

# *t h e* T E R M



## CELEBRATING OUR CENTENARY

Benenden marks 100 years at the forefront of British education

### **FUTURE PROOF**

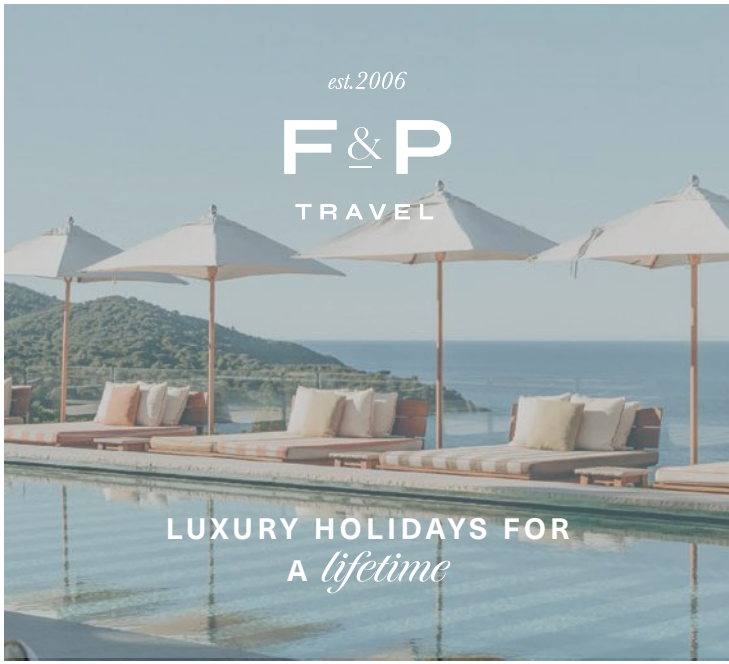
Students reveal how AI is changing our world

### **LIGHTYEARS AHEAD**

Discover the state of our world in 100 years' time, according to Benenden pupils

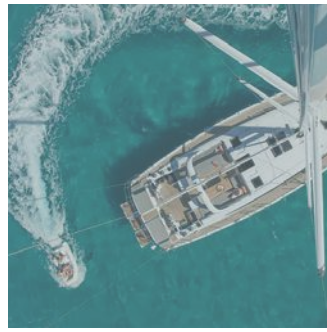
### **CHANGE OF PACE**

New Director of Sport, Ryan Garnsworthy, discusses his vision



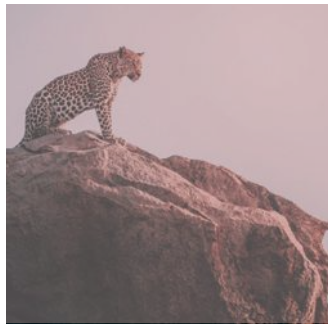
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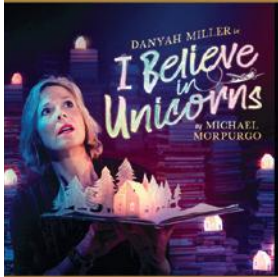
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I Believe in Unicorns  
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Laura van der Heijden & Jâms Coleman  
24 January

Music from the Movies  
London Concertante  
28 March

Goldilocks  
The Ballet  
11 April

Frank & Ella  
Len Phillips Swing Orchestra  
14 April



Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club:  
A Jazz Portrait of Gershwin  
20 April

The Scummy Mummies:  
Greatest Hits  
3 May

Bowjangles:  
Dracula in Space  
4 May

Showstopper!  
The Improvised Musical  
19 May

A Night at the Opera  
London Concertante  
25 May

# FROM THE HEADMISTRESS

Welcome to our first issue of The Term for the 2023/24 academic year, compiling all the highlights of a particularly memorable Autumn.



**T**his term marked the start of a very special year for the School, as we celebrate 100 years of Benenden.

While this is indeed the opportune moment to celebrate all that Benenden has achieved in the last century, the Centenary is also much more than that. It is a chance for us to both reflect on the past and look ahead to the future – the perfect opportunity to further shape and redefine what it means for a Benenden student to receive A Complete Education in the 21st century.

The celebrations began back in September at a launch event I'm sure many of you will hold dear in your memories – combining the

traditional Two Generation Sports day with sensational performances and fireworks that are reflected upon in the coming pages. Our landmark global conference on Inspiring Future Female Leaders, graced by the presence of HRH The Princess Royal, is also reported on, along with the Women and Wellness conference opened by Davina McCall, the range of Centenary events held in Hong Kong, and Benenden's fun Back to 1923 Day. With so many events still to look forward, we are resolutely determined to make Benenden's Centenary year one to remember.

We have also used this term to launch our revitalised Centenary curriculum, based around a revised timetable and including innovative new subjects as part of our Electives Programme, our Creative Technology offering, and our newly reimagined Languages Ancient and Modern Department.

In the spirit of looking forward, I am also delighted to share with you a range of our students' perspectives on how things might look at the end of another century. With well-researched and considered articles predicting some of the major developments of the next era, these students embody the future thinkers and leaders we aim to inspire.

At Benenden we are committed to ensuring we remain ahead of the curve, keeping up to date with the latest technological advancements, and we have also tasked our students with sharing their views on the impact of artificial intelligence on a range of industries.

Changes of our own this year have included the appointment of a new Director of Sport – Ryan Garnsworthy – whose vision for Sport at Benenden provides an enlivening read later in the magazine, and the welcoming of our new Fourths, who give their own accounts of the start of a fantastic year at Benenden.

At the close of such a busy term it's important to take the time to regroup and enjoy some rest with family – and I hope that during the Christmas break you all have plenty of time for relaxation and recuperation. 2024 promises exciting things, and I'm sure you're as thrilled as I am to continue the celebrations into the New Year. I'll look forward to seeing you then.

With very best wishes

**Samantha Price**

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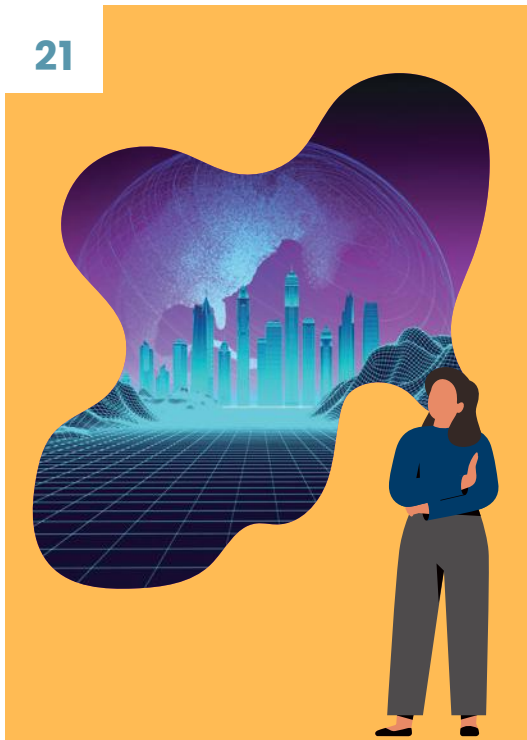


### On the **cover**

September marked 100 years of Benenden, kickstarting an exciting programme of events

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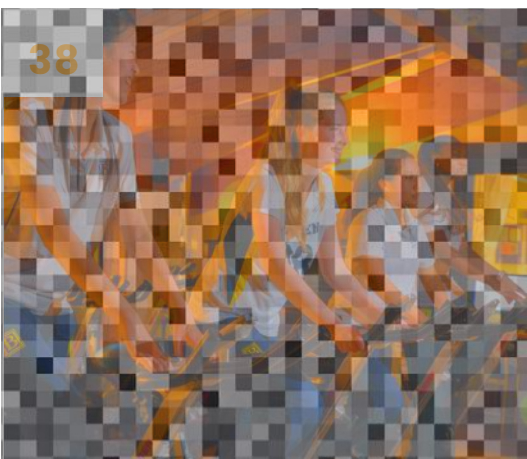
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## Cadets Receive Royal Seal of Approval

During HRH The Princess Royal's historic visit for the Inspiring Future Female Leaders conference, Benenden School and The John Wallis Church of England Academy's Combined Cadet Force assembled in the Quad ready for inspection. Senior Cadet Louisa reflects:

**B**enenden School and The John Wallis Church of England Academy's Combined Cadet Force had the honour of being inspected by HRH The Princess Royal. HRH had been visiting Benenden School for its global conference – Inspiring Future Female Leaders – and had requested to inspect the CCF on the day.

Though constrained by a tight schedule, HRH made time for many of the cadets across all troops and took a moment to have a small conversation with each of them. She seemed largely interested in what Cadets felt they had gained from their time in CCF, or what had drawn the new Cadets to join. Many reflected on the skills

and enjoyment they gained from being in CCF, while several commented on how excited they would be to take part in the parachuting course, much to HRH's amusement.

Overall, for the Cadets, this is guaranteed to be a lifelong memory and they were as proud of themselves as those around them, in both their conduct and skill. In the lead-up to HRH's visit, the Cadets, the majority of whom had only been in CCF for three weeks, made a huge effort, taking considerable time to ensure all uniform was properly prepared to a high standard. With the Contingent increasing threefold at the start of term, it was a challenge to ensure all had the uniform.



For me, the occasion was equally as nerve-wracking as it was exciting, leading the parade on the day. I am honoured to have had the privilege of leading the Cadets for this academic year. The CCF is a significant part of my life – the skills I, alongside the other Cadets, have learned during our time in the CCF, such as leadership and self-discipline, are invaluable lessons that extend beyond life in the Cadet Forces.

CCF for many acts as a source of enjoyment every week, with the opportunity to build strong friendships both within and between the two schools, reflecting the cohesive and friendly nature of our CCF. ■

**Cadet WO2  
Louisa Lesslar  
Six Two**



## Women and Wellness

Davina McCall – TV personality and women’s health advocate – encouraged young women to “stand up and make noise” at Benenden’s inaugural Women and Wellness conference.

**D**avina opened the conference, which saw a range of speakers discuss topics such as the menopause, pensions, investing, nutrition and digital safety, with a keynote speech and Q&A session. Her speech touched on her experience with the menopause and HRT, and what it means to be a woman.

Around 200 students and members of the local community were in attendance to learn more about the issues that matter to women in the 21st Century, with Davina encouraging the engaged audience of students to go after what they want, saying: “I cannot encourage you more to hustle. If you think you don’t have a voice, get someone’s email address and make a noise. You have to keep walking: things happen if you walk. If you sit down and wait for someone to come to you it’s not going to happen.”

Davina also discussed her experience with the menopause and the effect HRT has had on her life. She continued: “When the menopause hit, I lost my enthusiasm. I felt like I’d lost myself. HRT saved my career, my family life, my life.

“It’s not OK to have continual problems with accessing your type of HRT, it has profound effects on women.”

This was the first Women and Wellness Conference held at Benenden. The conference was designed to inform and empower young women to influence real change for generations to come.

Mrs Price: “It is hugely important to educate women at all stages of life about the issues that are relevant to them, something that Benenden has been doing proudly for 100 years.

“My hope is that all those in attendance today left Benenden feeling informed, inspired and empowered – and most importantly ready to carry on those vital conversations within their own communities.”

Other speakers included Anna Lane, President of the Social Enterprise, who shed light on pension disparities, challenged outdated beliefs and busted myths around women and investing. Renee McGregor, leading sports dietician, explored women’s nutrition throughout life and Charlotte and Emma Roberts, Founders of Digital Awareness UK,



**“We’re absolutely thrilled to have had the opportunity to make opera more widely accessible and enjoyable for our community – and we couldn’t have done this without the incredible effort that has been put in by the English National Opera.”**

**Samantha Price**



# UNCOVERING A RECORD OF BEAUTY: History of Art at Benenden

Benenden's new Head of History of Art, Matthew Wilson, offers his thoughts on why the subject remains popular and crucial to Benenden students.

**N**ot enough people realise the incredible lessons that can be learnt from the History of Art. In fact, not many people know that you can even study the subject at A Level, and I even speak with parents, fellow members of staff and students at Benenden who wonder what the subject is about in the first place.

In essence, History of Art is the study of visual culture made by societies across the world. It is partly a study of beauty, and how people have applied aesthetic theory to artefacts and buildings. But is also an exploration of history as it is recorded in physical objects.

If historians, poets and novelists express their histories in writing, artists do the same in visual form. It is the task of art historians to investigate and translate the stories of the past encoded in visual artefacts.

Take, for example, one of the most famous artworks in history – Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. As art historians we might examine how the artist explored the potential of portraiture to a previously uncharted degree, innovating a new, twisted pose for the figure, and an impressionistic new way of painting hazy lines (called 'sfumato') to make the mouth seem full of life.



It stemmed from Leonardo's unheralded preparatory techniques, which involved freeform sketching and even dissecting bodies to understand the mechanisms of muscle and bone. But the end result – a painting that has beguiled art lovers for five hundred years – is also a historical record. It captures a period of intellectual revolution in which thinkers began to recalibrate their understanding of the relationship between humans and nature.

The woman depicted in the painting, Lisa del Giocondo, came from a wealthy family of silk merchants in Renaissance Florence, so the painting even captures the emergence of capitalism and the sense of individuality that rose in a new class of entrepreneur in the 1400s and 1500s. At a time when European explorers were discovering previously unmapped territories around the world, artists were charting the hidden depths of human psychology.

The scope of History of Art, as a subject to study at school and a passion to embrace over a lifetime, is boundless. It encompasses 50,000 years of human history and speaks to us about the unfolding dramas of any human life – danger, love, contentment, and self-understanding.

Ideally, I would like any student I teach to leave School with the ability to read art wherever they see it and discover just how enriching a visit to an art museum can be. In the History of Art classroom, we study traditional paintings and sculptures, as well as more modern forms

of art like installations and conceptual art, and one of the marvellous things about the subject is the opportunities it offers to go on trips to UK and foreign destinations.

Trips to London and Rome in 2025 are in the planning, and I am hoping to lead trips to many other locations in the future. But the skills learnt in History of Art aren't just to be practised in art galleries. Because we investigate the underlying principles of how colour, composition and manipulation of materials can create things of beauty and intelligence, it trains us to see these things everywhere we go – in the design of a car or an airport terminal, the ergonomics of a ballpoint pen or the design of a kitchen.

The study of architecture is a key aspect of the History of Art, and this provides a unique opportunity to understand how factors like proportion and light have an impact on happiness, and how style and materials can assert power, offer consolation, or inspire us. History of Art is an intellectual subject because it requires knowledge and analysis – things that test the mind, but it also affects the emotions. Like all humanities subjects it has the ability to make us think and feel at the same time.

All these attributes of History of Art have made it a popular subject at Benenden and one that many students have opted to study at university, including one application to Cambridge this year. I hope that its popularity is as much to do with the knowledge and skills it imparts as the opportunity it offers to enrich people's lives beyond school and university. ■

# A Closer Look at the Course...

At Benenden we follow the Pearson/Edexcel syllabus in History of Art, which gives us the opportunity to explore visual culture from all periods of history and from diverse locations like Mexico, China, Spain, Japan and America.

There are three main components to the course which teaches students how to look at art in an analytical way, and how to evaluate its relationship to its historical, social and cultural context.

**The first component** is called Visual Analysis. This teaches the fundamental skills of observation and 'reading' art in a formal, art historical way. On one level it is training in being observant, and spotting the nuances of design that casual observers may overlook. But it is also an education in assessing the essential ingredients of all artworks, such as the hidden meanings of colour, composition, scale, and materials.

In the final exam (which is completely essay-based), students are given an unseen example of a painting, sculpture and building (which may come from any period in history) to investigate.

**The second part** of the syllabus is an investigation of themes. At Benenden we focus on two themes – Nature and War. The first explores humanity's perennial fascination with natural forms to create beauty and express a harmony with our wider environment. It is a topic that cuts across global cultures and links the earliest forms of artmaking in the caves of Lascaux and Chauvet, with concerns of contemporary practitioners about climate change in the 21st century.

War examines another all-pervading subject in art. In this section, we explore how artists have depicted the participants and places affected by conflict, and why they commemorate it in monuments and museums.

**The final component** of the syllabus tackles two periods in art history – the Seventeenth Century and the Nineteenth Century. I love teaching these two periods. The Seventeenth Century is often overlooked by A Level teachers of the subject who prefer the more famous and serene scenes created during the Renaissance. But for me, the Baroque is the most thrilling of all Art Historical epochs, where art became more emotive and cryptic than ever before and gave rise to the careers of such luminaries as Caravaggio, Rubens and Diego Velázquez.

The Nineteenth Century is another compelling period in which artists grappled with the problem of how to make the modern, industrialised world a subject of high art. This quest gave birth to Impressionism, Realism, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and Post-Impressionism and drove the incredible careers of Monet, Millais, Gauguin and William Morris.



Along the way, students have the opportunity to go on trips to see art in situ, such as the Impressionist artworks at the National Gallery and Courtauld Gallery in London, and the many Baroque churches and the Vatican Collection in Rome.

They are also privileged to have a regular programme of speakers who come to the School to give talks, most recently Antony Penrose, who spoke about his pioneering mother, the photographer Lee Miller.

This year, we will also invite students to take part in ARTiculation, a public-speaking competition based around art. With these opportunities, both within and beyond the classroom, students have a unique and very precious opportunity to explore the endlessly fascinating story of art.



Guernica,  
Pablo Picasso

Studying History of Art has allowed me to view architecture from a completely different perspective, particularly being able to recognise time periods during which buildings would have been built.

It has also given me a new approach when I view paintings and sculptures, allowing me to consider details that I previously wouldn't have recognised as well as the artist's choices, including the use of colour, tone and the positioning of different elements or objects and people in paintings.

Gaining this important skill of visual analysis means that you are able to interpret expressions as well as gestures. Though this is such an important skill, History of Art is not a widely taught A Level so it's a privilege to be able to study it at Benenden.

During our visual analysis lessons, we have learnt about a vast range of art throughout different centuries including Classical, Gothic and the Renaissance as well as many others. By looking at these different periods, we are able to learn about the evolution of architecture and how styles have been adapted.

As well as visual analysis lessons we also focus on paintings and sculptures that focus on the theme of war,

studying famous pieces including Guernica by Pablo Picasso, The Third of May 1808 by Goya and Him by Maurizio Cattelan.


In the lessons which focus on war, we look at details within the painting, artist choices and what methods and materials they have used, as well as the historical context around the pieces, including why they were commissioned and where the pieces are today. For me, a personal highlight in this topic has been studying Gassed by John Singer Sargent and learning about the huge impacts that mustard gas had on soldiers during the First World War.' ■



Olivia Godall, Six One

**“Gaining this important skill of visual analysis means that you are able to interpret expressions as well as gestures. Though this is such an important skill, History of Art is not a widely taught A Level so it's a privilege to be able to study it at Benenden.”**

# WHAT YOU MISSED IN TECH IN 2023



In November 2022, tech developer OpenAI released ChatGPT, a chatbot with an integrated large language model that converses with its users – a bit like a more friendly version of Google. Over the year since, we have been inundated with more and more of these artificial intelligences – Google’s Bard, Stable Diffusion, Bing AI, DALL-E, and a long list of others – and in the process have overlooked several other fascinating advancements that have been made in technology this year. So, here is a list highlighting a few of the biggest non-AI related technology advancements of 2023.

## Quantum Computing

Quantum Computing in simple terms is an area of Computer Science that leverages the behaviours of particles at the quantum (very, very small) level to perform calculations at breakneck speeds, far faster than any classical computer could. The first functioning quantum computer was a piece of biochemistry equipment – a Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) machine. Researchers Isaac Chuang and Mark Kubinec produced the Two-Qubit – quantum bit – machine in 1998 in what they said was an effort to “understand how the universe computes,” and since then we have doubled that number almost eight times.

IBM’s most recent Osprey quantum computer can process 433 qubits of information. For reference, the number of bits on a regular computer that would be required to represent a state on the Osprey computer is greater than the total number of atoms in the known universe. And IBM’s not stopping there – they have released plans to produce quantum computers with capacities of over 4,000 qubits by 2025 and are also anticipating the release of their 1,121 qubit Condor quantum computer before the end of this year, so keep an eye out!

## Extended Reality

Extended Reality (XR) is an umbrella term commonly used to describe immersive technologies such as Augmented, Virtual and Mixed Realities. A great example of this developing technology is London-based developer HYPERVSN’s new 3D holographic system, which uses a rotating four-ray LED system to create amazing interactive displays that are now being used in advertising and retail to attract buyers.

In the virtual reality space, Meta has released its newest VR headset, the Meta Quest 3, which has a 4K+ display that can be used to fully immerse oneself in a range of popular games including Assassin’s Creed Nexus, Espire 2 and Resident Evil 4.

## Internet of Things

The Internet of Things is a network of physical objects, instead of computers, that contain sensors, software, and other technologies to collect and exchange data with other objects and devices on the network. All sorts of devices such as refrigerators, baby monitors and security cameras are now on the Internet of Things and are being used every day in home life, security, and manufacturing.

Through the advancement of wearable technologies like smartwatches and web-enabled glasses, the use of the Internet of Things is now being explored in healthcare to allow for remote monitoring of non-critical patients, such

as those with cancer and diabetes. Dexcom continuous glucose monitoring devices allow their users to send a non-stop stream of information to their doctors, so preventative measures can be taken well in advance. Medical device manufacturers are also following suit to help prevent life threatening illnesses like heart attacks and strokes.

## Robotics

Healthcare-related developments are also being made in the field of robotics. Boston Dynamics’ dog-like robot, Spot, was originally released to the public in June of 2020, and is now being adapted for use in first aid alongside researchers from MIT. One of the researchers, Henwei Huang, says they aim to “use automation and robotic technology to remove people from dangerous jobs,” and they are doing this, in part, by enabling the remote-controlled robot to monitor patient’s vital signs from two metres away. Further testing and development are yet to be done, however, there is encouraging progress, and they plan to test the technology with more and more patients with a range of illnesses.

Outside of healthcare, there are also promising developments in the sphere of exoskeletons. Robotic exoskeletons are devices that can enhance or rehabilitate the physical performance of the user when worn. Developers SUITX have made a range of exoskeletons designed for use in the automotive and logistics industries to reduce injuries and increase workers’ quality of life, whilst also increasing productivity.

## Space Technology

Private space exploration company SpaceX is well-known for last year’s expedition to the International Space Station on the Falcon 9, which took four people into orbit. This year, SpaceX is now flight-testing their deep-space craft, Starship, which the company aims to make reusable, as we move toward making space tourism a thing of reality. In April of this year, the integrated first flight-test of the spacecraft ended in a crash as fuel leakages led to fires and the loss of control of the vehicle. Now, with these problems and others fixed, SpaceX is moving into its second integrated flight-test of the craft with the hope that this time, it won’t end in an explosion or crash.

Outside of the technologies mentioned in the list, there are many other non-AI improvements being made that, like AI, may soon become an intrinsic part of daily life – so keep an eye out for the next big thing in tech! ■

**Ibik Oduba-Ibironke,  
Six Two**

# THE YEAR OF CHANGE

Around one in six UK organisations, totalling 432,000, have embraced at least one AI technology according to government research. The rapidly developing technology has the potential to revolutionise various industries throughout the world, if it hasn't done so already... Here, some of our students delve into the impact AI is having on specific sectors across the globe.

## AI in Retail

Artificial Intelligence is poised to revolutionise the retail industry as it develops at an unprecedented speed. Its role in retail promises to streamline mundane tasks, enhance sustainability, optimise supply chains and redefine customer interactions. As AI continues to mature, it holds the potential to reshape the retail sector, presenting both opportunities and challenges.

One of the primary uses of AI which is already prevalent in the retail industry is the automation of mundane tasks. Tasks such as delivering products, tracking inventory, and scheduling can now be completed by AI. This eliminates human errors and maximises efficiency as AI can work indefatigably.

As sustainability is becoming a more pressing concern, AI can play a crucial role promoting eco-friendly practices within the retail industry. AI-powered systems can monitor and detect high emission rates from transportation fleets and manufacturing processes.

Supply chain optimisation is another area where AI's impact will be significant. By analysing consumers' purchase patterns, AI systems can predict demand, optimise inventory levels, and provide alerts when best-selling stock reaches a low level. This approach helps retailers avoid stockouts, reduce excess inventory, and ultimately enhance efficiency in the supply chain.

Predicting and adapting to seasonal trends is a constant challenge for retailers. AI can work alongside humans to analyse historical data, identify patterns, and predict which items will be in high demand during specific seasons. Moreover, AI can dynamically adjust pricing based on real-time market trends, ensuring that retailers maximise profits while offering competitive prices to consumers.

Augmented Reality (AR) adds another dimension to the retail experience, especially in the fashion industry. Virtual clothes try-on powered by AI enables customers to visualise how the clothing will look on them without the need to

try them on in real life. This significantly enhances the online shopping experience, bridging the gap between the digital and physical realms.

Behavioural analytics is a powerful tool that AI brings to the retail landscape. By analysing customer behaviour, AI can determine the optimal placement of products within a store, improving visibility and increasing the likelihood of purchases. This data-driven approach to merchandising ensures that retailers can tailor their strategies to align with customer preferences and maximise sales.

However, as with any technological advancement, the integration of AI into the retail industry brings potential problems. Errors and malfunctions in AI systems can lead to inaccurate predictions, logistical challenges, and even financial setbacks. AI applications should be closely monitored and constantly refined and improved to ensure their reliability and accuracy.

Having AI in the retail industry is a mixed blessing. While AI brings

massive benefits to the retail industry, potential challenges such as errors and the ethical implications of AI-driven decision-making mustn't be neglected as we step into a new era of AI and technological possibilities which would reshape not just the retail industry, but our lives too. ■



“As AI continues to mature, it holds the potential to reshape the retail sector, presenting both opportunities and challenges.”

Sammy Tsui, Upper Fifth





## AI and Transport

The impact of Artificial Intelligence on the transportation sector is profound, ushering in a new era of possibilities. AI's potential to enhance safety, reduce congestion, mitigate emissions, and streamline travel management is nothing short of revolutionary. AI has found one of its most triumphant applications within road transport.

Globally, automotive manufacturers and technology companies are exploring AI technologies to develop both commercial and personal automated vehicles, leveraging a combination of sensors, actuators, control units, and sophisticated software. These AI-driven vehicles range from those that assume specific driving functions, such as parking, to those intended to fully replace human drivers. Partially automated vehicles are already prevalent in the EU market, and fully automated vehicles are undergoing limited testing. Nevertheless, the introduction of AI into transportation is not without its hurdles. Ethical, social, economic, and legal questions have surfaced, prompting a closer examination of the impact of AI.

Ethical dilemmas come to the forefront when AI confronts life-or-death decisions on the road. The question of whether AI should prioritise the safety of its occupants or the greater good – even if it means sacrificing passengers for pedestrians – remains a topic of heated debate. The contrasting viewpoints on this issue highlight the need for a well-defined decision-making process. The challenge is to determine whether

AI algorithms should autonomously automate ethical choices, adhere to standardised ethical settings across all vehicles, or allow consumers to have a say in defining those settings.

Cybersecurity and data privacy are also of particular importance in the development of AI in automated vehicles. These sophisticated machines require access to vast amounts of data, much of which is sensitive or protected. Unauthorised access to this data poses a significant threat to the safety of the vehicle, its occupants, and other road users. This is why securing AI systems and having a robust framework for data protection is imperative.

Liability is another significant challenge that cannot be overlooked. The existing framework for liability in accidents assumes a human driver, yet automation technology seeks to partially or fully replace the driver, which necessitates adjustments in

legislation, traffic regulations, and insurance policies. Clear boundaries for liability must be established to identify who bears responsibility in accidents involving vehicles at different levels of automation. This is a complex task that will require collaboration among stakeholders and careful consideration of the changing landscape.

The integration of AI into transportation holds the promise of innovation and efficiency but also presents many complexities. Striking the right balance between the benefits and challenges of AI necessitates a collaborative approach involving technology developers, policymakers, and society at large. Careful navigation of these issues is vital to ensure a safer, more efficient, and ethically sound future for transportation. As we stand at the crossroads of this technological revolution, the decisions we make today will shape the future of mobility and safety on our roads. ■

“The integration of AI into transportation holds the promise of innovation and efficiency but also presents many complexities.”

Victoria Tsang, Six Two



# THE NEXT CENTURY OF EDUCATION

As Benenden reaches the end of its Centenary year, members of staff draw on 100 years at the forefront of British education to share their predictions on how education will develop between now and 2124.



## The School Classroom in a Century

If you go to the Black Country Museum in the West Midlands, you can be thrown back in time and experience a lesson in a Victorian classroom. The desks will be uncomfortable, the teacher will be strict, visiting students might be struck on the hand as punishment, and chalk dust will be thick in the air. While chalk may no longer be a key component of a teacher toolkit, and any striking of students will lead to a staff member being struck off themselves, we have more to hope for the next century classroom than perhaps simply more comfortable seating arrangements.

There is no doubt that we face, and require, a drastic change in our education model. The current nature of assessments requires a revolution; one hopes students will no longer face the pressure of end-of-year exams where they regurgitate two years' worth of learned material which will swiftly be forgotten. Instead, the focus will shift to lifelong learning, with curricula designed to adapt to a world where careers will emerge and evolve in ways we cannot yet predict.

Perhaps next century educational qualifications will no longer be represented by a string of letters and numbers. Instead, the evidence of a student's learning and capabilities may come from ongoing, engaging forms of assessment, such as digital portfolios which could showcase a student's journey and achievements through a series of dynamic projects and practical experiences,

rather than the results of a single, high-pressure exam.

As recently as the end of May, archeologists discovered drawings believed to have been made by children who lived nearly 2,000 years ago in the ancient city of Pompeii. Change the material and the location, and these could be the drawings of children today. Therefore, while much will change in education, some things will remain constant.

Students will still be students, needing guidance to focus (and stop the passing of notes, be it paper or a text message sent via a wearable device...), encouragement to ignite their passion for subjects, and the camaraderie of learning alongside peers. Classrooms will be dynamic environments where interactive and collaborative learning takes precedence, ensuring that education is not a solitary endeavor conducted in front of a screen, but a vibrant, communal experience.

While technology will undoubtedly play a significant role in education, the human element – the teacher's ability to inspire, mentor, and connect – will (hopefully, wrote the teacher) remain irreplaceable. ■

**Farah Dawood, Assistant Head – Academic**



## A Shifting Digital Learning Landscape

Imagine this. It is the year 2124, and you, a bright and curious student, attend one of the UK's most prestigious independent schools. As you stroll through the sleek, net-zero campus, nestled within bee-friendly, historic landscaped gardens, the familiar buzz of student chatter surrounds you. Your augmented reality glasses suddenly pop up a small icon of a butterfly, and you blink to hear a brief soundbite about a rare species that has just been identified in the long grass nearby, piquing your curiosity.

With a wave goodbye to your friends, you enter a dimly lit room. A warm, inviting voice greets you personally, "Good morning. I see you enjoyed plenty of deep sleep last night, and your brain waves indicate you are relaxed and ready for a great morning of learning." It is your AI teaching assistant, George, whose soothing tones never fail to put you at ease. With a wave of George's virtual hand, two life-sized holograms materialise before your eyes. One is a distinguished-looking gentleman, clad in Elizabethan attire, his piercing gaze and furrowed brow instantly recognisable – it's none other than William Shakespeare himself. The other hologram is a gentle-faced woman, her eyes brimming with maternal warmth – Mary Arden, Shakespeare's mother. George's voice resonates, "Today, you'll have the privilege of learning directly from these literary icons. William Shakespeare will guide you through the intricacies of his plays, offering insights into his creative process, his characters, and the cultural context of his works. Meanwhile, Mary Arden will share her perspective as the woman who nurtured one of the greatest minds in history."

A simple nod marks the start of this lesson, where you interact with and learn directly from figures who have

shaped the literary landscape for centuries. Throughout the day, you explore different historical periods, scientific concepts, and literary realms. George, your personal AI, continuously assesses your understanding, tailoring the learning experience to your unique needs and preferences. No more cramming for exams – your progress is seamlessly tracked, and personalised feedback is provided at every step, ensuring you grasp each concept thoroughly before moving on.

However, your education goes beyond cutting-edge technology. Your school recognises the irreplaceable value of human guidance, seamlessly blending AI-powered learning with the wisdom and mentorship of experienced tutors. In your ethical AI education sessions, your human tutor, Dr. Wright, a renowned expert in the field, guides you through the responsible development and use of these powerful technologies. With her deep insights, you learn about the potential risks, biases, and the importance of maintaining a human touch in education, fostering critical thinking and ethical decision-making.

The synergy between AI and human expertise has unlocked a new realm of learning, where knowledge is not merely imparted but cultivated through a personalised, multifaceted approach. With AI as your guide and Dr. Wright's mentorship, the possibilities for learning and growth seem limitless. Now you wander through the knee length grass hoping you might just get a real-life glimpse of the rare butterfly. ■

**Jeanette O'Connor, Director of Digital Learning and Innovation**



## The End of an Era: Saying Goodbye to a Groundbreaking Headmistress

Headmistress Samantha Price announced in summer 2023 – after a decade at the helm – that she would be leaving Benenden at the end of its Centenary year. Overseeing huge developments and changes, Mrs Price’s place in Benenden history is well and truly secured. Two Six One students, Ava Charlton and Amelia Lyle, spoke to her about her time at Benenden and what the School means to her.

### **What has been your best memory at Benenden?**

There has been so much that has been so good – it’s really quite difficult to identify just one.

I’d say that one of my best memories was the day that we opened the Centenary Hall to the pupils, and everyone was standing outside in Cloisters. It was about ten past eight, you were all there, it was extraordinary. It was a really, really hot June day and everyone was really excited which is rare at that time in the morning!

I remember having the two Head Girls there and cutting the ribbon. The School hadn’t been into the Hall. You’d just seen this building site for years.

I remember the countdown from ten through to zero, and that excitement, and then we all cheered, the Head

Girls cut the ribbon, and you were all allowed in. Then it was just this excitement and awe from everybody that made me think we absolutely did the right thing. So, I think that has to be one of my favourite memories.

### **Have you got one piece of advice to the new Head or to current students or future students?**

I think for me it’s always to be yourself. It took me a long time to feel comfortable being myself and I think it’s the biggest asset that anyone can have – just to be authentic.

### **What’s your favourite school hymn?**

I’ve got two. Lord of the Sea and Sky and When a Knight Won his Spurs. Those would be my two favourites. I also really like the new School hymn!

### **What is your favourite school meal?**

Got to be scampi and chips. Scampi and chips is always a winner, and School does it really, really well. Not quite as sophisticated as you’d think! Oh, and I do like the poke bowls!

### **This is quite a difficult question, but what was your favourite School production and why?**

Again, there are going to be two. Joseph undoubtedly, because the School being able to perform at the Coliseum is something that I will never ever forget. The whole School were there, and we had parents and Seniors there and there was that just electric excitement before it started. To see everyone on stage and the way they performed with such professionalism, they just owned that stage. And that’s the biggest



stage in the West End. The pride I felt in everyone involved with it was immense, but also the whole School just completely got behind it. It was a magical, magical evening.

So that definitely, and then I think *Les Misérables* was a great production. A really ambitious production for a single sex school as well, and the quality of the singing, the casting of the roles and the set was absolutely fantastic.

### Another hard question, what would you say is your proudest achievement at Benenden?

I was really proud that we managed to anticipate the lockdown in March 2020 and were able to get the overseas girls home before it started, so that I didn't have any overseas girls stuck here in the country.

I was very proud of the way that the teaching staff upskilled literally overnight so that – two days after we sent everyone home – we were delivering a full curriculum online. It's not very glamorous, but I was really, really proud of the way that the School managed that.

And then I have to say the building of the Centenary Hall and The Sir David K.P. Li Music School, as well as being bold enough as a School to take some strategic changes, like introducing Medway as a Fourths' House and flexing a bit more on the weekends. We've made quite a lot of operational changes, which you've got to be fairly bold to do.

“out of all schools that I have worked in, the depth of community at Benenden is in a completely different league, and I think that there is a fundamental care that is rooted right the way through the School.”

### Can you describe Benenden in five words, and why?

Home, Community, Care and the Students.

Because out of all schools that I have worked in, the depth of community at Benenden is in a completely different league, and I think that there is a fundamental care that is rooted right the way through the School. There is a kind of passion for the School which I am incredibly proud of, and that stays with all of us, even when we leave. You see that with Benenden Seniors going forward as well. And I think my last word has to be Brownies.

### What's been your biggest regret at Benenden so far, and why?

Not having enough time to go into the boarding houses as much as I would

like, and to teach as much as I wanted to. Without a shadow of a doubt. The thing I'm always worried about is not being visible enough.

### Are there any traditions that you might want to bring with you to Cranleigh?

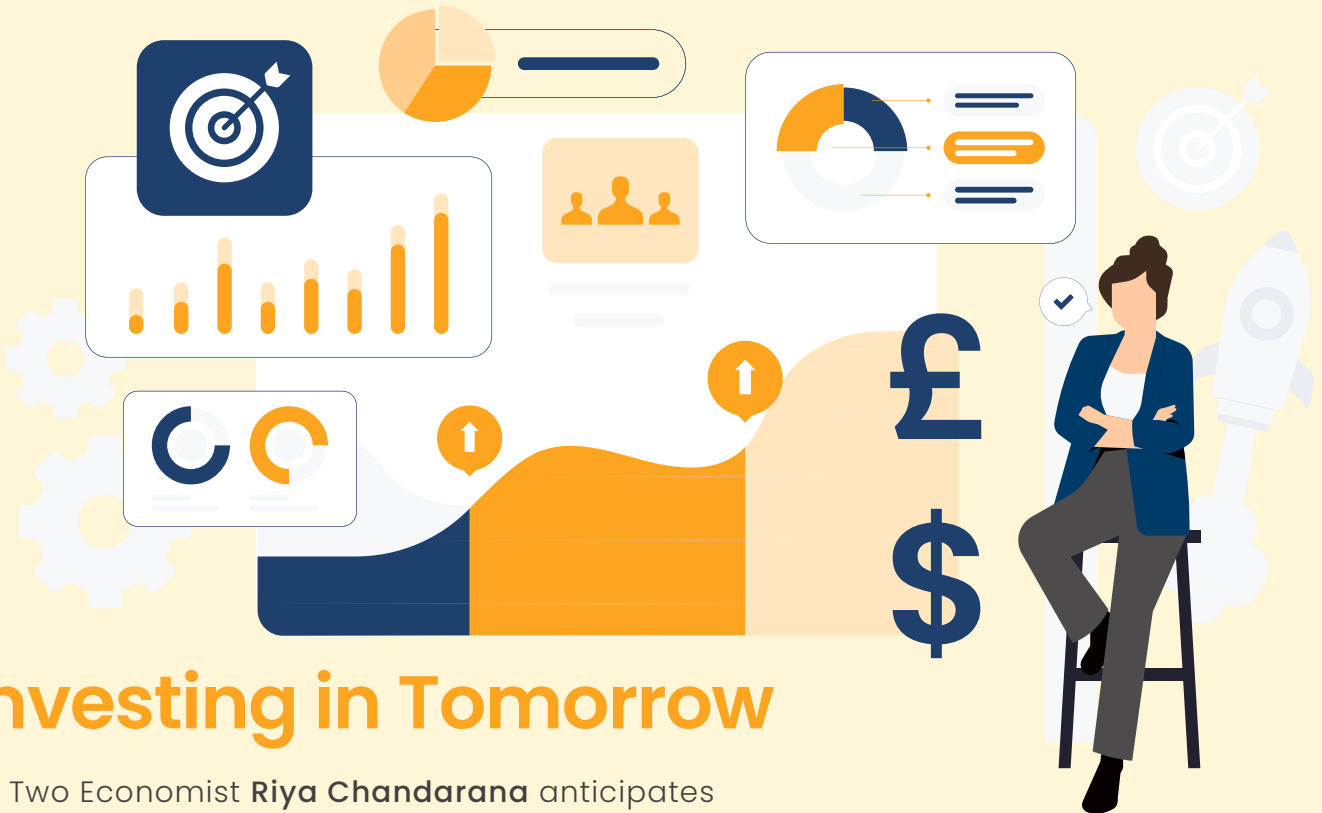
I'd actually quite like to take the Twelve Days of Christmas and the Rose Supper for leavers, which I introduced here. I will definitely introduce it at Cranleigh albeit in a different way, and it won't be called the Rose Supper as it's boys and girls.

### What will you miss the most?

I will miss the community. Definitely.

### And what will you miss the least?

South East Water. They're such a pain! ■



## Investing in Tomorrow

Six Two Economist **Riya Chandarana** anticipates the booms and busts of the next hundred years...

**E**conomics applies to the entire world and affects us all, so the state of the economy within the next 100 years carries significant importance and will be hugely impactful on everyone.

Adopting an idealist Economics perspective for the future, similar ideas would be circulated for most people. Some of these may include an end to world poverty (increasing employment), greater equality and environmental sustainability. While for many of us these aspirations may align, they are not necessarily easy to achieve.

I believe over the next 100 years we will work towards and get closer to meeting these goals. However, there are a range of unpredictable factors that may lead to a setback in meeting these aims. Examples may include natural disasters and climate change, health pandemics and conflict.

Natural disasters may hinder our progress as they disproportionately affect poorer regions, leading to a setback in development where it may be most needed.

Health pandemics (such as Covid 19) can not only disrupt economies, but also, due to the immense focus on a potentially overwhelmed healthcare system, can draw money away from fundamental aims. Furthermore, as humans become more able to survive diseases, viruses also change to adapt, and pandemic-like situations may occur more frequently.

Meanwhile, war and conflict (such as the Russo-Ukrainian war) can lead to a loss of infrastructure and disrupt general economic activities.

However, the advancement of Artificial Intelligence, may have role to play to mitigate these factors.

Humanity is a species which is constantly evolving and adapting to new circumstances. As shown having already undertaken the Agricultural, Industrial and Digital Revolutions, this sparks an interest in what will come next.

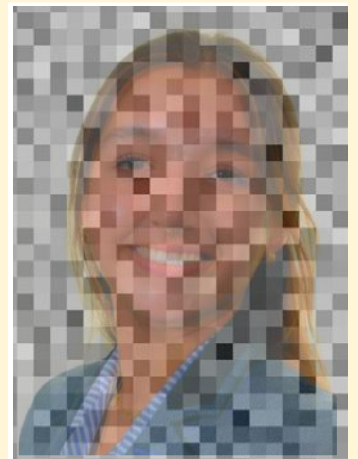
There is thought that the intelligence revolution will be the next stage. A revolution in which allows machines to be able to perform at a human level, meaning that in the next 100 years, AI and the development of technology will increase significantly. This will have a great effect on many different industries – possibly through a loss of jobs to machinery, an increase in efficiency and an increase in global GDP, provided re-training and newer jobs are promoted in the intelligent tech industry.

AI can help to meet the goal of an end to world poverty through its use in developing skills and education. This may be personalised to individuals, to allow them to enhance their skill set and hone more transferable skills, and to be able to obtain a greater range of jobs.

In order to increase equality, for example in the workplace, AI can mitigate any bias (whether conscious or subconscious) that there may have been through purely looking at the individual's qualifications and skills, rather than their gender or ethnicity. AI can help to develop greater environmental sustainability through many aspects such as waste management, wildlife protection (in the form of cameras and drones) and ocean/water conservation.

AI is already having an impact at the intersection of production, medicine, and data processing. We are seeing faster diagnoses of diseases and cures, which will also keep people in jobs, both by reducing the number of people taking time off work due to illnesses and also in healthcare by helping to develop treatments.

AI's economic impact has not fully set in, and the coming century will see the most changes from this advancement. Just as the Industrial Revolution resulted in new economic policies, the intelligence age has seen these discussions starting. I am hopeful that these advancing ideas, properly managed, will alleviate many of the factors mentioned above and I'm hopeful the economic effect they have will make the world a fairer and better place for us to live in. ■



**Riya Chandarana, Six Two**



## Mapping Our Future

Six Two student **Isabelle Cunniff** offers a Geographer's perspective on the next century's changing landscape...

**W**hen I was posed with the question of what I expect to see happen in the next 100 years in terms of Geography, I chose to focus on three different areas that I find the most fascinating, but which also represent problems that need our immediate action.

We live in an ever-changing world where every day we solve one issue but are faced with another. I hope that in the next 100 years as a worldwide community, we begin to understand the severity of our current actions and their impact on our futures and the futures of coming generations.

With regard to climate change, I think what happens in the next 100 years will critically define what kind of world we will live in. A key aspect that will need to be greatly taken into consideration is equipping low-income countries and emerging economies with fossil fuels from high-income countries, so that they can use this energy to reverse the effects of climate change and move towards more renewable energy sources.

Although this may be seen as counterproductive, I think implementing this redistribution of fossil fuels on a large scale will not only help in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the long term, as higher-

income countries can afford to be less reliant, but also partially close the gap between our world's richest and poorest countries.

I also believe that we must become open to an increase in migration between countries, whether it be from refugees, economic migration, or internal migration. The pervasive issues we face today require collaboration and innovation to find effective solutions. The rapid change we are experiencing requires a spread of knowledge and ideas, and the movement of people is key to this.

This would not necessarily mean there would be a loss of borders, as these provide important boundaries for trade, security, and law enforcement. However it would encourage a spread of culture, customs, and heritage along with helping solve problems.

Furthermore, I also anticipate that in the next 100 years, we will find a solution to the detrimental plastic problem. With around eight million pieces of plastic entering our oceans every day, this is one of the key areas where I want to see improvements and developments made. The two things that are the most important are reducing the amount of plastic we use in our day-to-day lives and finding strategies to remove the plastic that currently sits in our oceans.

What I think we will find is that people will begin moving towards a more sustainable lifestyle. This could include anything from finding more inventive ways to reuse things around your house to sorting your rubbish so that it can be effectively recycled, or it could even be as simple as carrying a shopping bag around with you. Although these changes may be seen as insignificant as they are on such a small scale, if everyone contributes to this it will make a considerable difference to the world we live in. ■



**Isabelle Cunniff, Six Two**

# A Future of Freedom

Six One **Ruth Okubajo** ruminates on the changing times ahead through a philosopher's lens...

**W**hen thinking of the future, the human brain often immerses itself in existentialism, which is the question of purpose in human existence. Why do we think this way? Well, the future only means one thing: as we get older, our bodies age, our minds mature, our views change. Also, our search for meaning becomes more and more important to us as we attempt to discover what gives our lives purpose.

Benenden, now in its Centenary year, has unquestionably grown older. It has expanded its cultural diversity internationally, developed numerous architectural projects that have flourished under its name, taken in a myriad of respected teachers, governors, and staff who have supported the School throughout the years, and established a platform of esteemed alumni who strengthen Benenden's bonds within various industries and communities.

Yes, Benenden is growing, but why? What does this growth mean, and why is this growth important? What exactly is Benenden's purpose? That is Benenden's existentialist question.

There are numerous branches of existentialism. A famous one is nihilism – the belief is that life is meaningless, and therefore core values hold no importance. We do not have to look far to recognise chaos lies among us in all parts of the world. In the midst of these issues, are the four Cs of Benenden of utmost importance?

In the next 100 years, with the domination of AI in all fields, the increasing tension between polarised governments that challenge the order of democracy, and the consequences of our abuse of fossil fuels, will we

even remember what the four Cs are? When the future does not look as idealistic as one can hope, can one still believe there is a purpose to anything? I say yes.

Benenden's purpose is to prepare us for these growing concerns and lead the next generation of women who will be able to use to our courage, courtesy, confidence and compassion to bring the world out of this chaos.

Another interpretation of existentialism is absurdism. One may argue this is a more optimistic approach to the meaning of existence. Absurdist cannot find a rational meaning for the universe, so they act freely, not constrained by a defining purpose. The writer and philosopher who pioneered Absurdism, Albert Camus, stated: "Freedom is nothing but a chance to be better."

At Benenden, we are provided with freedom to improve and enhance ourselves. However, it is important to recognise how freedom has changed over time. A hundred years ago, freedom for girls to be educated was limited, and that was the freedom which Benenden provided. It offered not only the freedom of female education but also an education that focused on various aspects of human development, not only academics.

Now, we have the freedom to give to other communities; we have the opportunity to provide the freedom we have to others through Benenden's ever-giving spirit. In the next 100 years, we shall have a freedom that we might not even acknowledge with the possibilities of the future being endless. This freedom provides us with yet another purpose to Benenden's revolutionary nature.

A key mind in existentialism was Simone de Beauvoir, an astute French philosopher and writer, who much like Camus, acknowledged the confinement of womanhood in 20th-century Western culture. She strived towards a philosophy that did not only attend to the lives of men but also the lives of women. Beauvoir's feminist essays, *The Second Sex*, were written almost 30 years after Benenden was first opened, and yet it is one of the first essays written by a woman that discusses the treatment of women.

One can imagine the young girls at Benenden in 1949 reading copies of the work and learning from the insights of a female philosopher, probably for the very first time. This yearning for knowledge shall carry Benenden through the next 100 years with success. ■



Ruth Okubajo, Six One





## STEM in a Century

**Sarah Witheridge** in Six Two imagines the state of STEM after another hundred years...

In order to predict the future, we must first look back. It was only in 1923 that we saw the stars in the andromeda galaxy and in 2009 we discovered their planets. The first successful aeroplane took off in 1903 and only 54 years later, the first spacecraft was launched. As shocking as it sounds, doctors didn't wash their hands before surgery until the 1850s. The invention of mobile phones, the internet and AI have all happened in the last 70 years.

This may sound like quite a long time but hominins have been around for millions of years. So, the rate at which our scientific knowledge is advancing is rapidly accelerating, and this means that we are looking at a future that will be very different from the lives we lead today.

This year we witnessed the opening of Benenden Guangzhou. Perhaps, at the next centenary, Benenden will open a school on Mars. Both Elon Musk and NASA are aiming to make humans a multi-planetary species within the next 20 years. We saw the first ever space tourism trip in 2021 and this may become much more common as our rockets improve; people could go on holiday to the moon, a space station

or even just on a small trip to see the Earth from above.

The recent release of many AI programs such as ChatGPT will have a huge impact on the future. Tasks such as researching information, writing emails or speeches can now be done very efficiently with AI. As technology advances, we are seeing a huge change in the job market; it is predicted that 85 per cent of jobs that will exist in 2030 haven't been created yet – a very exciting idea for all of us who will be looking for our first jobs around then!

Another exciting prospect that the future holds is the cure for many diseases. We have seen such rapid advances over the past century with the invention of new vaccines and medicines. Not only will we discover many more of these, but we can also harness technology in our hospitals, designing small robots to enter blood vessels and remove clots or tumours in areas difficult to access. I look forward to watching many deadly diseases becoming simple to cure.

With so many exciting prospects in the future of STEM, we must remember that none of these will be possible if we destroy our planet. When we look to the future, scientists predict a

world where many great cities will sink under the water and many beautiful species will become extinct. We must remember that with great power comes great responsibility to care for those who are vulnerable, not only the environment and animals but people whose lives are destroyed by conflict. With every scientific discovery, we are unleashing something incredibly powerful and must remember to use it to improve the world. ■



**Sarah Witheridge, Six Two**



## Governing Progress

Offering five predictions for the shape of things to come, Six One Izzy Hason gives her Political perspective...

**P**rime Minister Harold Wilson once quipped that “a week is a long time in politics”. Bearing in mind this huge caveat, here are my five predictions for changes to the UK political landscape in the century ahead:

### **16-year-olds will get to vote.**

In the year when Benenden was founded, women had to be 30 years old to be permitted to vote (whereas the voting age for men was 21). Fast forward to today and the voting age for both women and men is set at 18. However, there are increasing signs that the age threshold for voting in general elections may soon be lowered to 16 – with the Labour Party reportedly considering including this proposal in its next manifesto.

### **Pensioners will become the deciding group in election outcomes.**

If the possibility of opinions of 16–17-year-olds being a major factor shaping UK politics is a concern, you might take some comfort from the fact that younger voters will probably become increasingly less influential as the UK’s population ages. In a century from now – based on trends in life expectancy, fertility rates, and migration – the proportion of voters aged 65 and over could reach close to half of the electorate. Of course, in those circumstances, politics and government policy will likely become dominated by very difficult questions about how society copes with the rising bill for healthcare, social care, and pensions.

### **Technology will be at the centre of politics.**

Smart phones, the internet, and social media have, in the space of less than 20 years, reshaped our social lives. In the political arena, these technological tools and platforms are also starting to upend the way governments and politicians operate. We have already witnessed cases of extremist groups and foreign powers seeking to interfere in elections by spreading fake news online. And – with the advent of ever-more sophisticated AI and deep fake technologies, which can tailor political messages to target specific groups and individuals – it is going to be an enormous challenge for voters to distinguish fact from fiction.

### **Britain will have a referendum on re-joining the EU.**

Currently, it appears that each of the major political parties have decided that questioning the wisdom of Brexit is political poison. But after a few more years of feeble economic growth, no useful trade deals with any country of importance, and a chronic shortage of service workers from care homes to restaurants, there will come a point when politicians will be forced to reflect on the state of the country, and Britons will once again be asked whether they think divorcing the continent of Europe was an expensive mistake.

### **Private schools will still exist.**

Human beings like choices – and parents especially like to choose where to send their children to school. Even in countries with well-funded state education sectors, such as Germany and Norway, there remains a place for privately funded schools. Yes, if the Labour Party wins a majority at the next general election, it is likely that private school fees will rise sharply, and some schools may close or merge. Nevertheless, the very best ones, like Benenden, will still be going strong in 2123. ■



Izzy Hason, Six One



## History in the Making

Six One Historian **Kriscia Koong** takes a look at the recent past to try and make sense of the near future...

**W**inston Churchill once said: “Those that fail to learn from history are doomed to repeat it.”

History cannot be viewed only as a subject of the past, but rather as a tool to guide us going forward, locating patterns that might otherwise be invisible in present time. The last century was nothing short of remarkable achievements, overcoming countless challenges including natural disasters, international pandemic and endless world conflicts. Through the hardships we earn experience – the ability to avoid mistakes to pave better paths for our future.

Why is it so important that our future should constantly be evolving? Raising the overturning of *Roe vs Wade* as an example, a landmark decision that made a women’s right to abortion legal has now been reversed. It may seem slightly ridiculous for our society to take three steps forward just to take five steps back, however this is a prime example of how our future will be ruined should we not learn from previous experiences.

The repeal of this constitutional right ultimately retracted 50 years of legal protection for women, raising the question of whether other rulings should be reconsidered, including the rights to same-sex marriage, contraception access and the legal status of transgender people. In essence, such a repeal of the landmark decision completely erases the progress in our legal system so desperately fought for by people in the past 100 years. This

raises the question of whether we want future generations to relive the past century, or whether we want a future of better opportunities, environments and advancements, for us and for those that come after.

One of the most notable and impactful events over the last century was undoubtedly the most recent pandemic – Covid 19. The virus has single-handedly affected our society far beyond anyone’s expectations, not only in terms of our physical health but also our mental well-being, education and economy. The devastating consequences of this international crisis have left a void in our lives from which we may never recover.

Nevertheless, the pandemic proved to be an admonition, urging us to improve our awareness towards public health, sanitation, and other environmental crises that could arise in the future. Through the occurrence of this series of events, we gained developments in many different aspects of our lives, including the creation of new vaccines, growth of online education and countless other technological developments, exhibiting how society can evolve for the better because of our experiences.

In sum, it is going to be very difficult to predict what may happen in the next century as technology, global warming and pernicious viruses are all evolving too quickly for our logical minds to deduce. Nevertheless, history demonstrates that change is a constant in which societies and individuals can adapt to survive and thrive.

For instance, during the pandemic we thrived by being open minded and flexible to new ways of living, such as using new methods of technology, therefore gaining development in so many different aspects of our lives as a result. Flexibility, resilience, and the ability to embrace innovation are crucial traits for navigating an ever-evolving future.

Although unprecedented obstacles will no doubt arise, challenging our ability to navigate solutions, rest assured that history will serve as a guide through all complexities, helping us in making informed decisions, so that our future is one full of fruitful opportunities and better qualities of life. ■



**Kriscia Koong, Six One**

# JUNIOR DRAMATICS

Students in the Fourth and Upper Fourth delighted audiences with their Junior Play, performing Kevin M. Cunningham's stage adaptation of *Little Women* under the direction of Six One students Serena Grant, Sophia Kirkwood and Daisy Smart. Here, the directors reflect on their warmly received production:



**L**ittle Women is a coming-of-age, semi-autobiographical novel by the famous American author Louisa May Alcott, which tells the story of four sisters (Beth, Amy, Jo and Meg March) and their different journeys from childhood to adulthood.

Despite all the trials and tribulations they face living in poverty during the American Civil War, they still manage to uphold a strong sisterly bond. Serena, Daisy and I collectively thought this was a great story for the younger girls in Fourth and Upper Fourth to take part in, due to the empowering message that is embedded within.

Reflecting on the rehearsal process, even though we had a few setbacks (a common occurrence within show business!) such as changes in role allocations, the cast brought an animated atmosphere to every rehearsal without fail, which not only brought smiles to our faces but also really helped the whole team stay motivated to achieve their targets and reach a sufficient stage for us to perform in May.

My experience of being a director has been nothing but fulfilling. When Mrs Porter-Barnett a few months ago informed the Six Ones of an opportunity to co-direct the Junior Play, I just knew I had to get involved and I am so glad I did. My patience levels and delegating skills have definitely strengthened!

I wish all the girls the best of luck. They deserve it after all their hard work into bringing *Little Women* to life on the big Benenden stage. We couldn't be more proud. ■

Sophia Kirkwood



**D**irecting the Little Women Lower School Play was such a lovely experience and I really enjoyed working with all of the Fourths and Upper Fourths.

Everyone involved in the play was so dedicated and impressive, we held months of long rehearsals and the commitment and enthusiasm given by all of the cast was so encouraging. I am sure that all of them are going to bring extremely exciting performances to the Drama Department in the future.

I was incredibly impressed with the level of the acting that all of the lower years brought to the audition process. Each of the auditions were so high in quality and made casting all the more difficult, as there were so many talented performers. The casting choices that were made underwent various changes and it was equally impressive how quickly many of the cast were able to adapt and take on larger roles.

I would like to thank all of the cast for their hard work and positive attitudes. I was so proud of everyone on both of the performance nights, and I hope that they were proud of themselves and could see how all of their dedication paid off. During the process I gained a new understanding of the hard work that goes on behind the scenes and I would also like to thank Mrs Porter-Barnett, Mr Sargeant and Mr Smith, who we could not have done the play without! ■

Serena Grant



**“The girls embody this play beautifully, and we hope that the sisterly love of Little Women speaks true to every Benenden girl.”**

**W**e chose to direct Little Women as we felt that it was a charming portrayal of community and selflessness, which are focal to life at Benenden.

Our performance is taken from the play adaptation by Kevin M Cunningham, of the novel by Louisa May Alcott, published in 1868.

Initially, casting the girls was near-impossible – they’re terrifically talented and we truly felt it coming together from the start. The rehearsals were trying at first, working with students we’d never met before, and learning how to direct for the first time! As new directors, we struggled with staging every character for every scene, figuring out the set, all while keeping the play rehearsals running smoothly.

We can’t give enough thanks to Mrs Porter-Barnett for helping with rehearsals, to Mr Sargeant, Mrs Caron, and Mr Smith for their wonderful work with set, lighting, sound, and costumes, especially on the time crunch we were on, and of course – the prodigious cast!

I’m star-struck by our actors, and how quickly the time’s passed. The girls embody this play beautifully, and we hope that the sisterly love of Little Women speaks true to every Benenden girl. ■

Daisy Smart





# This Year's Enquiry Projects

Mrs Collins, Head of Lower School, has designed this year's Enquiry Projects to be exciting and varied. Students have had the opportunity to work in their year groups, forging connections with students in different Houses and classes, as well as across the Lower School in the joint Fourth and Upper Fourth Enquiry Project in the Spring Term. Here is a flavour of what our Lower School students have discovered and experienced this year:

	AUTUMN TERM	SPRING TERM	SUMMER TERM
FOURTH	<p><b>Communication and Collaboration</b></p> <p>Building a vegetable garden at Medway</p> <p>Visiting Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, learning about no-dig gardening, eco-systems and collaboration</p> <p>Learning about fruits, vegetables, salads and herbs</p> <p>Cooking in Founders</p> <p>Leaf sampling and chromatography</p> <p>Lithographic printing</p> <p>Nature journalling</p>	<p><b>Empathy and Global Outlook/Analytical Thinking and Problem Solving</b></p> <p>Benenden Regenerators – a joint Fourth/Upper Fourth Enquiry Project asking:</p> <p>How do we find meaningful and practical ways to improve our planet?</p> <p>What qualities are needed to resolve conflict?</p> <p>This included a Think Like an Economist event, where students competed to come up with the most ecologically and economically effective solutions.</p>	<p><b>Leadership and Empowerment/Communication and Collaboration/Technological Literacy and Innovation</b></p> <p>Visiting Cuffley Activity Learning Centre</p> <p>Attending Empowerment and Leadership workshops</p> <p>Designing an eco-restaurant</p>
UPPER FOURTH	<p><b>Resilience and Adaptability</b></p> <p>Exploring sustainability</p> <p>Visiting Brogdale Collection, focusing on evolution and inheritance</p> <p>Learning about Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and sustainability at Benenden School</p> <p>Using knowledge and skills to explore the School site and restore Benenden's ancient orchard</p>		<p><b>Collaboration and Communication/Resilience and Adaptability/Analytical Thinking and Problem Solving</b></p> <p>Visiting the Euro Space Centre, Atomium Centre and Brussels Planetarium</p> <p>Exploring Mini Europe: life in space</p>



Empowerment and Leadership

Technological Literacy and Innovation

Analytical Thinking and Problem Solving

Resilience and Adaptability

Collaboration and Communication

Empathy and Global Outlook



## A Day in the Life of... THE EXAMS OFFICE

During their busiest term, we take a look at the day to day operations of the Exams Office.

As dawn breaks, the Exams Office at Benenden School is already abuzz with activity. This hub of quiet efficiency is where the day's smooth running of exams begins, following weeks of meticulous planning and preparation, all with the goal of ensuring that every student can perform to their best.

At 7.30am, the Exams Office team, led by Keith Dudley and ably assisted by Amanda Petch, gathers to review the day's schedule. Mr Dudley, with his calm demeanour and eagle-eyed attention to detail, oversees the planning and delivery of every aspect of the School's exam process. The team starts by double-checking the exam papers, ensuring that each set is correct and complete. They then prepare the packs, carefully organizing the papers and any additional materials needed for each subject and ensuring they are ready to be transported to the correct exam rooms.

At 8.00am, members drawn from the 25 strong invigilation team – who are overseeing the morning exams – arrive for their briefing. Led by Mrs Petch, they are highly skilled and trained, forming a vital part of the wider exams team – essential for ensuring all exam regulations are followed and for supporting students while they are in the exam room.

The specifics of each exam are reviewed, highlighting any special adjustments needed for individual students. For instance, some students may require extra time, specific

seating arrangements, coloured paper or the use of a computer. These accommodations are needed to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to succeed.

Each exam room is then checked to confirm it meets the optimal conditions for the day's assessments. This involves ensuring that clocks are working, lighting is suitable, and the temperature is comfortable. These seemingly minor details are crucial; a malfunctioning clock or a dim light can be the difference between calm and chaos for a nervous student.

With the invigilators briefed and exam rooms prepped, Mr Dudley shifts his attention to the wellbeing of the students, checking in with the House staff and the Medical Centre. Some students might be dealing with anxiety, others might have health concerns that could affect their performance. Any necessary adjustments are made swiftly, be it providing a quieter room or arranging for a last-minute change to the exam schedule.

At 9.00am, the first exams of the day commence. Mrs Petch and Mr Dudley remain vigilant and in constant contact with the exam rooms to ensure that any issues or queries that arise are swiftly addressed. They deal with any urgent correspondence or question paper deliveries received from the various exam boards and make sure everything is logged and stored to ensure that the School is compliant with all JCQ regulations.



As the exams proceed, the Exams Office starts preparing for the next critical phase: the collection and logging of completed papers. Each paper must be handled with care, ensuring that they are correctly labelled and stored securely. The team works systematically, using checklists to verify that every paper is accounted for before they are packaged and sent off to the exam board for marking.

By the time the morning exams conclude around midday, the Exams Office is already a hive of activity for the afternoon session. Papers from the morning are logged and stored, while the packs are reset for the next batch of exams.

Throughout the day, the Exams Office manages a stream of queries from students, parents, and teachers. These range from confirming exam times to addressing specific concerns about exam protocols and managing clashes.

As the final exams of the day end, sometimes as late as 6.30pm, the team begins the meticulous task of final checks and logs. Ensuring every paper is collected, labelled, and stored for dispatch is a task that demands precision and diligence.

The focus then quickly shifts to preparation for the next set of exams. Moreover, the team begins to prepare for the results collation, tracking, and data review process, which is essential for understanding student performance and making necessary improvements for future exams.

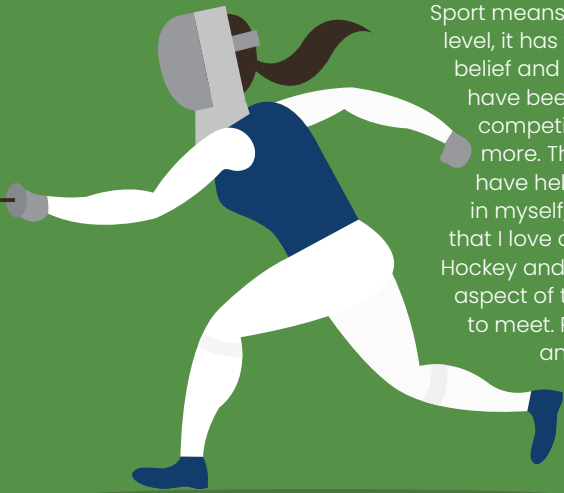
While often operating quietly along the long corridor, the dedication and expertise of this function in the School must not go without mention, and our sincere gratitude goes to all who contribute to the smooth running of exams at Benenden. ■



**“Working in the Exams Office requires you to be an odd mixture of air traffic controller, policeman and counsellor.**

**It’s important to make sure that everyone and everything is in the right place at the right time and that all the rules and regulations are adhered to, but it’s equally important to ensure that this is done in an empathetic and supportive manner.”**

## What sport means to us: Hear from some of our Sixth Form students.



Sport means a lot to me, and by competing at a high level, it has taught me many things such as self-belief and confidence. I fence for Great Britain and have been to many national and international competitions in places like Hungary, Germany and more. The busy environments and high pressures have helped me develop resilience and confidence in myself, to perform to my best ability. Something that I love about Fencing, and my other sports like Hockey and Netball is the communication and social aspect of the sports, as well as the new people I get to meet. Playing sports has improved my teamwork and leadership skills, which will be so important in the future. ■



**Verity Lees, Six One**



Going to the gym is something I do weekly, focusing mostly on weights and strength training. It is something I love doing and keeps my motivation levels up when I'm stuck behind my desk all day. The gym requires me to plan and set goals, meaning when I enter the gym, I know what I'm doing. Some weeks I don't feel like going because I'm too tired, but even so, I still go. Having it as something I do as part of my routine has instilled discipline in me and has allowed me to stay focused in other parts of my life as well. ■



**Gabby Brewer, Six Two**



Sport has always been a huge part of my life. At the age of two I started gymnastics and from then I've had a consistent love for Sport. To me, Sport is an escape from everything else in my life, when I'm playing in a match nothing else matters but what's happening in that game, it's the only time I can entirely focus on one thing. As a result of playing team sport, I have developed good communication skills. My teammates are so supportive which has raised my confidence and self-belief, and my captaincy roles throughout my sporting career have improved my leadership and built up my resilience, as I know I have to push through to set an example for my team. These are skills I know I will take forward in the next stage of my life. ■



**Lara Gibbs, Six Two**



Fitness is my way of disconnecting from the world and recharging. Even on days where I struggle to find the motivation, the burst of satisfaction from the post-run endorphins serves as a powerful reminder of why I continue. Fitness has built my confidence not only in the gym but in all aspects of life. By overcoming personal challenges and achieving goals in the gym it has led to personal growth. I have built resilience from pushing through mental barriers and improving my pace whilst running. These qualities I have learnt from the gym are essential for leadership. ■



**Gea Tassan Din, Six Two**



To me, Sport provides an essential outlet from the stresses of daily life, allowing me to channel my energy into team activities that foster competitiveness. This competitive drive has encouraged me to express my insights during team discussions, in order to contribute and show my desire for collective progress and success. My leadership abilities have developed from this competitiveness and drive to succeed, which has further helped me in my leadership in life beyond sport. ■

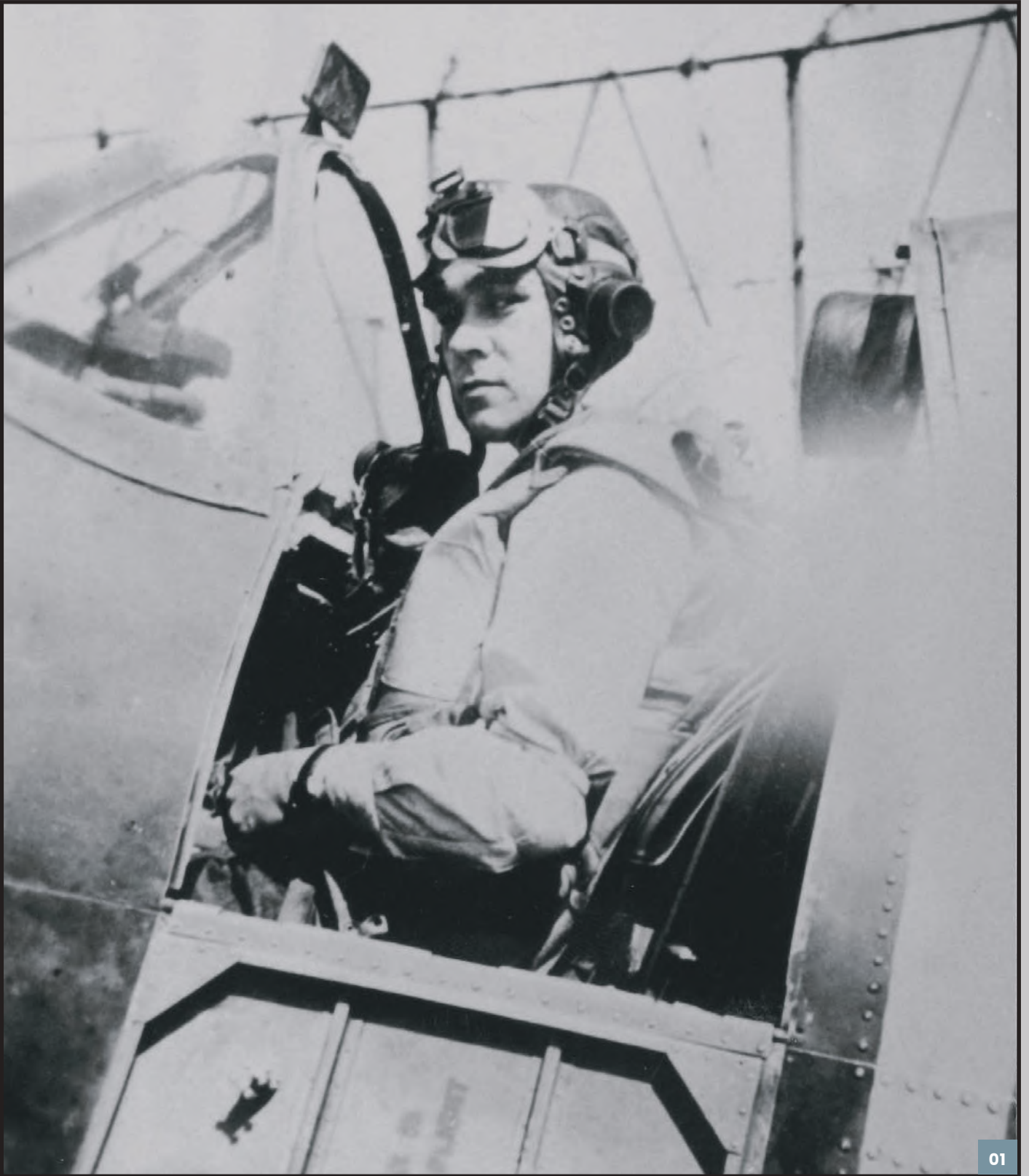
**Evie Hoffman, Six Two**



For me, sport has always transcended physical activity and has influenced and shaped the person I am today. Playing competitively from a young age taught me how to win with humility and to be resilient in losing; I taken both mindsets into all other aspects of my life, which has served me well. Captaining the Netball Team this year has laid the foundations of my leadership and communication skills and most importantly to me, Sport has been a catalyst in building lifelong friendships with my teammates. As a netball shooter, my favourite quote has always been 'You miss 100% of the shots you don't take'. While it perfectly fits the netball court, it is also a reminder I carry beyond sport, giving me the confidence and self-belief to take risks and seize every opportunity life presents. ■



**Eva Mathew, Six Two**



## CAPITAINE JEAN PIERRE EDMONDE MARIDOR:

The Heroic French Pilot who Saved Benenden School From a V-1 Bomb During World War II.

## Jean Pierre Edmonde Maridor

(24 November 1920 – 3 August 1944)

was a remarkable Free French pilot whose courage and quick thinking prevented disaster at Benenden School. At the time, the School had been evacuated to Newquay, and its buildings were repurposed as a military hospital. Archive records give an insight into a true Benenden hero:

**B**orn in Le Havre, France, Maridor developed a passion for flying at an early age. He abandoned his studies to pursue aviation, obtaining both his Civil 'A' and Civil 'B' flying licenses before turning 18 – an impressive feat that made him one of France's youngest pilots. As World War II unfolded, Maridor joined the Free French Fighters.

When France fell to the German invasion, Maridor escaped and made his way to England alongside other French pilots. He arrived in Liverpool in 1940 and subsequently joined the Royal Air Force. After training, Maridor became part of the 615 Squadron. However, his true ambition was to join the 91 Squadron, based in West Malling, Kent.

In February 1942, he achieved his goal and quickly gained a reputation for fearless and daring flying tactics. Maridor frequently executed low-level attacks on German ships, transport, and troops. ▶



02



03



## Cultural Exchanges

Benenden students had the chance to travel far and wide this Term as part of an ongoing series of exciting exchange opportunities...

### Adventures Down Under... and Back Again!

Over the Summer, three students in the Fifth, Didi Brooks, Zara Grey and Harriet Wainford, visited Australia for a bustling three weeks as part of an exchange with Firbank School.

The Benenden students had a thrilling few weeks experiencing much that was on offer with their Australian host families. When Firbank students Lara and Pippa were occupied by rehearsals for their school musical *Frozen*, Zara and Harriet had the rare opportunity to enjoy a game of football down under. After that, they enjoyed a bit of shopping before meeting the other students at the Botanical Gardens for a light show. The next day, the students enjoyed their first day at an Australian school.

On Zara's first weekend, she visited the Phillip Island Wildlife Sanctuary, while Didi visited different landmarks, including the Harbour Bridge, the Rocks Market and the Opera House.



The students were delighted when they were able to welcome their new Australian friends Emily, Lara and Pippa to Benenden in September, where they enjoyed supporting matches, attending GCSE classes, joining a trip to the theatre in London and a whole host of other activities. ■



### Exchange Students Spend Time in China

Over Half Term, four students in the Upper Fifth travelled to China to spend time at Benenden Bilingual School Guangzhou (BBSG). While there, they immersed themselves in the life of the school, attending lessons in Mandarin and working with the younger students.

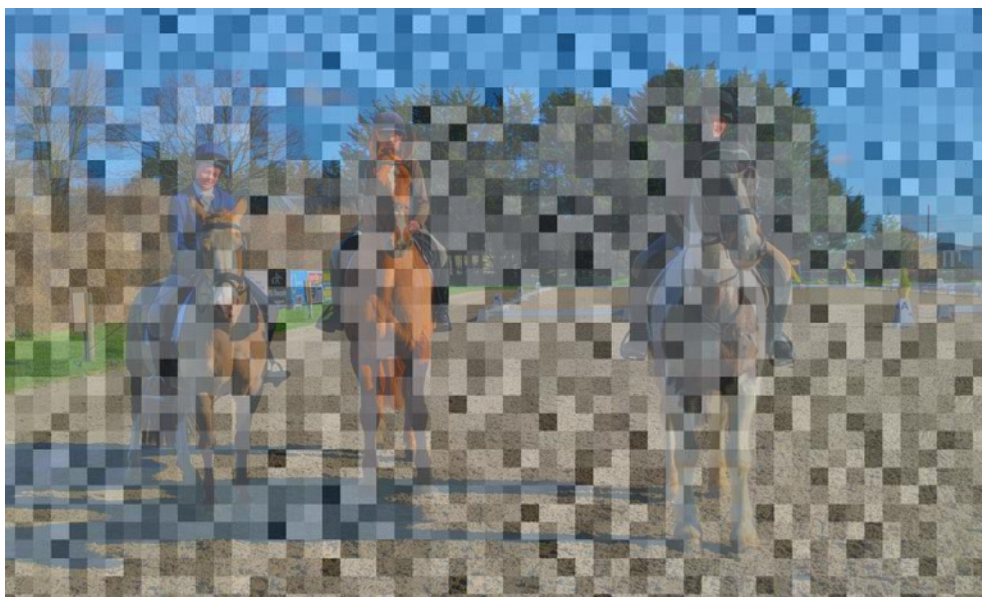
At the weekend and in the evenings, they were taken on various excursions to see Guangzhou and gain a deeper appreciation of the Chinese culture. A visit to a restaurant to try hot pot was a particular favourite! The students had a fantastic time and were appreciative of the warm welcome they received from the BBSG staff and students.

This exchange will take place again next year and students currently in the Fifth will be invited to apply for places for October 2025. ■

## New Football Team takes on First Schools Tournament

Benenden's new Football Team made history this term with its first competitive fixtures, travelling to Buckswood for a U16 Football tournament against five other teams from local academies and schools, such as Mayfield and the home team, Buckswood.

Throughout the tournament, the players grew in confidence and there were some real highlights, such as a hard-fought draw against Mayfield and an excellent goal at the end of the match against the eventual winners Bexhill Academy. ■



## Kent Dressage Championships Success

Congratulations to **Willow Ainslie** (Six One), **Emily Burns** (Upper Fifth) and **Didi Brooks** (Lower Fifth) who competed in the Open Team Class at the Kent Dressage Championships. The girls all rode well, with Willow winning her section in the Preliminary 14 test and Didi coming fourth, while Emily was second in both her Preliminary 14 and Novice 27 sections. The team came second overall to become Reserve Kent Champions in the Open Team competition. ■

## Cross Country Success in Kent Schools' Championships

**Amelia Aylward, Victoria Kirby, Katia Maia, Theodora Murray, Harriet Wainford and Zoe Whiting** were selected to represent the Tunbridge Wells District at the Kent Schools' Cross-Country Championships in Dartford in January.

All athletes ran a good race in tough conditions, with standout performances from our Junior (Lower Fifth) team. Theodora and Harriet deserve a particular mention as they finished 22nd and 25th respectively in a strong field of Club Athletes. ■





## BENENDEN SCHOOL'S BIOLOGY PROGRAMME

The department is committed to continuous evolution, challenging traditional methods, and staying at the forefront of scientific advancements. Students benefit from hands-on experiences with live animals, ecological fieldwork on School grounds, aquaponic system construction, plant cultivation, and engaging talks from renowned documentary makers and scientists. Our promise is to instil in students the understanding that Biology is integral to every aspect of life, preparing them to navigate and contribute to a rapidly evolving world.

### Fourth and Upper Fourth

Exploring ecosystems, cellular biology, reproduction, skeletal-muscular systems, nutrition, and sustainability, students utilize the unique resources of Benenden's grounds to investigate nature's interactions. They delve into the construction of mini aquaponic systems, preparing them for innovative solutions in the future. The revamped scheme of work ignites curiosity, pushing students into exciting new perspectives, and laying a strong foundation for their future studies. ■

### Lower Fifth

Under the guidance of our new Head of Biology, students engage in real scientific research through the CREST programme and collaboration with Kew Gardens. They explore the critical issue of water sanitation and the potential disruptions caused by the evolution of new microorganisms, fostering a hands-on approach to scientific inquiry. ■

### Fifth and Upper Fifth (GCSE)

Students follow the iGCSE programme with a unique twist at Benenden. While covering the curriculum, our programme emphasises experiential learning and in-depth knowledge acquisition. Through practical experiments and immersive experiences, students are fully engaged in the study of Biology, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. ■

### Six One and Six Two (A Level)

Pupils embrace the rigors of the OCR Biology specification enhanced by Benenden's innovative Practical Assessment Group (PAG) programme. With access to state-of-the-art laboratories and equipment, students are set a challenging academic journey, pushing their boundaries and preparing them for real-world scientific endeavours. Through a spiral learning approach over two years, students are equipped to excel academically and thrive in their future scientific pursuits. ■





## Fostering a Vision for Transformative Biology Education

New Head of Biology **Claire Gaskell** outlines her forward-thinking aspirations for Biology at Benenden.



**T**he Biology Department embodies a vision deeply rooted in a passion for Biology and a steadfast belief in the power of education to shape the future. This vision transcends individuals, encapsulating a commitment to advancing scientific knowledge and inspiring the next generation of Biologists.

Central to this vision is the recognition of Biology's significance as a discipline that offers profound insights into life and the natural world. From understanding the intricacies of cellular biology to appreciating the complexities of ecosystems, Biology provides a framework for comprehending the world around us. Through engaging teaching, the Biology Department aims to equip students with critical thinking skills, scientific literacy, and a curiosity-driven mindset essential for success in the modern world.

Embracing the transformative potential of educational technology,

the department seeks to integrate digital tools into the curriculum to deepen conceptual understanding and foster scientific inquiry. By employing innovative teaching methodologies such as enquiry-based learning and project-based assessments, students are encouraged to explore and make meaningful connections with real-world biological phenomena.

For exceptionally talented young Biologists, the department provides myriad opportunities for enrichment and growth. From advanced research programmes in collaboration with universities to participation in prestigious Biology competitions, students are encouraged to pursue their passions and excel in their field. Through immersive experiences and exposure to cutting-edge scientific advancements, the department aims to inspire curiosity and cultivate a network of aspiring scientists poised to make a difference.

The implementation of this vision is evident in the initiatives undertaken already. From the introduction of resident pets and living organisms in labs to the evolution of advanced practical programs, the department's commitment to excellence is palpable. With each endeavour, the department seeks to push boundaries, challenge norms, and provide the best possible education for the future generation of scientists.

As the Biology Department looks to the future, it sees a landscape rich with potential and promise. It is an exciting time, characterized by innovation and possibility, where the seeds of curiosity planted today will blossom into the scientific breakthroughs of tomorrow. With a collective dedication to nurturing the next generation of biologists, the Biology Department at Benenden School is poised to inspire, educate, and empower the scientists of the future. ■

There can be no doubt that 2023-24 promises to be a truly unforgettable year of celebration and of our community coming together.



## Benenden's Centenary Celebrations

After months of planning, the Spring Term saw the unveiling of the full programme of events and activities that will mark Benenden's Centenary year.

The School will be pulling out all the stops to celebrate its landmark anniversary, with a series of events organised to showcase different aspects of the School's strengths. From intimate dinners to gala concerts, student exhibitions to community walks, and from cathedral services to outdoor productions featuring every student, there is something for everyone.

The Centenary year will run from September 2023 through to July 2024, and is set to provide an opportunity for every member of the Benenden community – past, present and future – to get involved. The School is very much looking forward to seeing many parents at the enticing events it has planned – and is pleased to be able to open up so many events to the entire Benenden Society of students, staff, parents, Seniors, Honorary Seniors and Friends of Benenden.

Of course, as a School, Benenden wants this most historic of moments



to be underpinned by academic endeavours, and is therefore delighted to be formally launching its vibrant new Centenary Curriculum at the outset of the academic year.

This will be followed shortly afterwards by the School's first global conference – at which Sixth Formers from dozens, if not hundreds, of schools will gather – on the theme of Inspiring Future Female Leaders. Delegates will hear from fascinating and inspiring speakers with leading roles in an array of fields, and all of whom, fittingly in this special year, are Benenden Seniors.

From there, Benenden will be holding an array of events throughout the course of the year, some on site and others in London, Canterbury and overseas with a series of gatherings in Hong Kong during the Autumn Half Term.

There can be no doubt that 2023-24 promises to be a truly unforgettable year of celebration and of our community coming together. The students, governors and staff could not be more excited and look forward to enjoying this important landmark occasion with you all.

*More details at [benenden.school/centenary](http://benenden.school/centenary)* ■



# A YEAR TO CHANGE EVERYTHING

Globally, more voters than ever before will head to the polls as at least 64 countries (plus the European Union)—representing a combined population of about 49 per cent of the people in the world—are set to hold national elections. Here, Benenden students share their thoughts on some of those all-important elections taking place this year. ►

# The United Kingdom

**T**wo Prime Ministers have been and gone since the 2019 general election. It ended with an unprecedented 80-seat majority – a Conservative landslide victory. Five years later, many anticipate Labour to do the same.

A recent poll conducted by the Electoral Calculus predicted a Labour majority of 254 seats, with the Conservatives set to be reduced to less than 100. Should this happen, the victory would be larger than Tony Blair's landslide of 1997 (179 seat majority) and would be the second largest win by any party in modern history, just trailing Stanley Baldwin's Tory victory in 1931. For the Conservatives, this would be their worst result since 1900.

Can the Tories turn this around? Polling is volatile, with pollsters incorrectly predicting the results of 2015 and 1992 respectively, with both elections resulting in Conservative victories. Some polls put Tony Blair's Labour party more than 30 percentage points ahead of the Conservatives in May 1996, and a week before the vote surveys were still projecting a 20 percentage point Labour lead. On election day, they won by a far more modest 13 point margin. Over the past 30 years, a fifth of polls have projected the wrong winner. As far as polling is concerned, there is still some hope for the Conservatives.

However, after their crushing defeat in the Wellingborough by-election in February, in which an 18,000 Tory majority was overturned and a 37.6 per cent vote share drop occurred, Rishi Sunak's hopes of winning the election have soured. Adding to the loss of the Kingswood by-election in the same week, they have set a record-breaking nine losses, the largest it has suffered in a single parliament. It is not looking good for Sunak.

Spurring economic growth seems to be a large priority for Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer, with Shadow Chancellor Rachel Reeves reiterating the party's mission of achieving the highest growth in the G7 and appealing to the private sector at every opportunity. Aiming to appeal to the moderates and London's financial district, Starmer has strived to shift the party to the centre. Reforming the education system, cutting NHS waiting lists and moving to clean energy are also expected to make key appearances in the Labour manifesto.



In recent weeks, Starmer has talked about reforming the House of Lords (a step away from the initial policy of abolition) and phasing out tax breaks (such as the 'non-dom status').

It is anticipated that the election will take place in late October or early

November: a recent poll conducted by Statista concludes that 57 per cent of voters aged 18-24 are likely to vote for a new Labour government. Regardless of outcome, an exciting time for the electorate is guaranteed. ■

**“Two Prime Ministers have been and gone since the 2019 general election”**

**Ava Charlton, Six One**





## The United States

**A**t least 64 countries, representing 50 per cent of the world's population, are holding national elections in 2024, making it the most significant year of elections in history. In such a divided world, the results of elections in countries such as the USA, with the power to make a difference, are crucial.

Although not yet assured, the recent success of the Republican candidate Donald Trump in both the Iowa Caucus and New Hampshire primary makes it highly likely that by July, American voters will be facing a choice similar to 2020: Trump or Biden. This time, the stakes are higher than ever. For 81-year-old Biden, age has become a significant issue for many voters with the Guardian commenting that three-quarters of Americans say Biden is too old for a second term.

There can be no doubt that during a period of such global polarisation many Americans, looking for a powerful leader to propel the country forward economically and continue to defend the rules-based international order, will find neither candidate ideal. As it currently stands, Biden has entered the election year unexpectedly losing votes from the Democratic base as a result of US support for Israel's campaign in Gaza, which is alienating some core Democrat voters.

On foreign policy, pending a Trump second term, we would likely see a

President willing to sacrifice Ukraine's security to make a deal with Putin, and take an isolationist approach to foreign collaboration. A US withdrawal from NATO, something which he described in 2016 as "obsolete", is not inconceivable and would have serious repercussions for European security.

On the campaign trail, Trump has consistently advertised his belief that the President has the right to pardon himself (despite the Court of Appeals recently rejecting, by unanimous decision, Trump's calls for blanket immunity) establishing a concerning new paradigm which calls into question the constitutional powers of the President and the entire system of checks and balances within the US.

In the face of such a blatant threat to democracy it is up to individuals to sound the alarm on a nation which, as

Liz Cheney put it, "is sleepwalking into a dictatorship." However, there currently remains doubt as to whether Trump will even be on the ballot in some states, such as Maine and Colorado, where local state courts voted to remove the former President from the ballot under the 14th amendment (inciting insurrection).

Ultimately, it would not be ill conceived to say that the 2024 presidential election is a vote on what kind of country Americans want to live in: autocracy or liberal democracy. The question remains, are there enough voters in key states to hold fast against the tide of populism, or is it too late to prevent the inevitable? ■

**"In the face of such a blatant threat to democracy it is up to individuals to sound the alarm"**

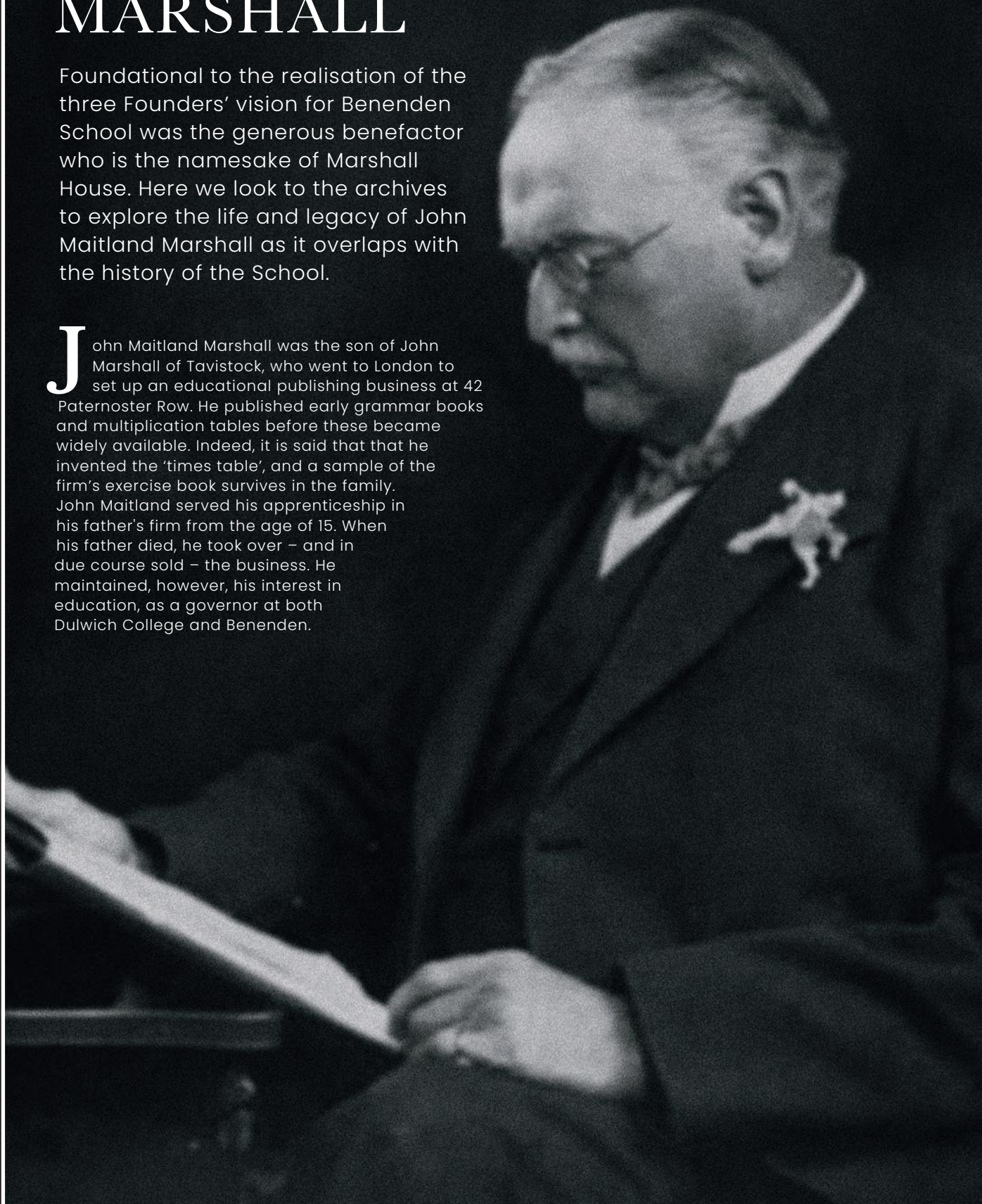
**Bella Rennie, Six Two**



# REMEMBERING JOHN MAITLAND MARSHALL

Foundational to the realisation of the three Founders' vision for Benenden School was the generous benefactor who is the namesake of Marshall House. Here we look to the archives to explore the life and legacy of John Maitland Marshall as it overlaps with the history of the School.

**J**ohn Maitland Marshall was the son of John Marshall of Tavistock, who went to London to set up an educational publishing business at 42 Paternoster Row. He published early grammar books and multiplication tables before these became widely available. Indeed, it is said that that he invented the 'times table', and a sample of the firm's exercise book survives in the family. John Maitland served his apprenticeship in his father's firm from the age of 15. When his father died, he took over – and in due course sold – the business. He maintained, however, his interest in education, as a governor at both Dulwich College and Benenden.



Marshall married Emma Catherine Man, known as Kitty, and they had four children. His youngest daughter, Hilary, was educated at Wycombe Abbey where she became Head Girl. It was here that he met the three schoolmistresses, Christine Sheldon, Kathleen Bird and Anne Hindle. It was Miss Sheldon who told Mr Marshall of their plans to start a new school and asked if he would join the Council.

"At first he hesitated, not for lack of interest and sympathy, but because he had a high ideal of service to any cause with which he was associated, and he is a very busy man" wrote Miss Sheldon. "Then, to our great pleasure, he accepted the invitation, and at once took an active interest in the choice of a house suitable for the School." He helped them with their plan to found a new girls' public school, and to locate their first premises at Bickley. He was a Member of the Council from 1923 and Chair of the Council from 1932 until his death in 1933. "From that day, until the day of his death, he spared neither time nor trouble in the interests of the School, and Benenden and its welfare had a very large place in his affections."

"It was Miss Hindle," wrote Christine Sheldon, "who, with characteristic vigour, got up in the middle of the night to go through details of the prospectus sent us by the agents and decided that Hemsted Park must be looked at again, although it had been turned down on being too far from the station. We went to see it, and at once felt that it was here we wanted the School to be. Mr Roscoe, our first Chairman, and Mr Marshall went to see it formerly as Members of the Council. On 24th December, an agreement was signed which enabled us to begin the January term there."

Five of Marshall's granddaughters – Jessamy James, Stella and Una Ebden, Jane and Rosalind Brooke – one great granddaughter, Penelope Forrester, and four of Kitty Man's relations – Peggy Durnford, Felicity, Pauline and Susan Man – all came to Benenden. ►





## 1923–1954

### Christine Sheldon CBE, Founder and Headmistress

Christine read History at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford and from the outset was destined to be Headmistress – she had a shrewd brain that would quickly get to the heart of the matter. The Founders “wanted to create a happy school, with personal integrity and service for others always in mind, and where everyone would be given the chance to follow her own bent, whether it was in academic or physical activities, or in the creative arts, or in the more practical side such as needlework and the domestic arts”. Christine brought to the founding and organisation of the School her own particular gifts of character and scholarship which became and remained part of Benenden’s tradition, a tradition of friendliness, normality and a love of work. Christine also held many important educational posts including that of Chair of the Association of Head Mistresses of Boarding Schools and she was mainly responsible for instituting the Common Entrance procedure for girls’ schools. On her retirement she was awarded a CBE for services to education.



## 1954–1975

### Elizabeth Clarke CVO

Elizabeth read History at St Hilda’s College, Oxford and first came to the School as a history teacher in 1940, when the School was evacuated to Newquay. She widened her experience by reading for the Bar and was called by the Middle Temple in 1949. Soon after, she returned to teaching and rose to become Vice-Principal of Cheltenham Ladies’ College before rejoining Benenden as Headmistress. Her aim was to maintain many of the traditions of Benenden and its Founders while improving its academic standing. Many prospective parents were reassured by her quiet self-confidence. “It was, no doubt, a tribute to this special quality of hers that the Queen, having invited her to Windsor Castle, later asked if she would take Princess Anne into the School”. Outside of School she was on the governing body of several local schools and served on the Wolfenden Committee on Homosexuality and Prostitution from 1954 to 1957. She was connected with the Howard League for Penal Reform and was on the council of the Sue Ryder Foundation. Upon her death, Elizabeth bequeathed £3million to the School.



## 1975–1985

### Janet Allen

Janet read History at University College, Leicester, having been a pupil of Elizabeth Clarke’s at Cheltenham Ladies’ College. Janet went on to teach at Howell’s School in Denbigh, North Wales before arriving at Benenden to oversee the many changes that took place in the School between the mid-1970s and mid-1980s. Fees had passed the £1,000 per term mark and growth to finance Founders’ House meant pressing ahead and expanding the School. A risk, but one Miss Bird vigorously supported, laying the foundation stone in 1982 on her 90th birthday. A new appeal was launched together with the establishment of the Benenden School Trust in 1983. Janet Allen believed that “Women’s lives are essentially lived in phases. They should be prepared for all and each of them.” The School of the 1970s and 1980s had “a pioneering spirit, a faith in the future and its opportunities for girls and a belief that a school should have standards yet be happy and give everyone a chance to discover and follow her own bent”.



## 1985–2000

### Gillian duCharme

Gillian read Modern Languages at Girton College, Cambridge and spent 19 years on the East Coast of the United States, working in the independent school sector. Gillian had an enormous attention to detail, her interest in the girls, work hard, play hard motto and accessibility. She once spoke about standing outside the chapel as girls went into Prayers, ostensibly to check uniforms, but really to see how they were, to look into their eyes and gauge whether all was well. She would model good behaviour and accepted challenges - the picking up of litter, the Tennis tournament, the accessibility to all staff in all departments, and the Forest Gate link which came after her appearance in the Channel 4 documentary *A Class Apart*, where she taught in their school. The School was also the focus of *Cutting Edge: Benenden*, a Channel 4 documentary that aired in 1992 and followed two students during their first term. Gillian was also active in developing Benenden's Hong Kong connection with Michael Leung. Outside Benenden, Gillian was a member of the European Council of International Schools, the National Association of Independent Schools and the National Association of Principals of Schools for Girls.



## 2000–2014

### Claire Oulton

Claire read History at Oxford and on appointment planned to set a firm example to her students that it is possible to juggle a high-flying career with a demanding young family. "I don't think one should stand up and lecture them about it. I want to give my pupils enough confidence to make their own choices. I want to give the girls the opportunity to concentrate at the academic side and a huge range of other activities. I want them to develop their own talents as well." Her first teaching post was at Benenden, she then moved to Charterhouse before being appointed Head of St Catherine's, Bramley, returning to Benenden in 2000. During her time as Head, Claire oversaw numerous changes and new ventures: the Trust Award to fund places from local primary schools, the Theatre and Science Centre, and also helped to set up the age 3-19 years John Wallis Church of England Academy in Ashford. Claire introduced the 3 Cs: confidence, compassion and courage as a motto. She wanted every girl to leave with her best possible results, to have a wide range of talents and abilities, to have found her strengths and not be afraid if she isn't good at everything.



## 2014–2024

### Samantha Price

Samantha read History of Art at Edinburgh University and was keen to instil in Benenden girls the importance of ensuring their success benefitted others. She said, of the 2023 A Level cohort: "What is particularly pleasing is that not only have these remarkable young women shone in their exams, but they have demonstrated time and again that they will be going out into the world to make a positive difference. They are kind, resilient, willing to try new things and are passionate campaigners with a strong moral compass who are determined to help make the world a better place." During her tenure Samantha delivered a programme of building and development, including the introduction of the Benenden Diploma, steered the School through the Covid pandemic and introduced places for day students. She believed in education in its broadest sense, and was committed to giving every girl the best possible preparation for her life ahead. Samantha served as President of the Girls' Schools Association, was a governor at several local schools and was Chair of the HMC Wellbeing Committee.

# SIXTH FORM ELECTIVES AND LECTURES

Sixth Formers Lara, Minty and Chloe give their overview of the Electives and Lectures on offer.

## Lara Forbes, Six Two

As part of the Sixth Form Electives Programme, I chose the Visual Arts and Culture course, where we learnt about both historical and current forms of arts and culture, including paintings, music, fashion, architecture and more.

The choice of content was by no means restricted to a certain specification, which meant a broad range of information was available to us. I found this Elective invaluable to not just following my interest in the arts, but also to developing various learning styles that are not typically explored in an A Level classroom.

The relaxed learning environment was definitely the most unique aspect of the

Electives Programme. I felt I could learn for the sake of pursuing individual interests, as opposed to the conventional learning style where the expectation to retain information for future exams dictates how we engage.

Although walking into a classroom without prior knowledge of the topic was intimidating at first, I found myself expanding on existing knowledge as well as learning new things that I would not have otherwise discovered by myself. Each Elective was individualised to the teacher's interests too, which meant there was definitely a sense of excitement and novelty felt by everyone in terms of the content we were learning and the discussions we were having. ■



## Minty Sargeant, Six One



I really enjoyed the Electives that I participated in last term. My favourite was the Flex Lecture Series; a series of lectures by different professionals, on topics ranging from Family Law to Quantum Chemistry, with engaging lectures for everyone to enjoy! It was an interesting series as it included many areas which I would never investigate on my own, but has grown my awareness and interest in those topics.

I also participated in the Decrypting Crosswords Elective, which really intrigued me as – with proper guidance – it was something that I began without any prior knowledge but ended up knowing quite a lot about.

I also took the Free Will and Determinism Elective, as I'm quite interested in Philosophy but didn't take the subject for A Level, and it was very interesting to debate in an informal and casual setting.

Finally, I took the EPQ (Extended Project Qualification) Masterclass Elective, which gave me a useful insight into the process which I will start this year.

The Electives are a great way to learn new things in a relaxed manner – with no prep. The Electives can also be beneficial for your personal statement or university interviews, as they present you as a well-rounded and knowledgeable individual. ■

## Chloe Younis, Six Two

One activity that brings me joy is Philosophy and Cinema, where we would watch snippets of philosophical films and hold discussion sessions critiquing the material we witnessed.

As a new student at Benenden, this Elective was foreign to me and became an incredible bonding experience, enabling me to create new friendships and find a haven away from schoolwork.

I always looked forward to Tuesday afternoon debates over the questions of epistemology and reality within *The Truman Show*, *Gattaca's* themes of predeterminism and eugenics, the significance of our memory

and identity within *Memento* and human morality within *Force Majeure*.

I especially enjoyed our presentation meetings, where we would bring our own films in and lead the sessions, allowing us to have intellectual autonomy within the Elective as it equipped us to direct our research into Philosophy and Cinema topics which interested us.

This was a useful Elective as it taught me to formulate a new lens with which to examine the world as I stepped out of my sometimes confining, A Level-syllabus comfort zone. ■



# THE LECTURE SERIES

In addition to the diverse and intriguing selection of Sixth Form Electives, the Six One and Six Two have also benefitted from a lecture series over the last term, including the following titles:

- Human...kind: An Exploration of Human Nature and Goodness – **Farah Dawood**
- Paradise Lost – **Simon Bennie**
- A Brief Guide to Existentialism – **Alfred Nicol**
- The Psychology of the Paranormal – **Heather Miller**
- Economics and McDonald's – **Dan Tweed**
- Rise and Fall of the Hemline – **Lesley Tyler**
- Receiving the Classics – **Stephanie Clive**
- How Can Politics Do More to Help Young People? – **Lizzie Bradley**
- A Beginner's Guide to Getting it Wrong – **Andrew Schagen**

## The Full Programme:

- The Magic of Reality: Search for Truth
- The Media: Practical Sessions on Operating in a Multimedia News Environment
- Advanced Genetics
- Philosophy and Cinema
- EPQ Masterclass
- Introduction to Investments
- Displaced People Across the World Throughout Time
- Italian for Beginners
- A Journey of Discovery Through Hispanic Role Models
- Decrypting Crosswords
- An Introduction to Meteorology and Interpreting the Weather
- Visual Arts and Culture
- Introduction to British Sign Language
- Travel Writing
- British Parliamentary Style Debating
- Literature, Arts and Transgression: Oscar Wilde
- Feminism: A Global Approach
- Psychology of the Paranormal
- The World of Wine
- Metacognition and the Art of Thinking
- Politics: What You Should Know Before You Vote
- Speaking to Influence and Inform
- Global and Environmental Issues
- Flex Lecture Series
- Free Will and Determinism
- Saving Species
- Excel Skills
- Philosophy in Action
- Psychology of Celebrity



# 'By far, Economics is the most relevant, dynamic and important subject it is possible to learn at A Level'

Carl Fisher, Head of Economics, reveals his vision for the department and why he loves teaching the subject at Benenden.

## How did you come to work in the Economics Department at Benenden?

Great things often happen unexpectedly and when opportunities arise, such as joining Benenden, the opportunity cost is too high not to explore them. After six enjoyable years, leading and growing the Economics and Business department at Rugby School, I felt ready for a new and exciting challenge: a challenge that has once again become absolutely focused on maximising the performance of our students and raising the profile of our subject. There is truly no better place than Benenden for me to help encourage, inspire and facilitate the next generation of female economists to join the vanguard of the profession.

## What is your favourite memory in relation to teaching Economics at Benenden and why?

I already have a tremendous number of fond memories of teaching here and wouldn't know where to start to pick one out and call it my favourite! Each year group has offered me a warm welcome, has been wonderfully engaged and has continued to provide superb repartee (even during PI on a Saturday!).

## Who else is in the department and what are their roles?

My number two is Mr Luke Brownlee. As a recent Economics graduate, he qualified as a teacher of Economics with us last year and delivers the Macroeconomics half of our course with his own style and in its entirety. Mr Brownlee is also responsible for the incredibly popular, hence much in-demand, Sixth Form Investment Elective.

## What do you love most about your subject and why?

I love the entire subject and believe, with all sincerity, that an education in Economics should be compulsory.

It is, by far, the most relevant, dynamic and important subject it is possible to learn at A Level. Every year it is our privilege to introduce students to concepts that mean so much to them, that are front and centre in their lives and which are exemplified in the news every day.

As a social science, Economics has its own vocabulary, its own theories and its own peculiarities. It is also the only subject to develop students' mathematical acuity alongside their ability to write analytical and evaluative essays. Economics is therefore uniquely placed both to challenge and to reward in equal measure.

## What do you want students at Benenden to get out of your subject?

Fun and laughter. Passion and determination. Enquiry and success.

## What is your vision for the Economics Department at Benenden?

To continue to produce amazing young economists who are confident and ambitious and armed with every tool they need to be able to navigate to the very best of their ability their future.

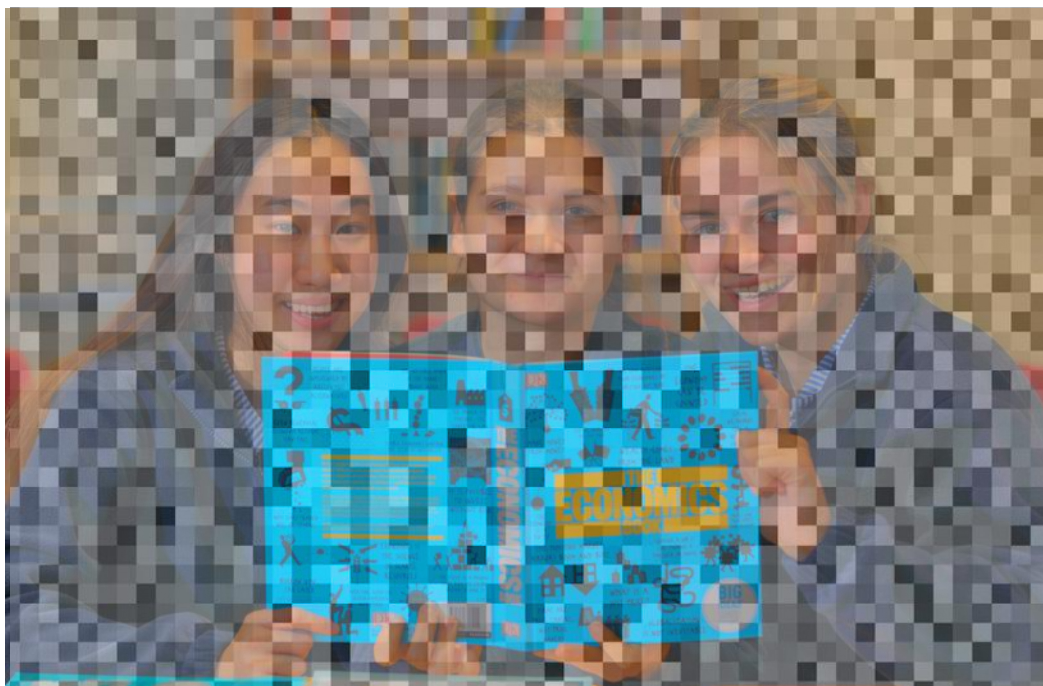
You'll be familiar with the proverb about teaching someone to fish being more valuable than giving them a fish?

Well, as we know, the world is changing at an unprecedented pace.

Textbooks become out of date as soon as they're printed, and my cultural references are in dire need of some updating (I mentioned Riverdance the other day and no-one had ever heard of it!). So, the

vision for my department is for us all – students and staff alike – to be occupationally mobile ie informed, nimble and highly skilled: such that we can best enjoy the exciting, uncharted, waters that lie ahead. ■





(Left to right) Six Two students Natalie Chan, Isabelle Murray and Kara Dimond

## SO WHAT IS ECONOMICS, ANYWAY?

As popular as the subject is becoming, and as talented as Benenden Economists are proving to be, there will no doubt be those among you wondering just what the A Level subject entails. Here we ask the question: what exactly do Benenden Economists study?

**E**conomics is a multidisciplinary study that incorporates elements of mathematics, geography, politics, history, philosophy, sociology and psychology in the pursuit of understanding how best to distribute limited resources.

The subject can be split into Microeconomics – focusing on topics such as supply and demand in individual markets and market failure, business growth and the theory of the firm – and Macroeconomics – examining bigger picture themes such as the causes of inflation, the effects of unemployment and the operation of banks and financial markets.

Rooted in theory, yet applied to the real world, A Level Economics is an essay-based discipline that incorporates a considerable degree of mathematical modelling. As

a result, the course is particularly well-placed to help students develop analytical, numerical and problem-solving skills, while at the same time enhancing mental acuity through informed classroom debate and transferable soft skills via long-term, collaborative projects.

A degree in Economics paves the way for a career in a wide range of posts including corporate investment banker, chartered management accountant, chartered management consultant, insurance underwriter, and financial risk and investment analyst. It is also an excellent foundation for a host of positions in government agencies and charitable organisations, as well as in the legal profession, journalism, communications, marketing, manufacturing and retail industries. ■

## Luke Brownlee, Teacher of Economics, discusses bringing the 'ultimate social science' to life

**I** became fascinated by Economics as I began to realise that it is the study of why everything around us is so. The study of Economics ranges from the psychology and science behind individual decision making, to the politics and history behind government policy and I strongly believe it is the ultimate social science.

Within the classroom, I am passionate about bringing the subject to life, and relating the theories we learn to the varied range of economies in the world around us. Seeing students take what they have learnt and give some fascinating insights on the state

of current affairs shows how the study of Economics can enhance your perception and views of the daily news cycle.

Students are loving our new virtual investment competition in the Sixth Form Investment Elective. In the future, we have plans to bring in external speakers from the finance world, attend open days at various financial firms, and enter a Young Investor's Competition. I am also relishing the challenge of outperforming last years' A Level results and continuing to teach this subject whilst such monumental economic events are occurring in the UK and beyond. ■



# “A FORWARD THINKING AND INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENT”



Head of Department Sarah Vanderpump shares her love of the subject and her vision for its future at Benenden.

## How did you come to work in the Art and Creative Technology Department at Benenden? Could you tell us a little about your background?

I joined Benenden in September 2022, from being Head of Art at James Allen's Girls' School in London since 2017. I have a degree in Fine Art and am passionate about Art and Creativity in all forms, but just as enthusiastic and engaged with my wider teaching practice.

In my first full time role I ran and grew one of the largest arts departments in London, overseeing a Gallery, Community Arts Project and publishing AE magazine, a magazine discussing Arts Education. I went on to work at James Allen's Girls' School and turned an abandoned building on site into a collaborative arts space: The Farm. Projects such as working with the team behind Shunt Theatre offered further scope to help students explore creativity through a whole range of materials.

I have been fortunate enough to speak about my work in Arts and Education at the Institute of Education and the Slade. I'm committed to developing new courses in Art and Creative Technology and to providing amazing opportunities and transferable life skills to pupils, both within the curriculum and through co-curricular activities.

## How has the Art and Creative Technology Department changed or developed recently?

As a newly established department, we embarked on our journey this year with a clear vision in mind. Our primary goal is to foster a forward-thinking and innovative environment, constantly adapting to the evolving landscape of creative futures.

We provide students at Benenden with diverse opportunities to explore and express their creativity through various avenues. By embracing different approaches and encouraging alternative modes of creative expression, we aim to equip our students with the skills and flexibility needed to thrive in an ever-changing world.

## What do you love most about your subject and why?

The atmosphere of creativity among both our staff and students – each day brings new discoveries as people constantly push boundaries and explore uncharted territories.

Being introduced to new concepts, be it an innovative process, a groundbreaking piece of software, or the work of a fresh artist or designer.

Witnessing the collaborative efforts of our staff as they plan and deliver new and challenging projects and share their excitement. The enthusiasm spreads as they pass on cutting-edge ideas and possibilities to our students, creating an environment where creative exploration knows no bounds.

## What do you want students at Benenden to get out of your subject?

We want students to feel empowered and included. To think beyond the boundaries of traditional disciplines and to collaborate on ideas, feeling confident in their creative decisions. Students develop adaptability, resilience and start a path of continuous learning to adapt to new technologies and the evolving needs of the field, building an awareness of the vast opportunities in futures beyond the traditional. We'd also like them to have a lot of fun.

## How does your department strive to make lessons exciting and interactive?

We are fortunate to have a huge wealth of knowledge and experience, paired with a lot of brilliant facilities. On top of that, we are very fortunate with our students, who allow us to be inventive in lessons.

This year has seen students do things they might never expect to in School; painting with robots, building 3D worlds in Blender, creating wearable art. We work together as a team, constantly reviewing and planning how to deliver cutting edge lessons that help students build a range of problem-solving creative tools. ■

“...each day brings new discoveries as people constantly push boundaries and explore uncharted territories.”

Sarah Vanderpump

## WHO'S IN THE TEAM?



**Sarah Vanderpump**, Head of Art and Creative Technology, holds a degree in Fine Art. With 17 years' experience in education, Sarah is an advocate for embracing multi-disciplinary creative approaches and harnessing the power of technology and contemporary arts within schools. In addition to her leadership role, she also utilises her expertise in Textiles, Fine Art, and Creative Technology through teaching.

**Emma Walsh** is a teacher of Art and Creative Technology. She has a degree in Architecture and is passionate about exposing students to as much of the creative spectrum as possible. She has taught for the past 11 years specialising in Product Design, and now enjoys branching out into the new and exciting areas that advances in technology presents.

**Christopher Fahy**, Creative Technology Technician, has worked as an engineer for over 50 years with expertise in plastics, woods and metals.

**Jessica Large** is a long-standing member of Benenden School. Having trained as a Multimedia Textiles artist at Loughborough, Jess' expertise and knowledge across all disciplines is invaluable. Her easy manner and attention to detail is integral to the Department, and students gravitate towards her for advice and guidance with their work.

**Kate Linforth** joined Benenden as an artist in residence and now works as a technician. She trained as a Fine Artist at the University of Kent and still has her own practice as a designer. Kate offers valuable insight into the world of art and her considerable knowledge of the subject is a useful resource and inspiration to students.

**Rhiannon Holland-Bright** joined the School in 2022 from Wycombe Abbey. Her teaching methodology is marked by meticulous attention to detail. Rhiannon fosters a vibrant and exciting environment that enables students to create artwork that reflects their unique interests. Rhiannon has taught Design Technology, Art and Textiles.

**Jeanette O'Connor** is the Director of Digital Technologies and Innovation. She has worked in Education for more than 20 years and has taught subjects including Geography, Computer Science, Economics, Business and Media Studies. She leads the School on all aspects of IT and Digital Strategy and is now shaping how Benenden will navigate the rapidly evolving landscape of Artificial Intelligence.

**Dan Tweed** currently works as Benenden's Data Systems Analyst. Before joining Benenden he was, for 30 years, a teacher of Computer Science, ICT, French and German. For over half his teaching career, Dan was Head of Computer Science at a large state comprehensive school. At Benenden he teaches the Computer Science strand of Creative Technology to the Fourths.

**Hannah Pearson** is our newest Teacher of Art and Creative Technology, completing her ECT years at Benenden. She has a degree in Fine Art and experience in both traditional and digital media. Hannah runs an Elective on Illustration and Animation alongside teaching Lower School and GCSE Creative Technology.



## Green Flag for Benenden's Sustainability Efforts

Due to the Benenden Eco Committee's hard work over two years, the School has gained an Eco-Schools Green Flag accreditation. The leaders of the committee, Six Ones Poppy Falcon, Ella Gouriet and Izzy McLean, worked hard to complete the audit and documentation to see if Benenden has implemented enough initiatives to qualify for Eco-Schools status. They were delighted to be awarded the Green Flag with distinction.

Benenden now joins a global network of 59,000 schools across the world. The Eco-Schools programme is an ideal way for schools to embark on a meaningful path towards improving the environmental footprint of a school, a change which inevitably leads to a more sustainable, less costly and more responsible school environment.



Isabelle has made huge progress in establishing the Sustainability Committee as a core part of the School's activities. Work initially centred upon discussion and the selection of Six United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), which were chosen by the whole School body as the most pertinent over the coming five years.

### The selected goals are:

- SDG 3 - Good Health and Wellbeing
- SDG 4 - Quality Education
- SDG 7 - Affordable and Clean Energy
- SDG 10 - Reduced Inequality
- SDG 12 - Responsible Consumption and Production
- SDG 13 - Climate Action

Discussions followed on the actions that Benenden could take to successfully achieve these goals. From the outset, the Committee has been supported by an enthusiastic and dedicated team of volunteers from across the School representing the Environment (via the Eco Committee and Director of Estates), Social (via PRISM, the Charity Committee and the Head of Equality and Diversity and the EDI Grey Jumpers), and Governance (via the Director of Finance and Operations and the Head) among many others.

By keeping the membership of the committee broad and having included representatives from across the boarding houses and departments, it is hoped that we have created

and will continue to create a sense of shared responsibility throughout the community, where everyone has an opportunity to participate in the discussion around, and importantly to act on, sustainability issues.

The pupils and staff continue to be strong advocates for social equality and change. A key part of this is our Partnerships Programme, which allows member of the School community to meet, support and engage with others and play their part in creating a cohesive, mutually supporting social network within the local area. Our commitment to charitable work and ensuring equality and diversity continues to be a central part of our ethos.

The Eco Committee have made excellent progress on all environmental issues both in and out of School, with Six Ones Ella Gouriet, Poppy Falcon and Izzy McLean successfully applying for an Eco Schools Green Flag award, for which Benenden achieved a distinction.

Work has also commenced on the development of the School Biodiversity and Nature Loss Prevention Plan. We are very lucky as a School to have such a marvellous resource for both helping support the local ecology, but also being able to educate all those at School about the issues we are facing as a planet. Over the course of the next year, the School is planning to involve the pupil body in the maintenance of many of its core ecological areas – including the Eco Garden and Ponds and the old orchard areas close to Top Lax – as well as in the creation of new projects. ■

# A READ ON RECYCLING

Sustainability is at the forefront of everyone’s mind at Benenden, as the School works to become more environmentally and socially responsible. Inspiring a new wave of sustainable activity, earlier in the year members of the Eco Committee visited Countrystyle Recycling’s facility in Sheerness. Six One Izzy McLean gives her account.



**I**n March, myself and eight other representatives of the Sustainability Committee visited the local waste centre where Benenden sends its rubbish: Countrystyle.

We were briefed by the workers on the journey of waste from bin to fuel, how each section works and the general safety regulations of the site. Then we were given a tour of some specific sites, namely the Dry Mixed Recycling (DMR) and the Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) site.

At the DMR, we got to see how the rubbish is processed from recycling bins we see around School, mixed with varying types of waste, into large piles of paper, cardboard, plastics and metals, which can then be packaged away for further recycling. I found this particularly enlightening as I now know where my extra worksheets go and how they can be re-purposed when I throw them away.

Even more interesting is the RDF: this is manufactured through the sorting and mechanical processing of soil and general waste (like the Schools’ old desks and chairs). This waste is shredded and compacted into large bales wrapped in fibrous recycled plastic string, allowing them to be more easily shipped to countries around Europe directly, with countries being able to generate energy via heat and steam to power the country.

The centre also told us about other types of waste dealt with on that site, such as food waste, which is collected en masse into an anaerobic digestion processor where the food is reformed into fuel as micro-organisms break it down into more useful molecules. This means that no waste has to be sent into a landfill, where it would release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere as it decomposes. The biogas created can be fed directly into the national grid to power over 3,600 homes and the recycling centre itself.

The trip enhanced my perspective on waste and sustainability. Though the centre can thoroughly process our refuse, it is still integral that as a School we aim to allow this process to go as smoothly as possible, by correctly sorting our waste and thinking more mindfully over our day-to-day purchases (online or in real-life) as every little bit does add up. ■

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# Benenden Economists: “HOW TO FIX THE ECONOMY”

Benenden students love a challenge – and improving the UK economy in the current political climate is certainly that. Here, they share their observations and reveal the strategy they would implement were they to become the next Chancellor of the Exchequer (a position that we think should certainly be held by a Benenden Senior!).

**T**he current economic climate in the UK of high inflation and stagnant growth highlights more than ever the need for appropriate policies from numerous institutions to be implemented.

In regard to fiscal policy, recent developments have come from Kwarteng's infamous mini budget which detailed increased government expenditure but lacked clarity on where this funding would come from. Without proper funding this could lead to an increase in the government's budget deficit and the UK's National Debt. Many were hoping for a windfall tax on energy producers following a drastic rise in abnormal profits to be a solution to this. Instead, all the budget seemed to do was spook the markets, sending the pound tumbling and raising import prices for UK consumers and firms. Soon after this, the UK saw the resignation of both Kwasi Kwarteng and Liz Truss and and Jeremy Hunt and Rishi Sunak taking their places.

The Central Bank in the UK raised interest rates from 2.25% to 3%, the highest increase in 33 years. This increase was implemented as an attempt to curb inflationary pressures: increasing the cost of borrowing and reward for saving will reduce the level of consumption and investment in the economy, thus reducing aggregate demand and causing disinflation. Will this be successful at tackling inflation? Arguably, inflation now is a supply side issue due to Russia's war on Ukraine, which has led to rising gas, commodity and wheat prices and has contributed to firms' higher production costs. Hence, any decrease in demand-pull inflation may not be sufficient enough to offset the higher cost-push inflation. ▶



## We Would:

- Increase expenditure on education from £2.3b to £2.5b
- Renew a commitment to the improvement of new and existing training schemes to improve occupational mobility of the UK labour force
- Extend electric vehicles to be exempt from excise duty until 2027
- Increase overseas aid to 0.6% GDP
- Further increase expenditure on pursuing tax avoidance and tax evasion
- Ensure some of the £420m budget for improving road conditions is targeted at improving cycling infrastructure



“Renewable sector growth will seek to increase the productive potential of the economy, causing long-run economic growth.”

The UK has a relatively low capital investment rate, estimated to be around 17% of GDP in 2021, compared to a global average of about 24%. To encourage investment, a 130% super-deduction capital allowance was implemented. This tax break allows firms to pay 25p less tax for every pound invested in plant and machinery investment. It lowers the cost of capital and helps boost UK investment, increasing the capital stock and productive capacity, boosting long-run aggregate supply, leading to long-run economic growth. This scheme is planned to run until March 2023. It will be interesting to see whether this scheme will continue in future years. If not, UK investment may remain stagnant which will limit long-run economic growth.

At COP27, Sunak pledged £11.6 billion to fight climate change, stressing the importance of ‘diversifying’ our energy through investing into renewables opening a path for ‘clean growth’. The current energy crisis in the UK could

not manufacture a more relevant time for the problems of the UK’s energy mix to be addressed. Through addressing the over-reliance on sources eg natural gas and oil, interdependency cultivating risk and environmental issues associated with fossil fuels can be tackled.

Renewable sector growth will seek to increase the productive potential of the economy, causing long-run economic growth. However, scientists emphasise renewables alone are not sufficient enough to meet UK energy demand. Hence, the Government should not only use renewables to diversify, but also use this fund to invest into sources eg nuclear as well as importing from a wide variety of trading partners, to ensure the economy is less risk prone in the short term whilst protecting the potential for long-run growth. ■

**Jamie Barbour, Isla Forbes,  
Sophia Cauter and Tammy Lee (Six Two)**



## The Centenary Hall: One Year On

After first opening at the end of the Summer Term in 2022, The Centenary Hall has surpassed all expectations, both as a central gathering place for the Benenden community and as a state-of-the-art concert venue.

**B**eginning with a formal opening event in the Autumn Term, the Centenary Hall was soon placed on the radar of the whole of the local community when the public was invited to an opening event that included a spellbinding performance by the London Philharmonia Orchestra.

Since that time, the Hall has been a regular whole-School meeting point for Prayers and other services (including that in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II), speaker events including those with Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock MBE, Baroness Barran MBE and Marcus Wareing, and wider community events such as The Art of Disagreeing Well conference and the Benenden STEM Convention.

As well as providing an exceptional space for Benenden's own musicians to perform on a near-weekly basis, The Centenary Hall has also drawn in performers and ensembles such as Amelie Jat, the Kidenza Orchestra and VOCES8, and afforded the space for visiting schools to enjoy productions and workshops at Benenden as part of the Partnerships Programme.

For the last two years, The Centenary Hall has also been the venue for perhaps the most significant day in the Benenden calendar: Speech Day. Accommodating separate Lower/Middle and Upper School ceremonies, the venue provides suitable grandeur to the School's annual celebration of its students' achievements, as well as its final farewell to the leaving Six Twos.

Finally, though no less significantly, the opening of The Centenary Hall has enabled Benenden to fully venture into the world of commercial performing arts events under the Hemsted Park brand. Since it was formally launched in the Autumn, Hemsted Park has hosted an array of thrilling events, including A Swinging Christmas with the Len Phillips Swing Orchestra, The Ronnie Scott's Story by Ronnie Scott's All Stars and an excellent performance by The BBC Big Band.

Looking ahead, performances by Trio Bohemo and Angela Hewitt, as well as the Swinging at the Cotton Club are just a few highlights from an exciting programme. ■





# Save the date!

## **UPCOMING PARENT EVENTS:**

### **Headmistress's Centenary Dinner for Fourth to Lower Fifth Parents**

Wednesday 17 January

### **PEC Parents' Burns Night**

Saturday 20 January

### **Centenary Celebration Show at the Coliseum**

Thursday 14 March

### **Headmistress's Centenary Dinner for Fifth and Upper Fifth Parents**

Wednesday 24 April

### **PEC Parents Party, London**

Saturday 11 May

### **Centenary Sports Day**

Saturday 15 June

### **Centenary Closing Event, Benenden Pageant**

Saturday 29 June

### **Centenary Leavers' Ball, London**

Thursday 4 July

### **Centenary Speech Day**

Saturday 6 July

Don't forget to take a look at Hemsted Park's  
spring season of events at:

**[www.hemstedpark.com](http://www.hemstedpark.com)**



BENENDEN