

# Newsletter



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## Headmaster's Welcome

Welcome to the final Newsletter of the strangest school year in living memory. As I reflect on my own first year at Yarm, which has been unpredictable and challenging but also, thankfully, fulfilling and hugely enjoyable, I am conscious that it will have been tumultuous and discomfiting for our pupils, to varying degrees. And yet, as I've said before, they continue to demonstrate their resilience and their creativity and we are immensely proud of them and their efforts. I know that parents are also proud of their children's ability to cope and reading the feedback from parents in acknowledgement of the recent reports has been and overwhelmingly affirming and reassuring process. I have passed on the many messages of gratitude and thanks to my colleagues.

This edition of the newsletter is filled with insights into the pupils' efforts in remote learning, both curricular and extra-curricular. We look forward immensely to the Dovecote Festival, details below, and I hope everyone takes time to enjoy this carnival of talent and fun. A review of the Duologues competition sits alongside creative writing and making from the English Department. Mr Morrison reflects on the value of understanding History to contextualise current events and we learn of more individual successes in the Duke of Edinburgh scheme. For those looking for inspiration over the summer, Mrs Leary poses an upcycling challenge and competition for our pupils while the English Department announce the winners of their recent debating competition. I am placed under the spotlight by the same group of journalistically minded pupils who quizzed me a year ago, before I'd even joined the School, and Miss Hussey introduces some fascinating work on some challenging themes by pupils studying Religion, Philosophy and Ethics.

I sent the pupils an end of term message ([available here](#)) and explained to them a number of changes to staff responsibilities from next term. These include Mrs Guest's decision to step back, after 13 years' dedicated service, as a Head of Year. We thank her on behalf of countless pupils and families for her tireless efforts. We welcome Mr Ivey as Head of the Second Year. We also thank Mrs Picknett for her support and care for the Sixth Form as she hands the baton of Deputy Head of Sixth Form on to Miss Gamble. In turn, Mr Reeves becomes Head of Aidan House in place of Miss Gamble. We congratulate Mrs Pinkham on the recent birth of her son and wish her the best of luck on her maternity leave. Mr Tim Taylor will become Acting Head of History. Mr Spence takes on the role of Head of Oswald House in place of Mr Taylor. Mr Collins has been made Director of Digital Strategy alongside his role as Head of Computer Science. We wish Mrs Dunkley the best of luck with her imminent arrival and maternity leave next year. We bid farewell, and sincere thanks, to Miss Edmondson who has been working in the PE department as a Graduate Assistant and who leaves us for new adventures next year.

Parents will yesterday have received an end of term letter from me with some updates as we look ahead to the Autumn Term. More than in most years, and after we have had a chance to make our detailed plans for next year, there will be a range of communication to come over the summer - about plans for the beginning of term, the new chromebook scheme and so on. Thank you in advance for responding to those when required. Everyone has worked hard this term under unusual and at times seemingly unsustainable pressure. I think we have coped admirably as a community and I am so proud of our pupils and of my colleagues. I am grateful to Governors for their support and to parents for their engagement and encouragement with the pupils, and for their cooperation and partnership with the School. I wish everyone a happy holiday and hope the summer gives us all a chance to refresh and recharge and that all stay safe and stay healthy.

Dr Huw Williams

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## DOVECOTE FESTIVAL 2020

Please join us at our Virtual Dovecote Festival on Friday, 3rd July as a memorable way to mark the end of term.

As well as some incredible home-recorded solo and ensemble performances from Senior School Musicians past and present, the concert will feature the first full airings of our two large-scale community initiatives; "We'll Meet Again" and our virtual choir and orchestra performance of "Caravan of Love". The concert will be available to view from 4pm via a link we will share on our school website and school social media accounts. Please do join us, listen in, create the atmosphere of the Dovecote Festival in your own homes and celebrate Yarm School's incredible sense of community.



Mrs K Staggs

## Virtual Junior Duologues 2020

This year has been very different for everyone, and as we start to try to return to some sort of normal, we are having to invent new ways to approach things we have done for many years.

I could not have imagined, as I sat watching the final night of Miss Saigon, that it would be the last Yarm School performance on the PAA stage for the school year.

The annual Yarm School Duologues Competition is always a great challenge for the pupils in terms of material selection and finding a close connection with their partner.

Performing a duologue whilst adhering to social distancing adds another huge and completely different challenge into the equation.

This year, I added the option of doing a monologue, so that not being able to meet up with a partner was not exclusive.

Performing anything as a recorded media poses its challenges. Its completely different from performing on stage, in terms of the way you come across on camera and the lack of reaction you get to your performance; no laughter to feed off for example. Trying to keep a performance connection with your partner, whilst in another house, is a huge challenge. I've been really impressed by the entries this year.

The Junior Duologues videos and results can be [viewed here](#).

We have two duologues; first from Noah and Sam, then Sophia and Anoushka. Performing in separate locations and still managing to communicate is no mean feat. Both couples tackled this really well and created a performance for us to watch. Then we have two monologues; firstly Ashton, followed by Sophie. Both created the scene really well, with good characterisation. Once you watch the entries Mr Hall will deliver his verdict... ENJOY!

The Intermediate and Senior Duologues will be uploaded on Monday, so look out for those. They feature Morven Hawthorne and Julia Portsmouth competing in the Intermediate Duologue competition. Both girls throw themselves into their characters really well and give lovely performances. Then we have one entry into the Senior Duologues from Erin Gilhespie. A really nice interpretation of Viola from Twelfth Night... I wonder who will win?

Can I thank all those who have joined in and been involved in these challenging times. It has been lovely to be able to see you all performing, well done!

We will be back in September with a reimagined House Drama Contest, so watch this space! Have a lovely break this summer.

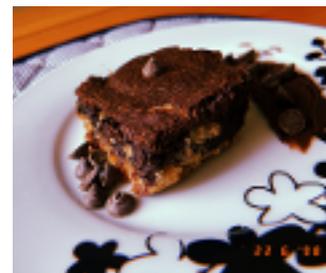
Mr D Brookes

## Remote Learning - English

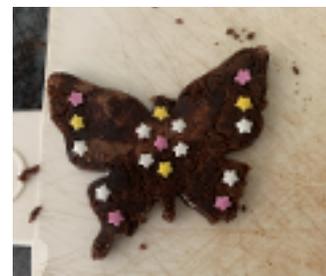
In the final week of term, Key Stage 3 pupils have been busy responding to their lockdown reading in very interesting and creative ways. From vlogs to cake baking (who knew we had so many talented bakers?), and from bunting to writing new 'final' chapters to some canonical texts, pupils have had fun celebrating their reading choices and conveying their sensitive understanding of their novels. Each offering was accompanied by a commentary offering the pupil's rationale for their choice of task. Below is just a quick snapshot of the fantastic work that has been produced!

Ms H Blakemore

Trish's Dauntless chocolate cake from the Divergent series- a cake that can either be considered to be 'reflective of the bold and passionate nature of the Dauntless characters', or as a means of 'indicating a character's melancholy mood'!

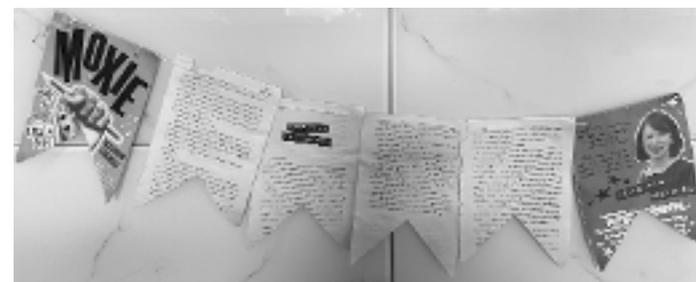


The Island at the End of Everything ~ Kiran Milwood Hargrave  
 'The butterflies in the novel play a very significant part as they symbolise freedom and beauty.'



All Rights Reserved - Gregory Scott Katsoulis

In this dystopian novel, a young woman uses silence to protest a culture in which free speech has been eradicated and every word, gesture, and method of communication has been patented, copyrighted, or trademarked.



MOXIE by Jennifer Mathieu is sweet, funny, and fierce. Read this and then join the fight. - Amy Poehler

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## Remote Learning - History

During the past 12 weeks it has been a great pleasure for me as a historian to see various Professors and history scholars interviewed on news bulletins and prime time panel discussion shows. Most recently, I viewed Professor David Olusoga, Professor of Public History at Manchester University, in conversation with Andrew Marr on The Andrew Marr Show on BBC One. Professor Olusoga was discussing the Black Lives Matter campaign and his response to the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis and the protests that followed. Furthermore, historians have been called upon to give their views on responses to global pandemics throughout history, in line with the most recent context. We also paused to reflect on VE Day recently and we viewed the Welsh Guards stage a physically distanced event at Windsor Castle to mark the Queen's birthday. Again, events that required input from historians. No more than ever before has the study of History featured so heavily in published articles, televised discussions and documentaries. Recent events have allowed us to pause and reflect on the importance of the past, in shaping our responses in the present. Studying history enables us to gain a more developed understanding of current events and an appreciation of who we really are. Gaining a comprehensive understanding of what links past and present, allows us to interpret factual information and form our own opinions that can perhaps be challenged, but should not be criticised. For example, the destruction of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol recently, in scenes reminiscent of those in impoverished eastern European cities at the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, has been described by the New Statesman as "an act of living history".

History is not neat and tidy. Understanding the connection between Colston and the slave trade is not simple, nor are the reasons why the statue was erected in 1895, 174 years after his death. In order to explain the past and hence the present, we have to look at the context of the time and be prepared to judge characters based on their contemporary surroundings. Hannah Rose Woods, writing for the New Statesman makes the point that if one was to dig a little deeper around the context of the late Victorian era in Britain, one would discover that the erection of statues of historical figures in towns such as Bristol and Manchester was commonplace, due to the desires of imperialist rulers to create a rise in national self-confidence. Britain was struggling in the late 1800s due to an increase in health problems in overcrowded towns. The rise of industry in Germany and the USA was causing competition abroad in British markets. The British Empire, encompassing a quarter of the globe, was beginning to crumble. Therefore, the government saw the need to erect a statue of Colston in Bristol to enhance public confidence and pride. Studying the

context of the time helps us to understand reasoning and therefore we can form a more developed interpretation, hence leading to more sophisticated and rounded debate. We do not need to form a strong opinion by studying the context, but more of an understanding to assist in how we approach current affairs. Yarm pupils applied this philosophy to their study of History during remote learning. For example, when studying the Peasants Revolt, First Year pupils listened to an In Our Time podcast, which provided new evidence that revised the idea of the rebellious peasants as a disorganised, bloodthirsty mob. The more sources we can interpret, the more advanced our comprehension can be and we are privileged at the moment to have access to a range of historical documentaries via our television screens. Professor Olusoga presents the House Through Time series, in which he explores the inhabitants of one home, over a period of time. The most recent series, screened last month, takes place in Bristol, and Olusoga explores Bristol's connection to the slave trade in detail in episode one. A number of pupils have taken inspiration from the series and produced House Through Time projects based on the history of their own homes. Furthermore, one of David Olusoga's previous documentaries; Black and British a forgotten History is currently being re-shown on BBC 4. By accessing these resources, we can become more informed about the context of current affairs. Recent events, perhaps more than ever, emphasise the significance of the study of History and the need to study past events to create, informed, balanced, moderate opinions.

Mr A J Morrison

## Bronze DofE Awards

We have had a number of successes with the Bronze DofE this half term.

Dania Khunda, Noah Bickenson and Connor Brown have all completed the final sections of their awards and had these approved by the DofE Head office.

A number of pupils have been continuing to work on sections of their awards, despite lock down difficulties and I am hoping to sign these off in the near future.

With expeditions being postponed this year, the DofE has arranged for a new award for those who could otherwise have completed their awards this year. Michael Bashford, Georgia Charnley, Laura Cunningham, Lilian Dufton, Katherine Henley, Divya Hukkeri, Felix Humphrys, Caroline Louwrens, Emily Miller, Alexander Nelson, Bakaer Noble, Neha Patil, Medha Rajeeva, Shreya Rajesh Kumar and Kaavya Venkatesh have all finished the rest of the award and these pupils will be eligible for the "2020 DofE Certificate of Achievement".

Well done to all these pupils and carry on with the hard work the rest of you.

Mr M Rye

## ECO-COMPETITION

We're running an Upcycling and Eco-competition for everyone to get involved in over the summer break. All you have to do is take something in your house that you don't use anymore and upcycle it into something that you will use.

Take a photo/video of your creation and/or send an e-mail demonstrating a way that you have helped the environment during lockdown or over the summer break.

**All entries should be e-mailed to Mrs Leary at gal@yarmschool.org before Friday, 21st August 2020.**



## Interclass Debating Competition

The English Department are delighted to announce Sophie Jewitt as the winner of the recent debating competition enjoyed by Second Years. Sophie and fellow Second Years responded to the debate motion that "Space exploration is humanity's only hope." Our distinguished judges, Mr Bridges and Mr Brash, who are accomplished rhetoricians themselves and run a debating club for Sixth Form students, commented on the impressive standard of the submissions. Runners up for the competition were: Yusuf Syed, Nila Baskar, Sophia Kilkerrri, Hannah Bettinson and Olivia Miller who were also nominated by their respective English teachers to be considered for the prize. Mr Bridges and Mr Brash were struck by the ambition of the language and content used by the students concerning this contentious topic; indeed, as was brought to our attention by the recent space voyages undertaken by Space X. We include a short excerpt from Sophie's speech that raises some important questions about the ethics that underpin space exploration: "There's more; for all of the effort that you put into finding microbial life, we could be saving our planet. They might say that we're developing technology for more people to spend longer in space. Well I say, how about developing the technology where it's needed. On the planet, where 7.8 billion people live. The only 7.8 billion people, might I add, that we know exist. Still they pretend that going to space will save our planet, our race. We are currently amid the sixth largest mass extinction event ever. Don't pretend anymore that we can fly away to a different planet and live happily ever after. This isn't a fairytale. We have seen them try and fail to save our planet; we have seen them checking the news with baited breath; when will we see them do what's right?"

Well done to all Second Year pupils for their submissions and remote learning in English.

Mrs Dugdale and Ms Blakemore

## An Interview with Dr Williams

A group of our school journalists touched base with Dr Williams one year on since their first interview with him...

### Have you enjoyed your first year as Headmaster of Yarm School?

The short answer to this question is thankfully an unequivocal yes!

### This year has been a particularly challenging year for many schools, particularly those in the independent sector. Has there been any moment since you took on the headship of Yarm when you have thought 'Oh no! I've made a dreadful mistake!'?

There have been plenty of moments of challenge, but in those times of difficulty you often see the best in people and I have certainly seen that in the people around me this year. Staff and pupils alike have risen to the challenge and demonstrated their commitment to teaching, learning and engagement with as full a range of activities as we've been able to manage. I have not once thought that it was a mistake to come to Yarm.

### What is your most memorable moment of your first year?

There have been so many, right from the beginning of my time here. Discovery day, concerts and plays, sporting

fixtures, House debating, Miss Saigon, the mock election hustings and results, lunches with the Lower Sixth, our Remembrance Service, donating visors to the NHS, collaborative lockdown music projects and so much more. However, most memorable for me, and most telling about the strength of our community, was the absolute respect and sincere support I saw and sensed throughout the whole school as we mourned Katie's death. It was a deep and powerful affirmation of our values.

### Which school event or school tradition have you most enjoyed? Why?

I have seen some very unusual school traditions in my time, perhaps the strangest of which was 'the Greaze' at Westminster School which saw a horsehair reinforced pancake being fought over by the pupils, with the winner (the pupils who eventually managed to get and keep the largest piece) being awarded a gold coin by the Dean of Westminster... Tradition has it that the School chef would have books thrown at them if they failed to toss the pancake over a high bar in the School Hall three times! I wouldn't suggest introducing that!

Pupils might not agree with me, but a tradition I have enjoyed (and participated in) is Tonbridge School's 'the CRAS', which is a whole school cross country race. Whilst plenty of pupils hated the prospect, the reality of the day is supportive and fun and most are glad to have taken part, even if that's because of the relief of finishing.

### Are there any school traditions that you would like to see adopted at Yarm?

Thank you for asking - given my answer to the previous question, I'll give some more thought to this and ask Mr Ferguson what he thinks!

### Has anything surprised you about life at Yarm?

There have been plenty of surprises, but that's the nature of the job, I think, rather than being about Yarm. Perhaps the relentless enthusiasm, energy and willingness of the pupil body has been surprising (very much a welcome surprise).

### When we interviewed you last year, you suggested that you and your family were looking forward to becoming part of the Yarm School community. Do you feel like this has happened?

I do. The whole community has been very welcoming and, because my children are in the Nursery, Pre-Prep and Prep school respectively, and I'm up in the Senior School, I have been lucky enough to have experienced the whole school from different perspectives - everyone has been lovely. We are all very happy to be here.

### How would you describe life under lockdown for the Williams family?

Intense. My three children have been brilliant, but our experience will have been similar to everyone else's - the energy required to maintain focus and purpose is significant and there are times when it can all feel a bit much! However, the intensity also brought real moments of joy and unity, too. I feel very lucky.

### In your interview with you last year, you mentioned your love of surfing. Have you managed to get your surfboard in the North Sea yet?

The desperately sad reply to this, which I'm ashamed of really, is no. Mr Thompson nearly persuaded me to go in the autumn term but I didn't manage it. I regret that - I should have. I will next year, if we're allowed!

### What are your hopes for the school in the next year?

A return to something resembling normal, and for every pupil to be in school.

## Spirited Arts

In Third Year Religion, Philosophy and Ethics, pupils have been asked to pick from a selection of philosophical and ethical themes and choose how they would like to portray this such as drawing, poetry, writing etc. The best ones will be submitted to a national competition 'Spirited Arts'. Some pupils chose to picture faith, others chose to respond to 'where is God' and some chose 'are we destroying God's earth'. Here are a couple of great examples (condensed for the newsletter)...

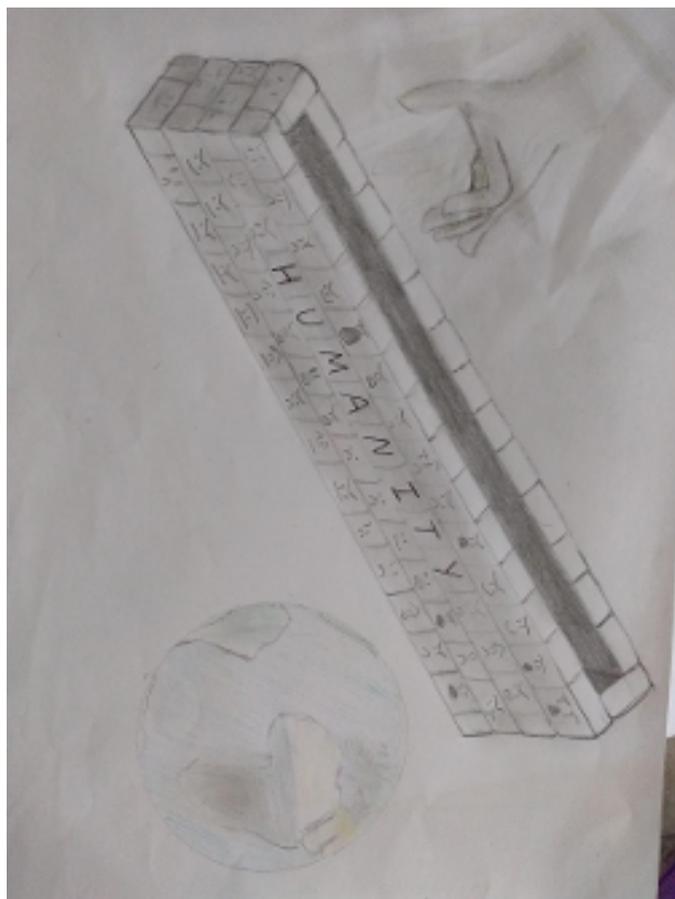
Miss S Hussey



The title I chose is inspiring because it made me remember what happened in early January to Kobe Bryant, Gianna Bryant and all the others in the helicopter. The deepest thing about my work is the bright colours used because they reflect deeply upon his vibrant personality and character. I also believe the different shapes represent the different emotions he was feeling in the helicopter. I think my work connects to religion because it may be teaching us that faith isn't always a good thing as he had faith in the helicopter driver to take him and his daughter safely to their destination. What I like best about my work is that it really describes Kobe's personality through shapes. It also shows him doing what he does best, playing basketball. I like that he is captured playing basketball because this is when he was most inspiring as lots of people looked up to him as an idol. Lastly, I love the bright colours used as it really makes the picture stand out just like Kobe stood out to his fans. A quote from a holy book that fits with my work is "Have I not commanded you be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged. For the lord will be with you wherever you go." I feel that this quote fits well with my

work as it shows that god will always be with you even after death. My RE art work has inspired me to not take things for granted and to notice even the little things in life. It has also inspired me to want someone to look up to me as an inspiration

Maddie Malpass



This picture is all about how humanity is what's stopping the world from being a better place - what is stopping the world from being in the hands of God. My inspiration came from having watched the news - the coronavirus, the Black Lives Matter protests, the Australian bush fires that happened a while ago - all of them symbolising how 2020 may be our downfall. In my picture, you can see a hand reaching out towards the earth - but is blocked by a giant wall. This represents humanity, as you can see, where the hand is God, trying to make contact and be one with the world, but is unable to do so due to the wall of corruption of humanity. I hope people notice how the wall is hollow - there is nothing inside except darkness, proving darkness is the core of humanity and its negative impacts - it has been built around darkness.

I like the theme I have been working on because it is very relevant to modern-day, and isn't really centred on religion, but more about how corrupt humanity has become. If you look carefully at the work, you will see that humanity is the only truly monotone object here, representing the darkness inside it, and that God's hand and even the Earth are fading away slightly, possibly because of humanity as well. This work has helped me realise how flawed humanity actually is; I used to think that we were more advanced and modernised than ever before. However, the reality is that COVID-19 isn't the virus: we are.

Keya Shah