reasons for SBDS, many mothers were being advised to put their children face down in their cots.

The main purpose of the evening was for us to consider the relative importance of medicine, to consider that there is more to medicine than keeping people alive, and that helping people to live longer brings with it other social and medical problems.

All in all the lecture was very useful and enjoyable, and I would like to thank the department for having done so much for students applying to do medicine and biological sciences.

**report of the talk given by
Dr Sarah Stewart Brown
to prospective medics,
by V Lee**

'Another Country'

The School's only internal drama production this term, *Another Country*, is a powerful, moving story about sex and politics at Eton in the early part of the twentieth century.

**a report of a production
of Julian Mitchell's
'Another Country',
held in Amey Hall on
December 4th to 6th,
by M Brown**

The plot revolves around two friends in their final years at school, Guy Bennett (Chad Mason) and Tom Judd (Mike Bartlett). Guy is gay and Tommy a "Commie", and their friendship stems from being outcasts in the School. In the play, sodomy, it seems, is accepted but ignored at Eton, and Communism is the ultimate taboo. The character Menzies (Nye Brewer) sums up the feeling when asked about his experimentation with homosexuality when he reports that he "would rather not talk about it".

The acting in the first half showed how much effort the cast had put into rehearsals, but the play really came to life after the interval, peaking in one of the most moving, thought-provoking final scenes written. The actors moulded the script to themselves, and Matthew Lloyd's talent and dedication shone through as the cast

moved the audience to laughter again and again. Chad was so convincing a drunk that one could almost believe that he had practised. Small touches such as acting throughout the interval and the dinner-jacketed members of "Twenty Two" (an elitist Etonian club), made the production individual and memorable.

Other members of the cast worthy of mention were Luke Haward as Devenish (the final word in megalomania), James Eaton as his eccentric uncle Vaughan Cunningham (nice hat), and Andrew James as Wharton (the fag).

Milking the sexual innuendo for all it could, this production exemplified what the boys can achieve by themselves. It was constructed almost completely by the pupil actors, under the inspired direction of Matthew Lloyd, with little direct help from the staff.

The Director's perspective

**'Another Country' was
directed by M Lloyd**

The idea of directing had been growing on me since the success of *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, a student-directed production in 1996. I investigated possible scripts thoroughly; perhaps Ayckbourn, perhaps Orton? Nothing seemed quite the mark. However, my love-affair with Julian Mitchell's *Another Country* started from the very first reading. Full of classic wit, littered with public school humour, and pitched to provoke controversy (in the most progressive sense of the word), the play seemed the ideal material for a school director's debut. Plans took shape back in the summer, and I owe gratitude to the teachers who offered time and advice.

A director's main concern in the early phases is organization; ensuring that people turn up at the right place at the right time. The rehearsals themselves were hugely enjoyable both for myself and for the cast, and

will be long remembered as the high points of the whole process, filled with form and idea, humour and wit. The fever runs high after the second dress rehearsal, which, for the director, is when the proverbial conch is handed from director to cast and crew; no final changes after the last dress. Luckily the cast had rapidly earned my respect, both as individuals and as actors, allowing me to make the final transfer of power with confidence that the show would do itself proud. And it did.

One rather puts one's sanity on the line for such productions, as I discovered in the last week, and before the performances I was seriously questioning the worth of the whole exercise. But I can safely, and honestly, say that the process of direction is highly satisfying, ultimately, assuming that the director survives to see the show...

The view from Backstage

a report by M Lloyd,
C Mason and J Eaton

Rehearsals progressed slowly. Hindered by absences, and exam stress, we ploughed on only to be confronted by a casting change. With three weeks to go, we realized the enormity of what faced us, and embarked on a week of depression and arguments; typical behaviour from actors in the times of stress.

More problems faced us as we moved into the Amey Hall for final rehearsals. Used to the CMR as a rehearsal space, we encountered numerous basic acting difficulties. As the set sprang up, we realized exactly how long we had. We were still faced with a major problem; lines. No matter how many times we had been warned and no matter how many private study periods we spent pacing, book in hand, they just did not seem to be coming fast enough. After a stressful, irritating but useful technical rehearsal, we faced three performances in a matter of days.

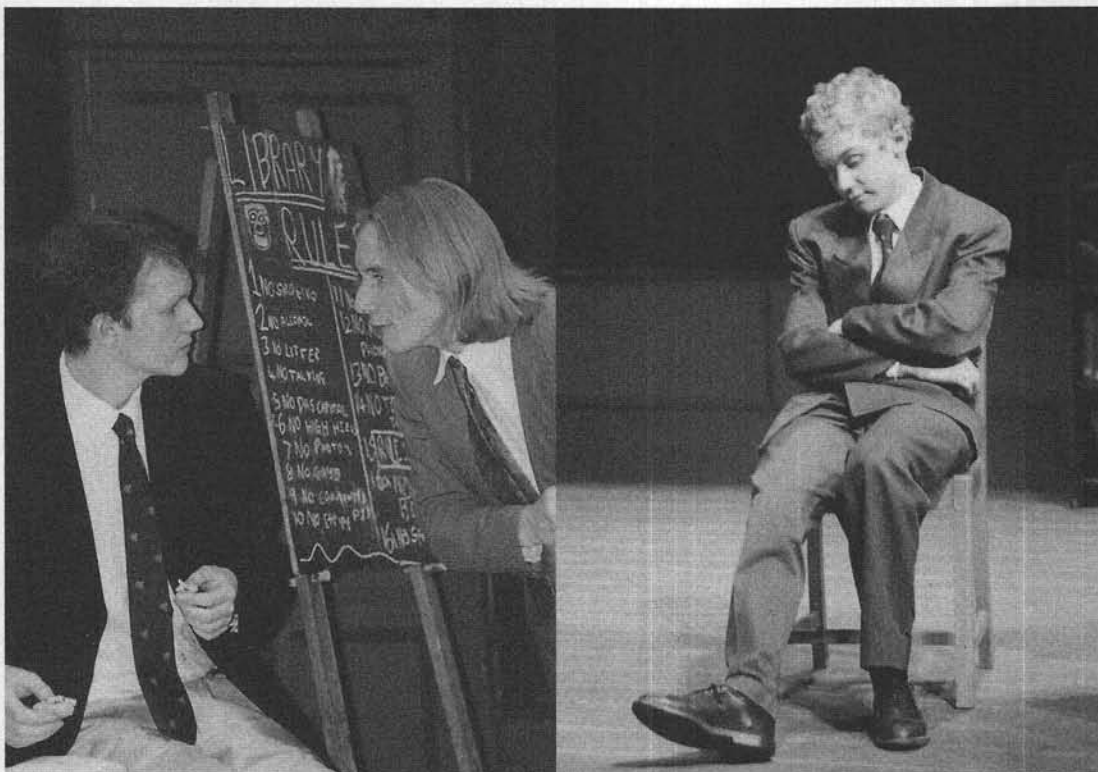
As the dress rehearsals approached, our problems loomed menacingly. Chad's main anxiety was costume changes; he clocked up an incredible four scenes on the trot, each with different costumes. Another major worry was trying to climb through the window built by the stage crew. Meanwhile Mike Bartlett grappled with the difficult task of finding some pyjamas.

Suddenly, from out of the dark depths of rehearsals, the feared opening night appeared. Joe Evans battled bravely through his lines and we put up a strong defence against nerves, lights, a youthful audience, and a failed curtain call. Although the performance was by no means perfect, the show went very well for a first night.

Second nights traditionally tend to be the worst of

three, after the nerves and inexperience of the first. A cast tends to gain a certain complacency that leads to a weak second performance. This was a serious worry for cast members who were no strangers to this problem. To overcome this, we placed more emphasis on the regular pre-show warm-ups, which incorporated physical, emotional and vocal routines, some of which seemed rather suspicious to the observing crew. Comic relief came in the form of some rather old photographs courtesy of School House; many a laugh was gained from "spot-the-teacher". The performance started in earnest and it soon emerged, contrary to tradition, that this would be the best night (Chad even started enjoying it at one point). The continuously acted interval, by Joe and Chad, raised many eyebrows. There were also many laughs, led by Mr. Taylor, and the play was generally well received.

The final night seemed virtually stress-free; it was after all the last time that any of the cast would have to put themselves on the rack of torture. Technically perfect, and with no prompts, the show closed in fantastic style with a very powerful final scene; the cast felt enormous relief and transferred pressure to Matt, who was dragged onto stage to make a speech. As the cast filed backstage, corks flew amongst the milling throng of well-wishers crowding the Art School. After the audience had disappeared, the cast and crew faced the enormous sad task of dismantling the set, which had served them well, with only Mr. Biggs' rendition of Chumbawumba's Tubthumping to keep spirits up. The cast vanished to the party, marking the ending of a highly successful production.



Music reports

Music Society trip

**a report of a trip to the
CBSO at Symphony Hall
in Birmingham
on October 15th,
by M O'Donovan**

This year's Music Society trip took place on October 15th, when a group, mainly comprising GCSE and A-level musicians, but also other interested individuals, went to Symphony Hall to hear the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra.

The concert was not only delightful to hear, but also most enjoyable to watch, since we had booked the choir seats right above the orchestra, giving us a spectacular view of the triangle player falling asleep during his pages of rests, and the honour of staring the conductor in the face. Of course he was too far away to notice. The result of our seating arrangements was that the balance of the orchestra was somewhat unusual, and the violins seemed to be always behind the rest of the orchestra, but the view we got made up for this.

The programme consisted of the Brahms *St.*

Anthony Variations, the Kodaly *Concerto for Orchestra*, and Sibelius' Fifth Symphony. The orchestra played quite well, although there was sometimes the niggling sensation that it was not at its best; the Brahms in particular was a little untidy in places. Personally, however, I was very impressed with the Kodaly, a piece which is extremely difficult, and whose performance did the soloists from various departments of the orchestra credit. It is likely that our location behind the orchestra in the concert hall, which has very clear acoustics, showed up the little glitches more than elsewhere.

Quite a few of the party were disappointed not to be able to watch Sir Simon Rattle conduct the orchestra, which is what had been promised us, especially since the substitute conductor was not quite at the same level.

House singing competition

**a report of the House
singing competition,
held on October 22nd,
by M O'Donovan**

The end of the first half of the Michaelmas term saw a very successful fifth inter-house singing competition, commonly known as the "House Shout". This year's competition, judged by Mr. Andrew Tillert, the director of music at St. Helen's, was particularly enjoyable to watch, and, as the Headmaster remarked, it was very obvious that the performers also enjoyed taking part. It was noticeable this year that there was much less participation from the Sixth Form tutor groups, this being somewhat restricted to the boarders, although both the Lower and Upper Sixth were represented, by Dr. Rolfe's and Mrs. Manship's tutor groups respectively. No doubt the advent of "through houses" next year will see an increase once more in Sixth Form participation.

The part-song cup was won, and deservedly so, by Mearns', who sang very well under the expert leadership of Thomas Herford; this said, it would not be fair

to omit that all the part-song entries were of a high standard. Tuning is always a very tricky problem to overcome with unaccompanied part-singing of this sort, as was pointed out by the adjudicator, and most of the groups met this challenge with success, singing *Yesterday* by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

Probably the most impressive thing about unison singing from an audience's point of view is the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the singers, and Crescent's rendition of Van Morrison's *Brown Eyed Girl* showed just that. Here Howard Watkinson wielded his baton with a verve which compelled the forces to sing out, making this group worthy recipients of the cup for unison singing. Also commended were the entries from School House (*I Get By With a Little Help*, again by Lennon and McCartney), Mearns' (*I Got Rhythm* by George Gershwin) and Wilmore's (*The Gasman Cometh* by Michael Flanders and Donald Swann).

Grand Christmas concerts

As usual, the Christmas concerts exhibited a wide variety of different types of music making and an large array of styles. The Brass Band brought proceedings to an arresting start with a military march by Faulds, and arrangements of *Stardust* and *Jingle Bells* respectively. Second Wind Band had their answer to this waiting, not least with a lively performance of the Fifties hit *Rock Around the Clock*. This hedonistic mood was then foiled to some extent by the strings of the Chamber Orchestra who provided an engaging and sensitive performance of Elgar's well-loved *Serenade for Strings*. The first of two concertos in the evening featured Matthew O'Donovan as the soloist in Bach's newly-reconstructed Viola Concerto. Matthew's grasp of the implications of the style was impressive and a warm, glowing sound was coaxed from his (large) instrument.

Aside from a march for (or against?) the Luftwaffe, the First Wind Band delighted us with a selection from the original film score of *White Christmas*, which in the same spirit was followed by a vital rendering of four songs from *Gyps and Dolls* by the First Year Choir. The musical had certainly been a hit amongst our First Year brethren. The first half of the concert was ably brought to a close by the Big Band, hot on the heels of their recent CD release. Their programme included an impressive world première of a piece by

William Bartlett which demonstrated an astonishing understanding of the medium and idiom in one so young.

Second Orchestra kicked off the second half, directed as usual by A level musicians. Their popular items included works by Richard Strauss, Tchaikovsky and Rimsky Korsakov. The populace was still very much in mind with the choice of the main title of the original film score of *Star Wars* which began the last leg of the concert given by the First Orchestra. The piece belies its sound to the extent in that it is virtuosically complex and thus difficult to hang together. The same is to some extent true of the Khachaturian Violin Concerto, although its idiom is altogether more abstruse. Matthew Hodgson gave us a carefully-conceived and highly convincing performance which unequivocally demonstrated the percussive and lyrical qualities of the instrument in equal measure. The Britten *Courtly Dances* which followed almost came as a relief from such intensity, before the players and audience were swept along by the Bohemian pathos of the second Liszt *Hungarian Rhapsody*, which brought the concert to a close.

The musicians of Abingdon collapsed in a heap, justifiably self-satisfied in repose. They were content with a veritable feast of music-making to round off the term.

**a report of two concerts,
held in Amey Hall on
December 10th and 11th,
by RSE**

Piano recital

Towards the end of September, Nicholas Hodges, an internationally renowned pianist, held a recital in the Amey Hall. It was attended by a supportive audience, consisting mainly of the School's young pianists, and also parents.

The programme contained a rich variety of works, dating from the romantic period to the present day. The first half opened with a sonata by Berg, followed by several pieces by Schoenberg, all of which were unfamiliar to the audience. Then, before the interval, Debussy's second set of études was performed. This work, which is technically very demanding, certainly impressed many with its high degree of chromaticism

and its sense of fluidity.

The second half of the concert consisted mainly of romantic works, written by such composers as Chopin and Liszt. All of these were performed superbly and with a great intensity of emotion. The recital ended on a high note with Bartok's piano sonata, a powerful and exciting piece which demonstrated the composer's characteristic percussive style.

The recital proved very successful and it was enjoyed by all. It provided an excellent opportunity for all those who attended to gain a sound knowledge of the piano repertoire as well as various performing techniques.

**a report of a piano
recital given by Nicholas
Hodges in Amey Hall
on September 26th,
by K Cheung**

Sports reports

2nd XV

13/9 Bloxham (A) Won 32-14
20/9 Marlboro' (H) Lost 20-27
4/10 MCS (H) Won 41-5
11/10 Stowe (H) Won 7-5
15/10 Oratory (A) Lost 0-3
8/11 St. Edwards (H) Lost 13-31
15/11 Pangbourne (A) Lost 8-27
26/11 Newbury (H) Won 37-6
29/11.97 Shiplake (H) Won 55-0
6/12 Radley (H) Lost 0-15
report by PER
illustration by N Hayes

The record suggests only a moderately successful season, but this would not do the team justice. Throughout the term, every effort has been made to play open, fifteen-man rugby. In the first three fixtures, and especially against MCS, this was certainly true, even though we were edged out by an even more determined Marlborough, having lost three of our players through injury during the match.

The Stowe fixture was played in driving rain, and the result could have gone either way. Our defeat by a very good St. Edward's XV could have been accepted if we had not suffered some indifferent refereeing at

Oratory and Pangbourne. Against St Bartholemew's (Newbury) and Shiplake, both the refereeing and the standard of the team were improved, leading to very good wins.

Finally, the much-vaunted Radley team was limited to two tries in a game where again we tried to attack from all parts of the field.

Leading scorers were Jones (six tries), Benson and Mills (three tries each), and Papps, Orr, Pank, Hemsley, Adams and Butler with two tries each; Allen and Lewis scored nine and four conversions respectively, and Allen scored three penalties.



4th XV

As a new arrival at Abingdon School, my expectations of Fourth XV Rugby were not particularly high. Thankfully, I was proved wrong in the very first encounter of the season, against Bloxham, where an explosive start gave us a try very early on, setting the pace for an excellent victory. Unfortunately, our form peaked too early and our supreme fitness and commitment were not enough to pull us through against strong opposition from Marlborough, Stowe and St. Edwards.

The season, however, turned with a strongly fought out away victory against Pangbourne with I. Sonuga scoring a scintillating try, which was successfully converted by B. Hunt to give Abingdon the extra two points essential for victory.

This upsurge in form continued against Shiplake's rugby league strength side where our victory was helped by some surprisingly swift breaks from O.

Smith and the sterling scrum-half play of the Thirds' skipper J. Wearne.

The final game of the season, against Radley, was, as expected a "Clash of the Titans". Monstrous line-out jumping from D. Hammond and a superb solo try from S. Fabes were, again, not enough to secure victory in a tough and evenly fought contest, which we eventually lost.

Many thanks must go to Mr. Beasley and Mr. Garnier for their coaching, cajoling and, all too occasional, cheering.

The following players represented the Fourth XV: O. Smith, S. Fabes, T. Hester, C. Rendell, A. Chater, R. Dawson, E. Allen, D. Hammond, J. Anderson, J. Sasanow, T. Schulte, B. Hunt, P. Norbury, D. Cundell, D. Sivarajah, A. Campbell, S. Rutland, M. Kom, J. Smethurst, B. Aston, J. Watts, T. Myatt, S. Duckworth, T. Andrews, I. Sonuga, B. Mason.

13/9 Bloxham (H) Won 41-0
20/9 Marlboro' (A) Lost 5-11
11/10 Stowe (H) Lost 0-7
8/11 St. Edwards (H) Lost 0-48
15/11 Pangbourne (A) Won 7-5
29/11 Shiplake (H) Won 27-0
6/12 Radley (H) Lost 7-14
report by R Dawson
illustration by N Hayes



Senior Colts A XV

13/9 Bloxham (H) Won 3-0
20/9 Marlboro' (H) Lost 6-10
4/10 MCS (A) Won 50-10
11/10 Stowe (A) Won 23-14
15/10 Oratory (A) Won 17-0
18/10 RGS High Wycombe
(H) Lost 14-24
8/11 St. Edwards (A) Lost 5-31
15/11 Pangbourne (H) Won 31-13
19/11 Reading (A) Won 15-12
29/11 Shiplake (A) Won 30-0
6/12 Radley (A) Lost 20-36

report by L Whibley
and J Kingsley

There was an air of expectation at the beginning of the season, since we had ended last year with a win over Sedburgh, Will Carling's former school. Having started off with a tight win over Bloxham, we lost by four points to Marlborough, who had been unlucky to have their two key players from last year taken away.

We decided that more ideas were needed in attack, as all the points thus far had come from the boot of Tom Fleming (whom the team sadly lost through his decision to take up golf full-time after this match). We worked hard on the practice ground, and our determination paid off as the wins came rolling in against MCS, Stowe and Oratory.

High Wycombe and St. Edwards disrupted this run of sometimes scintillating rugby, and two defeats were suffered, causing a loss of confidence amongst the players. However, there is one thing that this team has plenty of, despite the front of happy-go-lucky, joyful carelessness; guts. Because of this, the season got back on track with a series of three wins, this time against Pangbourne, Reading and Shiplake.

And then came Radley. The commitment and determination of those playing should have (and nearly did) result in an historic Abingdon victory against a Radley side which had been previously untouchable. An opening try from Nick Hambridge in the first minutes of the game sent Radley reeling: they knew that they were in a game this year. They came back into the match and snatched a 12-5 lead with two well constructed tries. A penalty from Jon Gardner (our new-found kicker) was answered by Radley with one of the dodgiest tries ever. They scored again, but once more Abingdon faced up to the adversity full-on, and an individual try by Gardner put a different complexion on the game. 24-15 was not impossible to overcome. The sidelines were filling up as news spread that Radley were in desperate need of support. Wave after wave of the men in black (our new strip colour) swarmed over Radley's line, and a quick tap penalty caught them by

surprise; the score was suddenly 24-20.

The battle heated up once more, and J. Kingsley had to visit the hospital with a ripped ear. Radley then broke through a counter attack twice and scored tries. Do not be fooled by the scoreline. We grew up in this match. It showed how much we had improved; having been unable to score a try against Bloxham, we had scored three against Radley.

J. Wilson, P. Batchelor and G. Wilson-North were solid as ever up front, having been an unchanged unit for well over two years. With the help of B. Grady and O. Norman-Longstaff, who were immense in the loose, they formed a front five with just one flaw: the lineout was never quite right, and even many changes did not solve the problem.

Abingdon has had a reputation for highly skilled back rows, and ours was no exception with J. Kingsley, S. Curran, S. Balch, M. Shields and T. Coe all working together, rotating on a squad basis and doing their part to ensure the ball for the backs. J. Gardner proved to be an aggressive, strong and (most important) cocky scrum half and capped many performances with fine tries. L. Whibley (Captain), making up the other half of the partnership, orchestrated a back line, combining speed and power. W. Ferguson, P. Tolley and S. Balch all filled the boots at inside centre and did so with great aplomb. M. Terry was inspirational and was a delight to watch. No team is complete without a quick and mobile back three, and in T. Humi, N. Hambridge and P. Barry scything through defences at incredible pace (with R. Fabes as their able back up, venturing forward with devastating effect), we certainly had one to be proud of.

This team would not have been half as successful without the coaching of Mr. Broadbent and Dr. Sharp, who helped us all grow in skill and self-confidence. Thanks must also go to our group of weather-hardened supporters who braved every element to watch us play.

Senior Colts C XV

This season once again highlighted the problem that we have in competing with large boarding schools at this level of rugby. The season began in the sun against Marlborough; after a keenly fought first half, a narrow lead developed into a second-half rout as Marlborough's superior early season fitness and strength paid dividends. They were eventual winners.

Our next game took us to rural north Oxfordshire for an inaugural match against Kingham Hill's "A" XV. In a closely fought match, the final outcome was determined by a breakaway try after a period of sustained Abingdon pressure. The two try margin which was indirectly created proved to be too much to make up, and Kingham won.

Confidence was restored at Stowe, in what was our best performance of the season. A game of open, fast-flowing rugby in difficult conditions turned a scoreless first half into a victory. We were brought back to earth with a severe bump in our next match against St. Edward's, with a heavy defeat. This was the one match in which we were totally outclassed in all areas at all times. For those involved it should act as a lesson for

what we should aspire towards achieving.

Shiplake, as always, was a tough, hard-fought match, with Abingdon's overall strength and skill eventually securing the win in what was at times a close game; it could have been a wider margin. Our final game, at Radley, ended in defeat and highlighted the problem which we encountered at various times during the season, namely losing concentration and giving away tries at key points of pressure in the match. The quality of the rugby played, however, demonstrated the progress made by all in terms of teamwork, individual skill and fitness.

The main strength throughout the season was our forward skill and power, whilst the slick handling of the backs was not matched by their frequent poor tackling; this gave away tries at crucial times. Outstanding progress within the forwards was made by Anthony Trill, whilst Quentin Letts emerged as the leading back despite his inability, on occasion, to release the ball. Good organisational ability and leadership was forthcoming from the Captain, Edward Pajak. Many thanks to all involved. I have certainly enjoyed the term.

20/9 Marlboro' (H) Lost 7-45
Kingham Hill (A) Lost 12-32
11/10 Stowe (A) Won 32-0
8/11 St. Edwards (H) Lost 53-0
29/11 Shiplake (A) Won 10-5
6/12 Radley (A) Lost 19-32
report by DE



Junior Colts A XV

13/9 Bloxham (A) Won 22-5
20/9 Marlboro' (A) Won 17-5
4/10 MCS (H) Won 66-0
11/10 Stowe (A) Won 36-5
15/10 Oratory (H) Won 24-12
18/10 RGS H. Wycombe (A) Lost
15/11 Pangbourne (A) Lost
19/11 Reading (A) Won 22-17
29/11 Shiplake (H) Won 19-7
6/12 Radley (A) Drew 7-7
report by ADW and SPD

One of the great attractions of coaching rugby is the gradual unravelling of a team's physical and psychological attributes. Much was and is expected of this age group, and they did not disappoint. On reflection, the statistics seem encouraging, yet there is more than a tinge of frustration that this team did not go unbeaten. Optimistic maybe, perhaps even arrogant, but this team has shown that it is capable of taking on the very best of schoolboy teams. Now they have to build on what has been achieved and get better. We feel this side will do that.

The first half of the season reflected the way that we wanted to play. We searched for width in our game, and tried to involve everyone in the ethos of total rugby. The thing which pleased us most was that we kept hold of the ball. This gave the side the ability to put other sides under pressure, no matter who they were playing against. Our record in the first five games was impressive; there were excellent wins over Bloxham, Marlborough, Stowe, MCS and Oratory. And then we met High Wycombe.

After half term we suffered a heavy defeat at the hands of Pangbourne, but this debacle raised a number of interesting issues. Next season those who play for the A XV will need to find answers to the sheer size and abrasive style of the Berkshire side, and certain players will have to come to terms with the idiosyncrasies of some referees. We suspect, though, that the human psyche will have an even greater part to play. Thankfully we accepted that in defeat much could be gained, and an excellent win at Reading set us up nicely for the remaining two games against Shiplake and Radley. Both matches were absorbing affairs (rather too much for some) and they reflected the determination and will to succeed which, we have no doubt, will

carry this team to even greater glories.

This report has so far failed to single out any one player; after all, rugby is a team game. However, we must pay tribute to the outstanding captaincy of William Baker, who really does lead from the front. We shall never forget his response when he was informed that he could not play against Radley; we just wish that many others would follow his excellent example of good sportsmanship.

What of the future? Most sides win games because they dominate the set pieces, and next year the lifting law will improve that aspect of play and benefit a pack which is short on height. An increased base fitness level, better individual skills and greater emphasis on collective techniques when under pressure will all be important if this team is to sustain a fluid game. If this is to be achieved then the majority must follow the example of the minority and train with the same level of intensity as they display when playing a match. Similarly, players have to learn to absorb pressure because, it is the nature of the game under modern laws that good sides are able to retain possession.

In conclusion, this has been a highly successful season, and the commitment from the players has been fantastic. This side can certainly build on this strong foundation. The manpower is there; now the team has to create the environment in which it can play successfully. We will follow its development with keen interest, and a certain amount of envy.

Those who played were W. Baker, K. Ma; N. Williams; D. Smith, D. White, J. Hayden, K. Shaikh, S. Allen, J. Wilcox-Jones, P. Thomas, J. Mather, O. Thomas, I. Downie, D. Wilson, M. Beckett, C. Hughes, S. Perkins and G. Unsworth.



Junior Colts B XV

We have had a successful season, as the statistics show, with everyone improving their game. New boys to Abingdon soon fitted into patterns of play learned in the Second Year, and a strong team developed. As a result there was competition for places, with key players being promoted to the A team.

Our first match, against Bloxham, was won easily, a good result considering that the team had only been together for two weeks. Next was Marlborough, our first big game. This was a close encounter, but we were victors partly because of David Procter's drop goal in the final few minutes of the game.

The team's form continued against MCS with a good win, largely thanks to Richard Kershaw in the centre. He darted and weaved, broke the MCS line a number of times and was rewarded with a number of tries. He was promoted for the rest of the season. Matthew Stalker played a steady game at centre all season, with his partner changing a number of times, until Ross Wheeler claimed the position with some robust tackling and straight running. Together with David Procter and Edward Dingwall at half back, they orchestrated some good moves in the backs.

Against Oratory, the forwards faced a much bigger but slower pack, by getting to the rucks quickly and by driving over they were able to create a good platform for moves which were finished off by a speedy Christopher Brads. Tom Gallard worked hard all afternoon and was rewarded with a try. During the season

he made many match-saving tackles, led the pack by example, and combined well with Tom Kingham and Walter Gervers. He was sorely missed when he too was promoted.

Our first home match, against RGS High Wycombe, broke our unbeaten run. Later we had a lucky win against a superior St. Edward's side, who failed to take their chances; we defended fearlessly, with Daniel Easterbrook having an excellent game. Against Pangbourne there was too much individual effort in the first half, but the forwards combined together in the second half, rucked well and created space for our wings to score. Against Reading, the lack of good tackling again let us down, and although we took the lead with another excellently-taken Procter drop goal, Reading's number eight sprinted through in the last few minutes to gain the win. The game at Shiplake was played in mud, rain and cold; neither team got going, and in spite of a lot of encouragement from our captain Walter Gervers, the many technical mistakes were severely punished by the referee.

We could not match Radley in technical skill in the forwards and slick handling in the backs. This was the game of the season, but their speedy wingers, and seven other players who had filled A team places at some time during the season, were far too good for us.

Many thanks are due to Mr. Burrow, Mr. Evans and Mr. Hamilton for all the support, expert advice and encouragement throughout the season.

Played 10
Won 6, lost 4
Points for 196, points against 87
report by E Dingwall
and C Brads

Junior Colts C XV

With a considerably-expanded fixture list compared with recent years, 1997 turned out to be, in terms of enthusiasm, commitment and general enjoyment, a very successful season. Unfortunately this was not reflected in our results, but in good wins against Oratory and Shiplake the team was rewarded for its efforts. Indeed, at no time in any game did their heads drop, despite on occasion being well behind in points scored.

Keeling led the team by unostentatious but steely example, while Salmon was a reliable right-hand man leading the pack. Markham and Ritchie were very

effective in the loose, until they were poached by the B XV, while Szurko, Howe and Fuggle all developed markedly as competitive forwards over the term. In the backs, Andrews marshalled his line effectively, while the penetrating running of S. Evans and the fearless tackling of Farrant and Cox were always a pleasure to watch.

Above all, a real team spirit developed and a genuine sense of disappointment was evident when the season came to an end. Many of this team will be competing for places in the B XV, if not the A's, if they continue their rugby next year.

Played 7
Won 2, lost 5
report by SCW

Rowing

report by R Hutchins
and A White

We left Abingdon at some ridiculous hour of the morning of Friday 24th October. After a long and uncomfortable journey, we arrived in Toronto and realized just how cold Canadian winters are. Picking up our buses for the drive down to St. Catherine's, we arrived at the boathouse after dark, and thus did not have a chance to see the lake until the next morning. When we did, we were shocked; it was huge.

We got down to the serious business of rowing at 8.00 a.m., and rowed in eights, fours and pairs. We went out rowing three times a day, and took intermittent "snack" breaks (actually meals) at Tim Horton's doughnut emporium, where we consumed copious quantities of bagels, doughnuts and cake, often buying the shop out.

The highlight of the week was a trip to Niagara Falls, including a walk underneath the falls in the net-

work of tunnels. On the same day we also tried to go to the USA to go shopping (the border only being an hour away), but were denied access; we must have been a sinister-looking bunch.

In all, the week's training was good as well as productive, and on the last day we raced two Canadian eights, both containing internationals. The B eight beat the women's eight easily, and the A eight fought a closely-contested battle with the men's eight, winning the first and losing the second of two races.

The week was a great success, mainly thanks to the great hospitality of the billets and the warm welcome which we received everywhere we went. It was an enjoyable experience, and we owe a great deal of thanks to Mr. Martin and Mr. Garnier for looking after us, as well as to Mr. Macdonald for driving us to Gatwick.

Badminton

20/9 Bloxham A (H) Won 8-1
Bloxham B (H) Won 9-0
27/9 Radley A (A) Drew 6-6
Radley B (A) Won 8-0
4/10 Marlboro' (H) Won 7¹/₂-1¹/₂
7/10 Rugby U19 (H) Won 9-0
Rugby U16 (H) Won 9-0
11/10 Cheltenham U19 (A) Won 8-1
Cheltenham U16 (A) Won 8-1
18/10 Bradfield A (H) Won 9-0
Bradfield B (H) Won 10¹/₂-1¹/₂
8/11 Bloxham A (A) Won 6-3
Bloxham B (A) Won 9-0
12/11 Oratory A (H) Won 8-0
Oratory B (H) Won 7-2
15/11 Wellington (H) Won 8-0
2/12 Stowe A (H) Won 8-1
Stowe B (H) Won 4-2
report by IAM

The nearest that we have come to defeat this term was when the U19 B team lost a few games to Radley's U19 A team. Fortunately the U16s had defeated Radley U19 Bs so heavily that even that fixture was won overall.

Otherwise, there has been a remarkable unbroken sequence of victories, and we have such strength in depth that it has been possible to field almost totally different teams in the various age groups, and still be fairly confident of success. It cannot be totally coincidental that we have enjoyed the example and coaching of former Olympic Badminton player Julie Bradbury last season and this.

The continuing regret is that the Oxfordshire Schools' League remains dormant, and hence we can

get no fixtures where full teams of U14s or U12s can have an outing. Overtures to local schools and nearby preparatory schools have not been fruitful.

Abingdon has been represented by W. Lui, V. Lee, K. Kobayashi, P. Biggs, A. Brown, J. Yau, An. Harsono, A. White, J. Spearing, J. Tarasewicz, B. Adrian, A. Aziz, J. Earley, B. Longworth, L. Chan, T. Frankum, J. Chang, M. Yeung, Al. Harsono, R. Tattersall, J. Ma, E. Webber, P. Slater, N. Page, D. Cole, D. Mitchell, Y.Y. Dong, A. Bitmead, J. Mendelsohn-Malik. Colours are held by W. Lui, V. Lee, K. Kobayashi (Captain), P. Biggs (Secretary) and A. Brown. Half colours are held by J. Yau, An. Harsono, A. White, J. Spearing, J. Tarasewicz, J. Earley, B. Longworth, L. Chan, T. Frankum, M. Yeung, R. Tattersall, E. Webber, P. Slater, and A. Bitmead.

Hockey

report by P Edwards

A squad of thirteen players went to RAF Uxbridge on 10th December for a practice match against the station's team. Rolling subs confused some players, but it was a very useful run out. We lost 3-1, which was very

disappointing, but the result did not match the play. We played well in both halves, and there were some very encouraging signs for the season to come. With the squad available, this may turn out to be very successful.

Shooting

report by SH

This term we have run two sessions each week, with Mondays reserved for team shooters and the Wednesday afternoon split in two; the early part of the afternoon is for general practice, and the second half reserved for trainee shooters in the Third Year. Such has been the demand that the Third Years can only come every other week, as one of them records below:

"Every other Wednesday afternoon at 3.45 p.m. I go to the Indoor Range for shooting. We normally fire at two separate targets, one after the other, using five rounds at each one and trying to get the best group possible. Probably the best set of groupings which the Third Year have got this term have been half inch groups, which is hard to get because every hole has to be touching the other ones."

There are some very impressive shooters emerging in the Third Year, and the sixteen regular firers will

probably be ready for team shooting by the end of the summer. Higher up the School, we have not been able to field a Senior team this term, though a new member of the activity, Sam Cavender has proven to be a phenomenal shot and has rapidly progressed to the challenging "ten bull" target even though he fires the right-handed rifle left-handed. William Skjott has also proved to be a 'natural', but has been unable to practise regularly owing to other sporting commitments.

The Junior team saw off opposition from Ardvreck and Oratory to come a close second to Marlborough in division five of the BSSRA league this term; Philip Ball has been a remarkably consistent Captain (average 93.6), ably supported by Michael Bungey (89.75), Ben Hancock (89.8) and Francis Kynaston-Pearson (88.2). Alex Hutchinson was a valuable reserve.

Lower School sports

The Minors A rugby team practise on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays with Mr. Drummond-Hay and Mr. Slatford. We have played five matches so far this term, and won three of them. Our hardest match was against the Dragon (we lost 35-0). They were a very big, fast and strong team who deserved to win. Our easiest match was against Christ Church; we won 32-0, but we did not play very well. Our top try scorer is probably Richard Morrice (left wing) and then our captain, John Chater (number eight).

The Minors B rugby team have had an average season this year, top scorers being Mark Johnson and Tom Jackson. Overall we have played quite well, but our lack of victories is due to selfishness. Rugby is a wonderful sport, very fierce and fast.

This term Abingdon and St. Helen's have been sailing at Farmoor Reservoir. The water is really cold but we cope. I really enjoy sailing because you meet new people and get the chance to sail and enjoy new boats.

Dr. Gunn is taking canoeing for the Lower School. In the first session we started with the hard but obvious task of getting into the boat. The next task was to do the roll, which some beginners (including me) sneaked out of. At the end, when we were called into the middle, my canoe was heading in the wrong direction, so I turned sharply and ended up doing a roll whether I liked it or not.

Mr. Barrett takes our swimming club on Wednesdays from 1.30 to 2.45 p.m. It is great fun and

not just swimming lengths. We do water polo, relays, fun swims, tournaments and diving or jumping off the diving board. Once we even did snorkelling, which was brilliant. Mr. Dawswell also takes a swimming club for Middle School.

On Tuesday lunch breaks Lower School boys can come to the Sports Hall and practise basketball. Mr. Hamilton teaches us new skills and improvements to our game, like muscle stretches and how to do the perfect lay-up. So far we have had no organised games, but that is because there are not enough people and we are too young.

Every Thursday lunchtime, Mr. Mansfield referees three football games of ten minutes in the Sports Hall. The First and Second years play on alternate weeks. We play from 1.10 until 1.40 p.m. The first and last players help to set-up and pack away, and it is really good fun.

Although no Lower School badminton matches have been played, a tournament was held in aid of charity. There is an easy-going, friendly atmosphere. Equipment is supplied and, whatever standard you have reached, you still have fun. Badminton is highly recommended.

Each time I go cross-country running it seems to get easier. The first time I went out it was hard because I was not very fit. I really enjoy competing in races when it is wet, because I love getting muddy. Matthew Cullen and I are among the youngest in the team, but it never stops us.

reports by D Puri, S Jones,
B Townsend, A Livingstone,
J Calnan, M Johnson,
I McKenzie, J Cousin,
M Martin, N Yeung, P Craig

CCF reports

Field training exercise

**a report of a two-day
cadet exercise, during
Half Term, at Bramley,
by DC and SH**

As Half Term began, some thirty Cadets from the RAF and Army sections travelled to Bramley training area for a two-day exercise.

The first night and day were spent training in various skills; night patrolling techniques, ambush drills, patrol harbours, weapons training, and section attack formations. A competition was held at the end of the day to see who was best at section attacks, and unsurprisingly it was the Army who emerged victorious.

This preparation complete, the exercise proper began under the direction of Lieutenant Carson. The first phase involved the Army, under Sergeant Bourne-Taylor, moving out to take up a new overnight location. The two RAF squads, under Sergeants Biggs and Ferguson, were tasked with undertaking patrols along two separate routes before meeting at a rendezvous and moving to the next phase.

Lieutenant Carson moved around the training area in the Land Rover to act as enemy and deny any patrols the use of tracks and roads, before he drove to the Army section's new position. On arrival, he found that they had not yet made it there. Some vigorous undergrowth-crunching announced the arrival of a rather strung-out Army squad, which then took part in some amateur dramatics entitled "How to be Heard by Enemy Patrols at Night". This was stage-managed to allow the RAF patrols to judge the Army's position before putting in an attack.

The Army, meanwhile, set up a snap ambush and

were ready and waiting. It is rewarding to see one's underhand tactics come to fruition, and some fifteen minutes later the two RAF patrols walked straight into a very loud and fierce firefight. Lieutenant Carson's position may have given him a good field of vision, but it also left him strangely exposed to gunfire from both sides...

The RAF then returned to base and prepared to bed down, after posting sentries. The Army, replenished with hot soup, now had time to "bivvy up" for the night in the non-tactical glare of headlights. The RAF were naturally expecting a night attack on their location, but the question was "when?"

The answer was supposed to be 0630. Lieutenant Carson was at the appointed rendezvous, an old Whirlwind helicopter, to meet the Army at that time, but where was his gallant band? 0645; silence. 0700; crash, crunch. A herd of cattle? Crash, crunch, "ssh". Yes, the Army section had arrived.

"Sorry, Sir, we overslept. The alarm went off but only Lewington heard it and he couldn't be bothered to get up."

Alarm clocks on exercise? Whatever next?

The attack therefore went in at 0715; not exactly a dawn raid, but the best which could be managed. Needless to say, the RAF were wide awake and ready.

Lessons were thus learned, and everyone had put in a reasonable effort, gaining a sense of satisfaction from what had been achieved.



Recruit training

reports by DC,
D Prior and C Mason

September saw the start of a new departure, with all new recruits to the newly-refounded Army Section and those in the RAF Section joining a Recruit Cadre to undertake a common syllabus of basic military training. Recruits will undergo two terms of training, culminating in a one-week camp in the Easter holiday, which will conclude with a passing-out parade where successful Recruits will be presented with the cap-badge and beret of their chosen unit.

We started this term with thirty-five recruits, and ended it with thirty, which is really very pleasing. They have been subjected to some repetitive square-bashing on some wet and cold afternoons. The term's training was expanded during the exeat weekend in late November. All the recruits worked very hard, and there was not one complaint; either they enjoyed themselves or they were too scared of being shouted at.

We are looking forward to next term, and expecting that those who have lasted this far will continue to put in maximum effort and complete their basic training in the Easter holidays.

After three quarters of an hour of waiting, reading my Cadet's Pocket Book and refraining with difficulty from consuming my emergency rations, I was finally bundled on to a minibus bound for Dalton Barracks, the former RAF Abingdon, with fifteen other Cadets. We were quickly ushered into the Junior Ranks' Mess, expecting an under-cooked meal of army bacon burgers and "biscuits brown", but were met by a nourishing meal of steak and chips with the regulars. We were then marched across the grass, down the perimeter track and the runway, before finally arriving at the disused airfield Control Tower. Flinging our heavy packs down, we waited for the officers, who trekked back along our mile-long journey to the barracks, expecting, but not getting, a meal in the Officers' Mess.

We spent the morning building bivouacs and practising fieldcraft, which we had run through the

night before. We had planned to visit a laser range to fire the GP rifle, but this was cancelled and so we returned to School for a session on weapons safety from Flight Lieutenant Hullis and Lieutenant Carson.

1730 on a Friday, and twelve camouflage-clad boys, hunched under the weight of full packs (toothpaste, deodorant, towels and lots of tuck), pile into a minibus on the Gravel. Five minutes later, twelve boys and packs pile out again at Dalton Barracks. The "Fifty-Eight" pattern webbing was already beginning to weigh heavily. Straight into supper, and dinners miraculously disappear. Plans are formulated to kidnap the cook and bring him back to School. Lieutenant Carson calls us outside into the freezing cold, and informs us of the kilometre walk in store. Perhaps smaller dinners would have been wiser.

After a brisk and refreshing stumble through the night air, Flight Lieutenant Hullis announces that although we know where we are, and where we are going, we are not quite sure how to get from the one spot to the other. Lieutenant Carson and Flight Lieutenant Haworth go off on a "recce", and we have an excellent opportunity to get rid of some of our excess tuck. The officers return, and we pull our packs on again (toothpaste, deodorant, towels, and not very much tuck).

Another pleasant little stroll, and we arrive at a small concrete shack with several broken windows. The officers hurry off for their dinner, but return with a McDonalds. A night exercise ensues, as we wander around in the dark pretending to be owls. This is enjoyed by all. We are then bundled into a barn to go to sleep.

In the morning, we all march off to breakfast and more cooknapping schemes. On our return to the shack we are daubed with camouflage cream before learning to turn into trees with Flight Lieutenant Hullis.

An OA remembers

On November 21st Mr. Hugh Lunghi MA (OA) came to the School to address the Sixth Form as part of their series of Friday afternoon lectures. Mr. Lunghi has had a fascinating career in his own right, but the main thrust of his talk was his memories of Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, since he interpreted at the great wartime and post-war conferences of Teheran, Moscow, Yalta and Potsdam.

an abridged version of a talk given by Mr Hugh Lunghi to the Sixth Form on November 21st, reproduced with his kind permission

The reason why I am able to share memories of the Big Three is that I played rugger, as we used to call it then. It was rugger which got me to Russia. At the start of my army service I was in an artillery regiment on exercise in the West Country. At half-time all the officers gathered in a pub in Taunton. One of the umpires was my fly-half when we played for the University Greyhounds, and he knew that I had a knowledge of Russian: "What the heck are you doing here? They are screaming out for Russian-speakers." On his return to GHQ he passed on the word. A few weeks later I was hauled out of my regiment. After a couple of months I was flying to Russia as ADC to the chief of our Military Mission there. So it was thanks to that incomparable team game, rugby, that I found myself standing and sitting literally at the side of our greatest wartime leader at four of the most momentous junctures of his life and our country's and Europe's history. He was facing probably the biggest mass-murderer ever, the ally we could not do without, Josef Stalin.

It was not many months after arriving in Moscow in 1943 that General le Q. Martel told me that I was to accompany him to Teheran at the end of November. There, without warning, I was ordered to interpret at what turned out to be the first of the so-called Big Three Conferences, code-named EUREKA.

Codes appealed to Churchill's sense of drama and mystery; he was, we thought, himself the author of all the well-chosen Conference code-names. EUREKA, "We've cracked it" (the fortunes of war had turned by then) for Teheran; TOLSTOY for Moscow (War and Peace); Yalta/Crimea, ARGONAUT, the quest for the Golden Fleece at Colchis; plain enough, as was TERMINAL for Potsdam, the last of the Big Three meetings.

The Prime Minister arrived in Teheran from Cairo where he and President Roosevelt and the Chiefs of Staff had met to discuss forward strategy, particularly the date of Overlord. Roosevelt had declined even to talk about a common approach to Stalin, much to Churchill's





**Lunghi (centre) with
Montgomery (2nd left)
in Moscow**

distress. He looked worried and irritable as he arrived in the British Legation. It was the second time I had seen him in my life; now he was a sturdy figure in Air Force uniform with his pilot's wings earned just before the First World War. He wore one of his service uniforms, most of the time, at all the Big Three Conferences.

What annoyed him more next day, as I gathered from crumbs of Chiefs of Staff conversations, was when his partner, our closest ally and benefactor, his friend, Roosevelt, refused to lunch or even to talk before they both met Stalin for the opening session that afternoon. The President said that he did not want Stalin to think they were ganging up.

The opening session was a bit of a shambles, not just because two of the American Chiefs of Staff had not been told about the meeting, so they had skipped off sightseeing up in the hills. Churchill was puffing on a cigar. I sat with our Chiefs of Staff, not called on to speak, so I had no interpreting to do. Stalin spoke, as always briefly and to the point, at times barely audible and with a strong Georgian accent. Churchill would begin his remarks with what I can only describe as a low, throaty purr, and then would come out with those wonderful ringing phrases of his. He did not like to be interrupted by his interpreter until he had finished his train of thought, which sometimes made it more difficult for us. For obvious reasons, one interpreted the words of one's own principal, except during informal chit-chat, when you were often interpreting both ways, oddly enough the easiest job.

Churchill's contribution, I remember thinking, was the most impressive, fighting his corner on military strategy against both Roosevelt and Stalin about the timing of Overlord and the opening of another front, pos-

sibly through the Balkans. In the long tally of history, as Churchill used to say, Teheran was certainly the most significant of the big Three Conferences, more important than Yalta. It was at Teheran that Churchill was at his magnificent best.

My next encounter with the PM was almost a year later in October 1944 when he came out to Moscow for talks with Stalin, mainly about Poland and Eastern Europe. It was at this TOLSTOY Conference that Churchill struggled to get the Polish Government in exile in London to accept Stalin's terms for the future of their country, the best he believed he could get for them. It was there too that Churchill passed to Stalin and Molotov, his Foreign Minister, the historic "slip of paper" with percentages indicating spheres of interest in Eastern Europe. Birse (Churchill's principal interpreter) and Pavlov (Stalin's usual interpreter) were the only other witnesses to this transaction.

In February 1945, after a seven-hour flight from Malta, Churchill landed in the Crimea, shortly after Roosevelt's aircraft had touched down. We watched as Churchill greeted Roosevelt and with touching concern, it seemed, following on foot the jeep from which the long-disabled President, now looking desperately ill, reviewed the guard of honour. They still had a tiring five-hour drive to their respective destinations. Ours was the slightly odd Vorontsov Palace overlooking the Black Sea. Stalin was in the Yusupov Palace about six miles away. Again, unsurprisingly after the taxing journey, the PM was not best pleased when he arrived, demanding to know why his daughter Sarah, then a WAAF officer, did not, as he had requested, have her room next to his quarters. The accommodation for the other VIPs was appallingly cramped. The PM, blissfully unaware of the

over-crowding, said "I don't know why they say it's inconvenient, I find it very comfortable indeed".

One of the most fateful episodes of the Yalta conference occurred at its opening session. It was then that Dresden's destiny was sealed. Among the many media myths historians have put about is that Churchill, "Bomber" Harris or the RAF as a whole were directly and personally responsible for the deliberate devastation of Dresden and its art treasures. The truth of the matter is this: at that first session I was listening and watching as Stalin and his Deputy Chief of Staff, General Antonov, each in turn urgently asked us and the Americans to bomb roads and railways to stop Hitler transferring divisions from the west and reinforcing troops which had halted the Russian advance on Berlin. The road and rail network (against which we already had contingency plans) was the target, not the city, certainly not the civilians. Antonov stressed the importance of Dresden as a vital rail junction. Churchill and Roosevelt had to agree. The following day Antonov again pressed the subject. I interpreted our assent. The bombing mission by the RAF and the US Army Air Force was a military success, but tragically and unintentionally inflicted enormous loss of civilian life which Churchill later deeply deplored. But, at the time, when there was a chance to shorten the war which had already cost so many lives, and indebted as we were to Stalin for relieving pressure on our front when the Germans launched the Ardennes winter counter-offensive, we and the Americans could not refuse.

Legend also has it that Eastern Europe was betrayed at Yalta. True, Stalin by that time held the trump cards: his armies were already in occupation of most of Eastern Europe. Sadly, the pass had already been sold by Roosevelt at Teheran, where he first advertised to Stalin his differences with his British ally Churchill and his relative indifference to Eastern Europe.

At the end of the conference we heard a dispirited Churchill say "That's done with and out of the way". He grumbled about the final communiqué: he had particularly objected to the over-use of the word "joint", as in, say, "joint agreement"; it reminded him, he said, "of the Sunday family roast of mutton." Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's closest adviser, on the other hand, hailed Yalta as "the dawn of a new age". Who was right? Of course, Churchill, who saw further ahead than anyone. But it is not just his vision we have to respect and admire. His courage and energy in making those arduous, dangerous wartime pilgrimages to meet the other Big Two were almost superhuman. Remember that he had pneumonia twice in one year, in February and again in December 1943, a couple of weeks after Teheran, as well as a heart attack and more illness to come. At the time we did not realize, because we did not know, the prodigious physical, let alone mental, strain which he must have been under.

What one remembers so well is the doggedness, the toughness, not without that old world courtesy and magnanimity, with which Churchill fought not just for Britain, but for Poland and France and for smaller nations too. Churchill also argued for fair play for the German people, as distinct from the Nazis.

Stalin trusted neither Churchill nor Roosevelt. Churchill, I think genuinely at first, held out the hand of friendship. Speaking of the Russian leaders he once said to us "I think Stalin is the most human of them all". President Roosevelt misguidedly, and disastrously, tried to ingratiate himself with Stalin by running Churchill down, behind his back. It did not help. Stalin's verdict was: "Do you think we trust them? Churchill will pick your pocket of the smallest coin; Roosevelt goes only for the bigger ones".

By the time that they met again in July 1945 at the Potsdam conference, TERMINAL, Truman had replaced



Berlin Conference of the Three Allied Powers



Roosevelt, who had died in April. We saw Churchill still battling on behalf of post-war Poland and France and the others at that last of the Big Three meetings. Half way through Potsdam we had a general election. Churchill, "the greatest modern British statesman", was dismissed by his beloved country. Although Churchill was to serve his country as Prime Minister a second time towards the end of his life, I regret that I never saw him face to face again after Potsdam. Stalin I saw and shook hands with several more times, after the war, in the Kremlin. My last indirect and sad connection with

Churchill, almost exactly twenty years after Yalta, was on the occasion of his state funeral, when it fell to me to organize its coverage for the Czech and Slovak broadcasts of the BBC World Service.

For the very reason that their relationship during the war had not been the easiest, the most fitting epitaph, it seemed to me, came from General de Gaulle, the chief foreign mourner. In his letter to the Queen, President de Gaulle paid this tribute, striking in its brevity: "Dans ce grand drame, il fut le plus grand": "In this great drama, he was the greatest."

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