



NMSC Newsletter

MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the first NMSC newsletter. It seems incredible to think that the Spring Term only began a few weeks ago. The students have already taken part in many curriculum and extra curriculum events which I am delighted to share with you in this newsletter.

This month, we have been asking the students to comment on both their boarding accommodation and their meals, through surveys and Student Council meetings. We have also been asking our teachers to suggest ways of enhancing our provision and experience at the College. In the next few weeks, I will be sending out a parent survey and I would like to thank you, in advance, for taking the time to complete this.

Next week, our newly formed NMSC boys Basketball team will pitch their talents against Westwood Academy, our neighbouring secondary school. We wish them luck in their first match.

And finally, we are about to say goodbye to the year of the rooster and welcome the year of the dog. We wish all our Chinese students and their families a happy and prosperous Chinese New Year.

With best wishes



Antonia Giovanazzi

Principal

Upcoming Events

February 16

Royal Society of Chemists Analyst Competition

February 23

2nd Parliamentors Session

February 25

Visit to the National Space Centre

Important Announcement

A reminder of Spring Term Dates:

Monday 8th January to Friday 23rd March

Half Term – Friday 16th February to Monday 19th February (inclusive)

Easter Holiday – Saturday 24th March to Sunday 8th April

Mid Term Break – Friday 25th May to Monday 28th May (inclusive)

Last Day of Summer Term – Friday 6th July 2018

A Royal Visit!

On Tuesday 16th January, Coventry was visited by the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, two members of the British Royal Family. The Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, is the Queen's grandson and the future King. They visited the city to open a new science research centre, and to congratulate the city for being awarded the title of UK City of Culture. Members of AO, accompanied by NMSC staff, went to meet the royals. It was a cold morning during which the students waited very patiently, and were rewarded with meeting Duchess Catherine in person, speaking to her and shaking hands.

In the words of our students,

"People were shouting, cheering and couldn't wait to shake hands with the Royals. Me, too! I stared at Princess Kate until she came and shook hands with me and said "Nice to see you". Everything happened so quickly, but it kept be excited for the whole day." - Sophia

"Whilst we were waiting for the Royals, a local old lady spoke to us. She was friendly and talkative. When I told her my English was not good, she encouraged me to not be afraid to speak as much as I can. She made me feel the kindness of local people". – Rainnie

Mr K Lambert



First College Cook Off

The inaugural NMSC Cooking Competition took place on Sunday 28th January in the two kitchens of the Residence; around 30 students were involved from all four tutor groups, some as chefs, some as helpers. The overall standard was outstanding – about 30 different dishes and cakes were produced and enjoyed by students and staff; Mr Hoult managed to try a bit of every single one and declared the competition to be an honourable draw. **Mr J Hoult**



The Trip to Bletchley Park by Ekaterina Sysoeva

During the Christmas break my sister and I watched a film named “The Imitation Game”. This work tells a story of one of the most outstanding and pivotal figures of the 20th century, Alan Turing. Being a brilliant mathematician, Turing worked in Bletchley, England as a cryptographer for the government and helped crack the code that Nazi Germany used to encrypt their military messages.

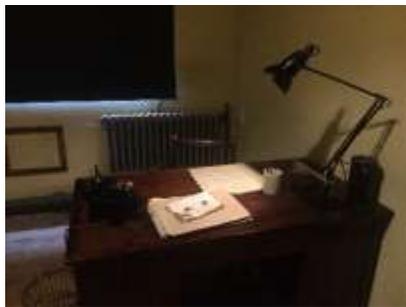
Being inspired by the film, I contacted my Maths teachers, Mrs Warren and Mr Haines, and offered to watch it with the whole college as it would be very mind-broadening for a lot of us. Not only did they like the idea, they also thrilled me with the fact that they had started organising a trip to Bletchley!

In order to fight the Germans in the WWII, British government founded the secret Government Code and Cipher School that was based in Bletchley Park, England. The primary goal of this organisation was to intercept German military messages and decipher them so that they could be used by the military forces of Britain and the Allies.

As everything was behind the scenes, there were different ways of recruiting people. Some of them were invited to work through challenging crosswords and puzzles published in newspapers and designed to determine their skills in deciphering; others, such as Alan Turing, were appointed by the universities. The first thing that all of the staff in Bletchley did is they signed the Official Secrets Act which meant

that none of the workers were allowed to mention anything about Bletchley to anyone as long as the government prohibited it. Then codebreakers were designated to different Huts (“departments”). Some of them worked on decrypting Morse code, others tried to decipher messages. This was the collaboration of both mathematicians and linguists as all the messages needed translating into English.

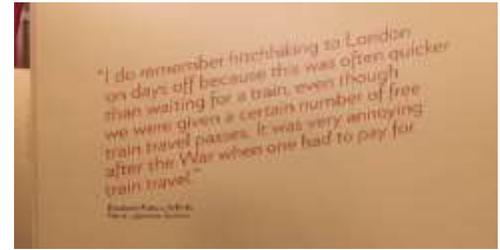
As we were touring Bletchley, I’ve noticed that all the Huts were surrounded by high and thick walls and all the windows were covered with black curtains or shutters. Such measures were taken in order to make Bletchley invisible during nights and protect huts from bombing.



People worked for eight hours a day during one of three eight-hour shifts. Because they worked under such pressure, The Bletchley Park Recreational Club was founded. As a result, workers got opportunities to spend their time after work playing in the theatre, performing music, participating in chess tournaments or playing volleyball or football. This enabled them to ease the tension that they must have constantly been because of long working hours.

Interestingly enough, people who worked in Bletchley were of approximately our age. The youngest member of staff was 14 whilst the rest were between 14 and 30 years of age. Overall, 75% of staff who worked on

deciphering German codes were women. And even though workers at Bletchley Park weren't given a salary, they were provided with free train tickets to get to work and meals.



But how did Germans encrypt their messages? Back in the days, it wasn't very hard to intercept radio messages. So in order to ensure secrecy, Nazi Germany used the modified version of a coding machine "Enigma" that allowed them to have 159 000 000 000 000 000 different possibilities of cipher. During the workshop on cryptography, we were able to work with the real Enigma! Also, we were explained the mechanism that Enigma uses to encrypt messages. On this photo, I'm standing next to the Enigma that was used in producing "The Imitation Game" film with Benedict Cumberbatch starring as Alan Turing!

To make it more challenging, Germans changed their setting every day at midnight. So by the time the messages were intercepted by the British, the decoders had only 18 hours to crack the code until it was changed again. Alan Turing realised that for humans it wouldn't be possible to determine all the possibilities on their own. Consequently, with the permission of Winston Churchill, along with the team of best mathematicians, he started working on a computing machine that supposedly would be able to conquer "Enigma". And he was right!

After months of work, his team produced the first of its kind computing machine, Colossus, that managed to break all the codes of Enigma! Unfortunately, after the war, all of the copies of Colossus were destroyed for secrecy reasons. But here at Bletchley visitors can see a replica, built according to the old schemes. We were very fortunate to see the demonstration of this matching working.



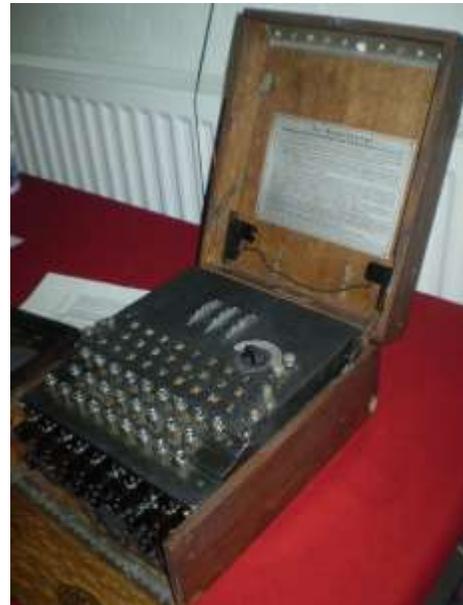
As you stroll around the Bletchley Park, you will come across a wall made out of red bricks with different names on them. Those names represent some of the decoders who worked in Bletchley towards achieving the common goal of defeating the Germans. Also, everyone who made a contribution to support Bletchley after the war, also has their names engraved. Here I'm standing near the wall and touching the brick that says "Alan Turing". There is also Morse code under his name. It says "V" which stands for Victory.

To say that I enjoyed the trip is not to say anything. The trip to Bletchley park was worth all the anticipation and was indeed very informative. I loved the opportunity to visit such an important place for the history of the UK and the world!

What I enjoyed about the trip is how interactive all the exhibitions are. Everything is open to public and is very accessible. If you are planning a trip to Bletchley on your own, make sure to devote a whole day to the tour. From Coventry, it will take you a quick hour to get to Bletchley. Wear comfortable shoes – there will be a chance

to wander near a beautiful pond, as well as many exhibitions to explore! The site is open throughout the year: 1 March – 31 October from 9.30 to 17.00 and 1 November – 28 February from 9.30 to 16.00. The official Bletchley Park website (<https://www.bletchleypark.org.uk/visit-us>) will provide you with detailed information on admissions and any questions regarding planning your trip. Enjoy!

Bletchley Park – Students and Teachers Try to Crack the Code



BLETCHLEY PARK
Home of the Codebreakers

First Visit to Parliament on Friday, 26th January 2018

The first visit to Parliament got off to a flying start; our party arrived just after 11am and we were immediately greeted by Mr Sun and Mr Robinson, who introduced us to our tour guides. We split into two parties for an official tour around



Westminster Hall, The House of Commons and The House of Lords. The guides were extremely knowledgeable and were able to skilfully impart their learning simply and at a pace that students could follow. What never ceases to amaze me about these visits is that each time I attend, I always discover something completely new, whether it is about an aspect of history, politics, architecture, engineering or art; there are always extra details that I had not known from previous visits.

After a superb lunch, we then visited the Wilson Room where Mr Robinson addressed our group and deftly engaged students to enquire further about aspects of the British Parliamentary process that emerged out of the tour. This was an excellent experience for improving the students' question forms and provoked a lively debate about democracy, history and the adversarial nature of our political traditions. Even those who are usually reluctant to speak, made some good contributions, which is very promising for future visits.

On our return journey back to Coventry, we began to consider topics which students might choose for their first Parliamentors' assignment: a piece of personal writing about what they found most interesting about the day.

We are looking forward to a return trip on 23rd February when we are going to listen to Mr Geoffrey Robinson's Private Members' Bill on a Body Organ Donation Opt Out Scheme! **Ms N Bruce**



Biology Olympiad Round 1 Results.

At the end of January Valentino Lew sat Round 1 of the 2018 UK Biology Olympiad. Over 7800 students participated nationally in this competition aimed to select a team to represent the UK in the International Biology Olympiad this summer. The first round of the BBO consists of two, 45-minute multiple choice papers and we are delighted to report that Valentino was commended for his score by the UK Olympiad Committee – congratulations.

Special mentions go to Anete Stakinova and Pierre Kostanteen two of our Year 1 students who chose to sit this extremely challenging paper a year early. Anete's excellent performance also saw her commended by the UK committee and Pierre performed exceptionally and he was highly commended for his achievements. Well done to all for taking part and doing so well in an extremely challenging paper – we are very proud of you all.



Biolympiads

Warwick University Spectroscopy in a Suitcase

We were delighted to host Ruth Patchett from the Royal Society of Chemistry and Warwick University at the beginning of February in the chemistry department. Infrared (IR) Spectroscopy is an analytical technique that uses a beam of infrared light to analyse the structure of organic compounds. IR spectroscopy is introduced in theory in A level chemistry but the specialist equipment goes beyond that held within College



Our Year 1 chemistry students the chance to learn more about spectroscopy through a hands-on workshop, where they all got to use some of the top of the range instrumentation that we learn about as part of the chemistry specification. As well as covering the principles of spectroscopic techniques, the activities use real-life contexts to demonstrate the applications of the techniques and the chemists were tested on their ability to analyse and interpret data to identify a range of organic compounds.

Ruth then shared her expertise with our Year 2 students who have been conducting a multi-step synthesis of aspirin in their chemistry lessons. Our students were able to run spectra of their starting material, intermediate compound and final product, which was a fantastic hands-on experience and opportunity to analyse data from their own compounds to confirm their identity. **Dr. P Robotham**



Edinburgh –by Anete Stakinova

When considering visiting the hilly capital of Scotland, you should understand that you are about to have a spectacular experience in your life that comes together with a tad of Scottish accent, Haggis and cold weather.

The quickest way to travel the 310 miles that it takes from Coventry to Scotland, is to use the “Virgin train” line. In 5 hours and 30 minutes you should be surrounded by the astonishing lights that come from the Parliament house and smoky gothic buildings.



There are many ways of entertaining yourself in Edinburgh. During eight weeks of summer the lively city offers 1,000 performances per day brought to the audience by comedians, actors and singers. I would like to bring to light the fact that Arthur’s Seat and The Castle of Edinburgh aren’t the only tourist destinations worth visiting. For those that appreciate the architecture, St Giles’ and St Mary’s cathedrals will astonish with the gothic shades, and for some that want to

see an interactive and more energetic side of the capital, Camera Obscura and World of Illusions, as well as The Museum of Scotland offer a hands-on experience just within minutes walk from the station. My friends, don’t get discouraged by the word “museum” - the building is in 5 floors so starting from fashion and animal, ending by technology and history lovers, everyone will find a point of interest and curiosity in this magical place. In contrast, although whilst planning the trip, The Edinburgh Dungeon seemed like a perfect place for young people where to have fun, I was very disappointed with the high entrance fee and the themes that couldn’t live up to the expectations. At the beginning of this article I introduced you to a mysterious thing called “Haggis”. It turns out that in Edinburgh they use this word to describe a traditional Scottish meal which for somebody who is not a big fan of a British cuisine, might be one of the easiest specialties for the stomach. The softball-sized mass of Sheep’s Pluck (heart, liver, lungs) minced with spices, onion and oatmeal can be found in the most part of city’s restaurants, including the five out of sixteen Michelin Star restaurants in Scotland that belong to Edinburgh. Nevertheless, deep fried Mars bars, bean sandwiches and square sausages seem to be even stranger things that you are going to be exposed to.

Finally, a great idea if planning on staying in the capital for couple days, is mastering the urban dictionary. Sometimes even with outstanding English skills it is not enough to communicate in Scotland. For example, the Scottish favorite word is said to be “numpty” the meaning of which is an ineffectual person. A dram or wee dram is a measure of whisky; scran is food; a close or wynd is a minor street; loch is lake; a law is a hill and a kirk is a church. This is just some vocabulary that will make your holidays in Edinburgh more exciting and enjoyable.

Estimated cost (2 days, one night): £140. See you in the heart of Scotland!