

# Awards Evening December 2004

**O**ur Annual Awards Evenings always seem to produce a number of unique moments and this school year's occasion again had some original elements to it.

Firstly, it was the newly appointed Headteacher David Blow's first major public event in his new role. Secondly, it was the first time that a member of the school's governing body had been invited as a guest speaker, and thirdly, it was Martin Jones' last Awards Evening in his capacity as Chair of Governors.

The principal purpose for this event is to celebrate success and achievement and for it to be recognised publicly. The sponsors' reception, the packed hall, the music and speeches, are all "trademarks of this perennially enjoyable evening and for many people connected with the school."

Martin Jones paid tribute to the legacy of the recently retired Headteacher, Arthur Webster. Guy Simmonds and Lindsay Jamieson gave the students' perspective on the previous school year and fortunately the speech from Mr Blow complemented the comments from the Head Boy and Head Girl! The strength of the school's outward vision came over as Guy and Lindsay spoke of the international links and Mr Blow continued this theme of partnership saying how much the recent Ofsted inspectors had been impressed by this facet of the school's work. Indeed, the excellent Ofsted report was, said Mr Blow, a testament to the hard work and dedication of many people.

Jim Baker, after presenting awards to over 160 pupils and students, spoke to the 500-strong audience of how his life had been transformed through international travel and how he had acquired qualities of tolerance and understanding as a result.

"You become flexible and adapt to change, and follow events with more intimacy and knowledge," he said.



*Jim Baker presents Emily May with the HSCB trophy for outstanding results at GCSE*



*Guy Simmonds, Jim Baker, David Blow, Martin Jones, Lindsay Jamieson*

Mr Baker quoted some interesting statistics for his audience. "75% of the world's population is unable to speak English, 60% of UK trade is with non-English-speaking countries, 40% of employers prefer their recruits to have had a broad education, and only 2% of the world's population can speak more than one language." He exhorted his young listeners to be part of this last group.

As a recent President of the Harvard Alumni Association, Mr Baker spoke

enthusiastically of the opportunities open to students to continue their Higher education in the United States and take advantage of the generous scholarship schemes available to students.

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## Channel 4 Award for The Ashcombe School

The Specialist Schools Trust issued the following Press Release about the award:

The Ashcombe School was presented with the Channel 4 Award for excellence in multimedia language learning at the Specialist Schools Trust's Annual National Conference, which was held in November.



*Helen Myers, Senior Curriculum Manager, receiving the award from Heather Rabbatts (left), Managing Director of Channel 4's education business4learning.*

The school was designated a Language College in 1998 and it has developed an ongoing training scheme in the use of multimedia resources for language staff.

A high number of staff are involved in the scheme which has been extended to include regular workshop days, held for those interested in multimedia technology locally, nationally and internationally.

Students at The Ashcombe also benefit from this commitment and multimedia facilities are integrated into students' programmes of study - a well developed shared area on the school network provides quick and easy reference to the resources available. In addition the facilities are used to promote language learning within the community in adult language evenings, primary pupil and parent sessions, 'taster' sessions in lesser-taught languages and the suites are also used by other schools.

Elizabeth Reid, chief executive of the Specialist Schools Trust, said:

"This is a remarkable achievement and we would also like to thank Channel 4, the award sponsor, for helping us to recognise the school's hard-work and commitment."

## Ofsted

We were delighted with the final report which reflects so much of the quality of life at the school and also identifies the areas of which we ourselves are very aware need further work. Throughout the whole process, all of those associated with the school were very supportive and we are very grateful for all the hard work that was put in to the inspection. It would be difficult to estimate accurately the time and cost of the current inspection system, and the school feels very comfortable with objective analysis and scrutiny of its performance. The summary report sent to all parents does not really indicate the enormity of the current system so you may be interested in some of the unreported aspects of the current inspection process that preceded the publication of the report.

- pre-inspection visit by the Reporting Inspector a month or so prior to the inspection during which he accompanied the headteacher to every morning lesson [fifty two "micro-lesson" observations took place]
- meeting for staff and then for parents with the Reporting Inspector
- an extensive pre-Inspection Commentary written by the school to give the inspection team an overview of all aspects of school performance and its range of activities
- preparation and writing by the headteacher and governors of extensive self-evaluation forms against which the performance of the school is measured by the visiting inspectors
- the week involved some students, staff and governors in many interviews
- a daily briefing for the headteacher from the Reporting Inspector on the progress of the inspection

- statistical data prepared to enable inspectors to evaluate performance and examine trends
- a community lunch for the inspectors and our partners in local schools and the wider community
- end of week feedback to staff, then later feedback to the governors.

The list could be made much more extensive, but the above serves to give you a flavour of the process. Changes from September 2005 will mean that future inspections will take place every three years instead of every six years, the school will have a couple of weeks notice instead of three months, and a handful of inspectors will be on site rather than the current average of about 16. Lessons will be sampled and judgements will be made based on the school's own assessment of its performance. Much of the information on the school is held now by the DfES so there is evidence to support or challenge findings. We believe that the new system will be less administratively cumbersome and more incisive.

## Year 11 Worldwide Quiz

The Geography department held the school rounds of the Worldwide quiz and after stiff competition from a number of teams, the final team of three (Tom Wood, Rob Higson and Leo Hemsted) were chosen to represent the school. The team then went to Kingston University for the regional round of this national competition. The boys did extremely well, answering some difficult general knowledge questions about the world and current affairs.

## Study Centre Children's Book Week

Children's Book Week was held in **O c t o b e r**. There were 192 entries this year, sixty up on last year. We also had other activities such as crosswords, word searches, drawing, quizzes and poems for National Poetry Day.

Activities for Children's Book Week also included five murder mysteries

(the most popular event of the year).

## Maths Visit

Mrs Carter and 15 Year 9's enjoyed a day doing Maths at Goodwood courtesy of the British Horse Racing Board. The day was entitled 'Maths in Action' and pupils were involved in practical applications of Maths such as estimating how many people would fit in the stands. They also had the opportunity to look round Goodwood and watch a race.

## Modern Foreign Languages Department European Day

The MFL department held a very successful European Day of Languages on Thursday 23rd of September. A large number of pupils took part in quizzes, which were held in the Ranmore Foyer and on the piazza. Many students won prizes and the MFL department handed out stickers in different languages.

## Year 7

Our newest and youngest pupils have settled into The Ashcombe way of doing things and took Photo Day, Games Day and Ofsted in their stride. A number of pupils were involved in a big fundraising event for the charity LEPPA. We had previously had a speaker in assembly from the charity who told us all about leprosy and how easy it was to treat. In November, 70 Year 7s gave up their lunchtime to do a sponsored 'Work-out'. We raised £671 that lunchtime, enough to "transform the lives of 32 people."

There was also the first Year 7 social event in December when Bradley Canteen was transformed into a Year 7 Disco.

## Year 7 Drugs Educational Event

The 'Natural High' team came into school to deliver the message about having a "good time" with music, friends, dancing and sport,



while staying in control of yourself and not putting yourself at risk.

## 12th October



Arranged by the Sixth Form senior prefect team, this social included a group of 30 Dutch students visiting the UK on a school trip. The additional student numbers successfully filled the Common Room and created a lively and friendly atmosphere with both groups mixing well. Everyone enjoyed dancing to the music provided by the Sixth Form Jazz Band (David Howarth on saxophone, Ben Laver on keyboard and James Hill on bass guitar).

Pre-planned party games ranged from Doughnut Limbo to Twister, plus a Singing Machine to develop quick conversation. Even the teachers joined in the party games. In addition, an authentic atmosphere was created with excellent decorations (spiders' webs included!) and fancy dress. Food and drink were also available, including a cake provided by the Dutch visitors..

In conclusion, a most enjoyable and satisfying evening was had with the added bonus of many new friendships being made.

## Meeting with neighbours

A letter and a copy of "Accent on Ashcombe" were sent out to our neighbours in Ashcombe Road and Croft Avenue informing them about the Bradley Arts Centre in particular and inviting them to a meeting at school to discuss that issue and any other points they wished to raise regarding their relationship with



## Comment

By the time you read this, an election may well have been called. Electioneering is certainly in the air at the time of writing and education is inevitably a "headline" issue. We are therefore bombarded by a plethora of proposals. It is an important time to reflect on our core values and the on-going nature of education. We have just completed Charities Week, raising about £2,500 for our established charities, the Romania project and the Royal Marsden, and for the Tanzania Fund. The work put into the week says much about the ethos of the school.

There are mutual benefits for many pupils, but particularly for the Sixth Form: the events were mainly organised by the Lower Sixth who showed initiative and responsibility and were involved in coordinating and advertising the daily events and the dress themes for each day. Several hundred pupils gathered in the Hall to watch performances by pupils and staff each lunchtime, enhancing the sense of shared enjoyment and involvement. And then the Hall had to be cleared and prepared for Year 10 and public modular examinations, demonstrating the variety and pace of life at a thriving school.

This rich tapestry is fundamental to the school and because the vast majority of pupils are positive and supportive, events such as Charities Week can take place. Whatever may or may not be happening at a national level, this strong sense of shared purpose will keep us true to our values.

*D.J.Blow*

## Careers Fair

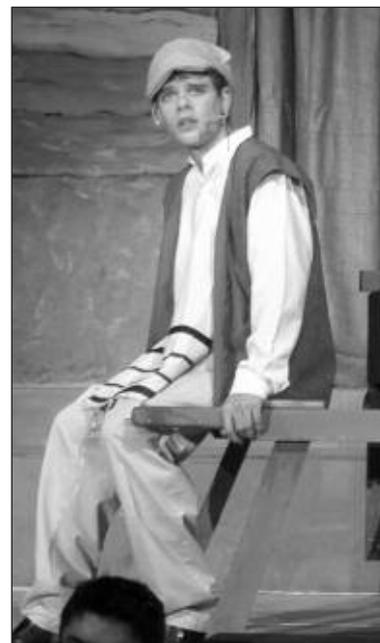
The biennial Careers Fair was again a superbly successful evening event with over 2000 visitors. Over 60 professions were represented and there were talks on Higher Education, the teaching profession, and vocational courses that were all new to this event and highly popular. We are very grateful to the PTA, UNUMProvident and Unilever for their support of this event, and to Benedict Business Resources for the event management and donation towards our costs.



## Fiddler on the Roof

### A view from the Musical Director

The production was a great success both musically and dramatically. The principals and chorus alike responded well to musical direction and produced a polished performance. Students and parents were keen to be involved in the orchestra so extra rehearsals were run. Student members of the orchestra were: Chris Tanton on trombone, David Howarth and Catherine Huxtable on clarinet, Lydia Reeve on cello, James Hill on bass guitar, Neil Strugnell and Neil Martin on percussion, Sam Cackett on keyboard and Christian Reeve on trumpet. These students were highly motivated and this will make a valuable contribution to their exam coursework. This was the first experience for some of the students of performing in this context. They have all said what a valuable and rewarding experience it was. This year one parent played trombone and five visiting instrumental teachers as well as staff from the music department supported staff from modern languages and IT!



### A view from the stalls

As Miss Goswell wrote in her programme notes, “the music is haunting and the story, while packed with humour, has a pathos which cannot fail to have an impact on all who see it.”

She was not wrong. Since the last production of this play took place at The Ashcombe, the world has witnessed the events in the Balkans, and the powerful message that the world does not learn from history was clearly made, particularly for the older members of the audience.

Miss Hayes writes about the music above. The acting complemented the quality of the orchestra’s performance. Matt Lawton as Tevye was superb and is to be congratulated on sustaining this demanding role throughout so many performances. Charlotte Dixson was very convincing as Yente the matchmaker. Simon Fellingham, Tom Stenton, Alex Brown and Dora Palache all enhanced their reputations as perennially accomplished thespians!

Finally, Chloe Keedy’s role as The Fiddler was brilliantly interpreted. Her playing and movements across the stage were masterful and it was a relief to see her around the school the following week walking around without her violin.

Congratulations are due to everyone who contributed in whatever capacity.

In a break from tradition, Miss Goswell announced the following week that the next production will be “My Fair Lady.”

# Out of School Visits

## Science Visit

A group of Lower Sixth students spent a day taking part in a Navy Engineering Challenge, hosted by East Surrey College. The day was led by female Naval Officer Lt. Jo Goodship. Honestly,

The challenge was to build an amphibious vehicle that could collect floating mines (ping pong balls) from a harbour (a paddling pool) while being controlled remotely from land. A method of propulsion that allowed the vessel to be steered was required, as was a light rigid structure to support it. All that would then remain would be to wire up the electrics, and see how many mines could be collected in three minutes.

Unanimously the teams adopted a relaxed approach: they assigned themselves the various roles, mused over their sketches, and once a consensus on the design had been agreed they ambled around the room collecting equipment. Three short workshops were given to help with each of the three tasks they faced, and guidance was on hand from two representatives from the Navy along with a couple of technicians from the college.

After extended breaks, as the testing deadline approached, the mood in the room changed. As anxiety about the impending public humiliation grew the activity became increasingly frenetic, in stark contrast to the morning session. The planned use of careful gluing and riveting was thrown aside, and copious amounts of gaffer tape were called for, naïve from a technical point of view, but unavoidable if the vessel was to be ready. Empty coke bottles were retrieved from the bins to provide the buoyancy that these hulking lumps of metal required.

To the amazement of the participants their machines actually worked, some more successfully than others. I'm not sure how much technical knowledge was gained, but some valuable lessons about delegating tasks within a team and working to tight deadlines were certainly learned.

*Mr Reeves*



## Geography Visit

On 12th October, 25 Year 13 students travelled down to Slapton Ley in South Devon on the train for a five day field trip. They stayed at the Field Study Council's field centre on the coast which provided board and lodgings and a tutor for the

week. The purpose of the trip was to collect data for coursework and practise data collection and analytical techniques. The days were long, starting at 9am and finishing after 9pm every night but all seemed to enjoy their time down there.

A number of topics were studied including plant succession along a shingle ridge, coastal management techniques along the coastline and urban studies in Exeter.

*Mrs Wood*

*Measuring vegetation*



*Lined up ready for action*



# National perspectives on Modern Languages

Ms Myers is taking an increasingly prominent role at a national and international level in Modern Languages, in particular on the use of ICT in the teaching of Modern Languages. She has recently been appointed to the Executive Committee of the Association for Language Learning (the national association for Modern Language teachers). The issue of "severe grading" and the national crisis in Modern Languages at secondary level was a major item at a recent meeting and she will be meeting with senior representatives of QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Agency), which oversees standards and grading levels, to take the matter further.

She was a key speaker at the London Languages Show held at Olympia and was invited to Swansea to speak to Welsh teachers of Modern Languages.

We also continue to have a strong interest in our regular half-termly all-day free workshops, led by Ms Myers, which are a very effective way of spreading good practice.

Ms Myers was nominated by ALL to represent this country at an EU funded Arion seminar in Barcelona in May and followed this up by inviting the participants to visit The Ashcombe School in the week after half-term coinciding with her presentation at the London Languages show. The visitors brought a film crew from Austria to produce a video about The Ashcombe as follow-up to the presentation made by Ms. Myers in Austria in June.

In November, primary and secondary teachers from Austria, Norway, Japan, Spain and Hungary came to visit The Ashcombe School and St Paul's Primary School. We were delighted to

receive them. Here are some of their comments:

- "Ashcombe seems to be a place where students not only obtain outstanding education but where they feel very welcome as the members of a wonderful community."
- "I really enjoyed the tours in both secondary and primary school. I learned a lot about ICT. I was fascinated by the equipment and teaching aids you've been using in your schools"
- "It was a very beautiful experience to have the opportunity of visiting you and look around and inside the schools. I was really impressed for the way you work and the things you do. All of you work very hard and I could see and feel it."

## school in focus

celebrating success in schools



It is not only the vast array of languages that marks out Ashcombe School in Surrey – it is the way staff and pupils at this specialist language college have used their expertise to create a truly international institution.

In addition to its work as a local centre of excellence in the teaching of French, German, Spanish, Italian and Chinese, the school has helped forge links between this corner of the Home Counties and China, East Africa, and rural Romania as well as more conventional partner locations in Italy, France and Germany.

*Read the full article on The Ashcombe website [www.ashcombe.surrey.sch.uk](http://www.ashcombe.surrey.sch.uk).*

*Two further articles appeared in "Teachers" magazine (January 2005) and can be found on the website.*

## Staffing News

There have several staff changes this year, with maternity leaves for Mrs Johnston-Fay (English), Mrs Vellucci (History), Mrs Gutteridge (Head of RS and Lower School responsibilities), Mrs Beggs (2 i/c Maths), Mrs Attwell (Acting Head of Year 7), Mrs Williamson (ICT Resources Co-ordinator, GNVQ Co-ordinator and Careers Co-ordinator), and Mrs Ruben (ICT Curriculum Co-ordinator, Head of Year 9).

In addition, Miss Thomas (Head of Year 8) has relocated to

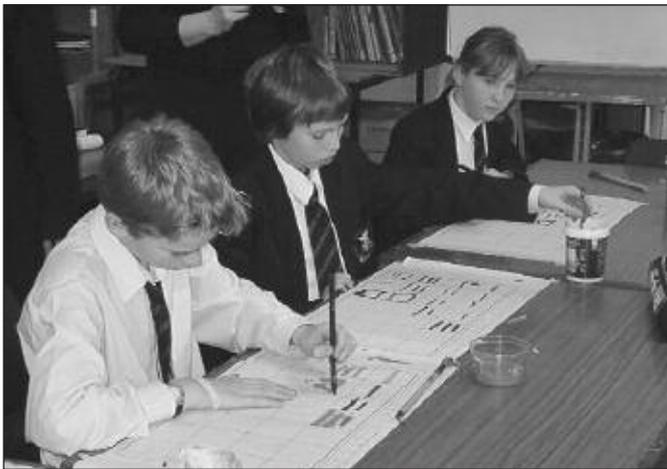
Bristol and Ms Mulhern (Languages) has moved to an international school. Dr Parrish has left on gaining promotion as Head of Chemistry to another school.

We have appointed several additional staff:

Mr Kingdon (Geography), Mr Simmonds (Head of Year 8 and Modern Languages/Humanities), Ms Shanks (English/Humanities), Mrs Cole (Modern Languages) and Mrs Morgan (part-time Economics and Business Studies).

# Chinese Calligraphy

To celebrate the Chinese New Year in February a special calligraphy class was held for younger pupils in their Chinese club lunchtime session.



# German Exchange

For all the German students this was their first visit to England and they certainly experienced a range of activities: walking through the City of London and finding the alley used in the Harry Potter film was a definite highlight, followed by a visit to the London Museum, which illustrated some of the things talked about on the walk. On another visit to London they saw the Changing of the Guard at Horseguards' Parade, the Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, walked through China Town and Covent Garden.

They had an ICT English lesson (more Harry Potter!) and a practical Chemistry session to make crystals.

Another successful day was spent in Canterbury. Both Ashcombe pupils and their partners visited the 'Canterbury Tales' and were given a guided tour of the Cathedral.

It was a very successful week and thanks must go to the participating pupils and their families for their efforts and support of the Exchange.

# Romania

Last summer's visit was the thirteenth consecutive year that students from the Sixth Form have gone out to work on projects supported by the whole school during Charities Week.

Again accompanied by Miss Cammack and Mr Wakeford, this year's group built a duck house at the "Farm of Hope" which is home to a dozen former "street boys." This will enable the social workers to teach the boys to care for animals and provide an income for the farm.

Students also helped with house renovation projects for several poor families, including a family now sponsored by the students.

One of the highlights of the trip was contributing to the learning and enjoyment of some of the area's poorest children at the various kindergarten / day centres established by "Link Romania."



*Community Centre in Slobozia (gypsy village) - money from charities work paid for plastering and painting inside and outside*



*Ashcombe students and staff are welcomed to Tanzania by the Mayor of Dar es Salaam and Joel Kaaya (right) Tambaza headteacher*



*Summer safari in the north of Tanzania*



*Mr Rosser poses for a caption competition*

## Upper Sixth student Orla MacRae writes about an unforgettable exchange with Tanzania - Ashcombe in Africa!

On 19th July last year, nine students and two teachers set off to Tanzania. None of us knew what to expect and were all frantically practising the smattering of Swahili that we had learned. When we eventually got through immigration in the Dar-es-Salaam airport, we found our Tanzanian partners waiting for us outside. After some nervous greetings and introductions we were soon rushed off to meet the Mayor. Driving through an African city for the first time was an enlightening experience. We didn't feel entirely prepared to meet the Mayor of this major city, in our clothes that we hadn't changed for over 24 hours but we were honoured all the same. It was an amazing way to start our stay in Dar.

One of the best parts of this exchange is the unique opportunity it offers to live with a Tanzanian family for three weeks. We were all anxious about leaving our English friends on the first night and nervous about what each of our partner's family had in store for us. My partner, Salome, was one of the most well off and from the outside her house looked very impressive. However, I did not escape from the threatened bucket of cold water in the morning as my 'shower'. Most of us had squatter toilets. Walking around the streets of the city with our partners, we soon become accustomed to the cries of 'mzungo' (white person) everywhere we went. School in Africa is a very different experience to The Ashcombe. Lessons at Tambaza High School are a different sort of hard work. The teachers lecture their students for an hour while the 40 or so students in the cramped classrooms scribble notes. The level of the work also surprised us as even Miss Watts found the Chemistry class to be of a higher level than our A-Levels.

After just a few days with our new families, it was time to take our partners to the island of Zanzibar. Despite it lying just a few miles off the coast of Dar-es-Salaam, most of our partners had never been there before. We spent our first day around the capital, Stonetown, where we watched the sunset over the Indian Ocean before visiting the night market for supper. It was here that we broke almost all of the rules with plates loaded with freshly cooked seafood and ice-cream for pudding. The vibrant colours of the food were unforgettable and we were very grateful to our Tanzanian partners for choosing our food for us. The next day we had a busy schedule of a Spice tour followed by a trip to Prison Island. First we visited a market where you could buy your spices from brightly-coloured sacks full of saffron and chilli and just about anything you could think of. Then we were taken to some plantations where some members of the group discovered that vanilla grows on trees, not on supermarket shelves! After balancing on the end of some wooden boats we arrived at Prison Island whose most distinguishing feature is the twenty Giant Tortoises. Charlie Coe particularly enjoyed feeding them with stalks of grass and tickling them behind their legs to make them stand up.

That evening it was time to travel across the island to Jambiani where we spent two nights. After dragging ourselves from our beds at 6:00am to watch the spectacular sunrise we went for a long walk along the beach where we met local children who found Mr Rosser's attempts at digital photography hilarious.

The afternoon was spent snorkelling and while the English students enjoyed taking underwater photos of the brightly coloured coral and schools of fish the more audacious Tanzanians simply enjoyed being in the water as none of them could swim. In the evening we went for a meal at a local restaurant where the food took three hours to arrive but the seafood platter that Jamie Blockey and I shared more than made up for the wait. After this my partner arranged a bonfire on the beach which was a surreal experience with Mr Rosser showing off his unique drumming skills while Marco Lopez collapsed in hysterics. This was an incredible trip that we were delighted to share with our new friends. The next major trip was the Safari, which we had all been looking forward to. We all (just) survived the 10-hour

coach journey to Arusha in Northern Tanzania. Arusha is one of the largest cities in Tanzania and provides a base for most people embarking on a safari. We found it to be a lot more run down than Dar-es-Salaam although the boys enjoyed visiting The Monkey Bar. We hired a guide who took us for a walk up Little Meru to see Massai villages and coffee plantations. Lindsay was very appropriately dressed for this trek in a mini skirt! The next day saw the start of what was, for many, the highlight of our trip: a three-day safari. We visited a different national park each day and returned to our campsite each evening. Once we overcame our initial excitement about spotting our first animals - baboons on the first day - we went on to see many different animals to the soundtrack of Lindsay singing songs from "The Lion King". Some of

the highlights included seeing a cheetah within a few metres of our jeep with her three hungry cubs, seeing hippos out of water, which is very unusual, and of course the numerous families of elephants. All in all, it was an unbelievable few days, although we were all looking forward to being reunited with our partners.

Everyone who took part in this trip felt that it had enriched their lives. We all learned a great deal about life in a less economically developed country as well as making new friends and learning some key phrases of Swahili. Let it suffice to say that Mr Rosser has already planned his return trip and many of the Lower Sixth want to visit their new African families during their gap year.

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## When Tambaza came to Dorking...

Despite last minute confusion over visas, nine Tanzanian students accompanied by two teachers arrived at Heathrow on 1st February. We had all been looking forward to seeing our friends again and were happy that they were finally here. A fun-filled two weeks ensued.

On our two visits to London we showed them all the major sights and, thanks to the generosity of Baroness Thomas of Walliswood, both groups of students enjoyed a tour of the Houses of Parliament. One highlight for our visitors was the chance to see a West End show. Other visits included

Brighton, ice-skating at Spectrum which resulted in many comedy falls, a visit to a local primary school and a reception with Bridget Lewis, the leader of Mole Valley District Council. The Sixth Form put on a social event for them with the theme 'School Disco' and the Tanzanians joined in with the spirit of things and donned our Ashcombe ties! Mr Thompson even invited the students to see Preston North End beat Queens Park Rangers. Unfortunately the visitors and hosts arrived late and had to sit at the QPR end. It didn't stop my partner openly supporting Preston though!

Just as we had enjoyed experiencing Tanzanian life, our partners soon fell into our routine. They found the pace of life very different from 'no hurry Africa' although they soon realised that the cold is one reason why we rush everywhere. Even away from school they all worked very hard with many of our partners getting up before dawn to do some schoolwork.

By the end of the two weeks we were all exhausted but were, of course, very sad that they were leaving. We said an emotional farewell at Heathrow on 14th February but we all hope to see each other again in the near future.



*Bridget Lewis the Chair of Mole Valley District Council meets Tanzanian visitors accompanied by Mr Thompson*



*London Eye*

# Hangzhou, China - Summer 2004



*Chinese Opera*



*Language Lessons*



*Concert at Chang Zheng School, Shanghai*

The Ashcombe School's annual trip to China has always been a successful event and last year was no exception. In July, 14 students accompanied by Mrs Martin, Dr Coultous and Ms Ashburner travelled to Hangzhou, the capital city of the Zhejiang Province, Eastern China. Hangzhou is famous for its natural beauty and many sites of historic and cultural importance. Attractions such as the West Lake (which we visited many times!) make it a popular tourist destination for the Chinese.

The trip was organised by the British Council, and gave us a fantastic opportunity to learn Chinese and be immersed into a different culture. We were based at the Zhejiang University of Technology and began each day with a three hour long Chinese lesson; the class length and style of teaching were very different from lessons in England. Nevertheless, the Chinese teachers put a great deal of effort into the lessons, and it was fun to put the things we had learnt into practice during our free time and afternoon excursions.

Many varied activities had been organised by the University: from lessons in painting and dumpling making, to riding in buffalo carts at Shuang Xi! We also saw some breathtaking martial arts, as well as traditional opera. Picking tea at the Mei Jia Wu tea gardens was another interesting experience, but one of the most memorable must have been participating in a rather noisy and energetic 'water pouring festival' at a recreated city from the Song Dynasty.

One of the most exciting parts of the trip was the weekend we spent in Shanghai where we visited our link school and stayed with Chinese families. Despite some initial apprehensions, everyone found this really enjoyable. The families all showed amazing hospitality and were keen to show us some of the delights that Shanghai has to offer.

Many of us were taken to see the Nanjing Road, an incredibly modern street whose atmosphere is electric. Other highlights of Shanghai include the Bund area with some amazing buildings including the Oriental Pearl Tower.

Before we left, everyone involved in the trip contributed towards the final closing ceremony. As well as all of us from Ashcombe performing a song, our Chinese class did some Wu Shu (a form of martial arts) which we had been taught by one of the student helpers.

For many of us, this trip was a once in a lifetime experience, so a lot of gratitude is owed to both the teachers who took us there, and everyone in China who worked so hard to ensure we had an amazing time. The three weeks we were there flew past, but they left us with experiences and memories which will never forget.

*Mary Penman L6*

Chinese continues to thrive with groups of staff and governors learning the language after school on Wednesdays, and a trip to China for friends of the school will take place over the Easter holidays.

# Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme

All the students taking part have been busy getting their record books signed so that they can complete the award.

30 Year 11's successfully completed their Silver Award practice expedition in Exmoor. Their three days in the hills were very challenging physically, but

everyone made it to the high point of the moor Dunkery Beacon and admired the fabulous view over the hills to the sea. The weather was a lot kinder than last year too, where the groups experienced 70mph winds on the second day and were even being rocked about in the minibus by the gales!

So far 16 pupils have successfully completed Silver and 37 Bronze and they received their awards at a special presentation ceremony at the City of London Freemans school on Friday 21st January.



## Amnesty International

The Sixth Form Jazz group performed at a concert in aid of Amnesty International at St. Martin's Walk. They performed their own

compositions and this contributes to the 'performing during the course' aspect of their AS coursework.

The concert included performances from professional musicians and students from The Yehudi Menuhin School. The jazz group's performance

provided a contrast to the other repertoire in the concert, which included operatic arias, folk songs, poetry and virtuoso violin pieces. The students found listening to the other items in the programme both challenging and enlightening.



## PTA

The PTA is going through an extremely positive and supportive phase with a strong and committed group of parents. The committee meetings are focused and productive and have led to some really beneficial activities this year. The 70s and 80s dance in September raised £1500 for the Arts Centre project and was easily the most successful function the PTA have put on.

There are plans to repeat the event next year. The PTA hosted another "How safe is my child?" evening, an event that was well supported by parents and governors. The working party have continued to work on improving the school environment and this term have again put up more display boards whilst re-landscaping the courtyard that leads out from Ranmore Staff Room.

## PE

Another fantastic Games Day was held in September. The weather was perfect with the sun shining on all activities (better than Sports Day held in July!). Once again the format saw over 1000 pupils from Years 7-10 taking part in a variety of events. These ranged from Girls' Football, Boys' Football, Basketball, Badminton, Netball, Rugby, Hockey and Volleyball.

The main focus of this day is to raise pupil awareness of the wide variety of sporting activities available at The Ashcombe School and to engage them in healthy competition through the House system. By holding the event in September more pupils have the chance to participate in sports they may not think they enjoy, but Games Day provides the perfect opportunity for this.



It was great to see so many people in the school getting involved in helping this day to run. The Heads of House gave assemblies informing each House group of past performances and then tutors organised the teams. On the day the PE staff and Leadership students of the Sixth Form officiated each sport

with tutors available to support their tutees.



It was a fabulous day seeing so many pupils getting involved in physical activity and it is hoped that one day they may look back and think this is where they started their participation in one of these sports! For further information please visit the PE website.

## Netball

With excellent support this year the Netball practice has been very popular with the girls. Well done to Katy Holland, who has made the U14 County squad.

## Rugby

Rugby will not be played competitively until February. However pupils have been regularly sent to county trials. Well done to the following players: U19 Miles Shenton and Jonny Langford; U16 Chris Beer (who is playing for the County team) and Alex Robinson; U15 Jake Dobson (who is playing for the County team), James Catton and Sam Selcon; U14 Nick Haigh.

## Cross Country

Another successful cross country season has started for the pupils at The Ashcombe School. The Junior boys team qualified for the Regional Finals of the English Schools Cup. Runners were: Tom Woodcock, Connor Mottram, James Cook, Tom Hunt, Josh Evans, Jamie May and Alex Spooner. We also had 23 runners participating at the District Championships and the following 12 pupils qualified for the County Championships (Jan '05): Amelia

Maugouber, Zoe Shannon, Becky Gardner, Alex Spooner, Luke Caldwell, Evan Erskine-Thomas, Matt Cannon, Rupert Cape, Luke Kelly, Joe Bullen, James Kelly and Ollie Charles. Also, Helen Markie, Jamie May, Tom Woodcock and Alex Wills are first reserves. This is a fantastic performance by all runners. The turnout for Running Club (8am Tuesday mornings) has been really good including six staff! It does set them up for the day! Maybe it should be made compulsory!

## Ashcombe Swimming Report September - December 04

Two swimming events traditionally dominate the Autumn Term, although participation was lower than normal. In addition, Charlotte Mann (Y8) represented the school in three events in the Bazuka Inter-Divisional Swimming Championships in September at Crystal Palace.

The Surrey School Relay Championships in early October promised an opportunity for swimmers to represent their school against tough competition from a wide variety of schools across the county. Three swimmers came forward in most age groups but the school was only able to enter a full team in the Junior Girls events, leaving more than twelve volunteers disappointed. However, Charlotte Mann, Alice Wearn, April Richards and Rosie Holden (all Y8) put up an excellent performance in both medley and freestyle relays, which is promising for next year when they will compete in the same age group. Daisy Barnett (Y9) was unable to swim due to an injury and Rosie Holden was fortunately able to substitute at short notice.

Similarly, there was a lot of interest when the Southern Schools Biathlon was first publicised at school, but in the end only four Ashcombe entrants were forthcoming and the trip was scratched. The event itself was over-subscribed and split between Newbury, Berks and Crystal Palace: hopefully this nearer venue will be retained next year and encourage a greater uptake from the school.

This term, the Surrey Individual Championships gave strong swimmers a chance to represent the school in 100m events, while the locally run Swimarathon offered an opportunity for swimmers of all abilities to take part and raise money for several charities.

*Mrs Carter*

## Gym and Dance Evening

Over 100 pupils took part in the performance for parents in February.