



CAMBODIA TREK MAKES A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

This summer 21 students from St Thomas More RC Academy went on an unforgettable month-long expedition to Cambodia. On our trip we helped local communities, worked on building and agriculture projects, planted trees and learnt about the fascinating history of Cambodia, a country still recovering from a tragic genocide.

The first week of our trip was spent at Beng Pae Camp, where we lived with villagers in a rural part of the country. Here we worked alongside the community to build a new home for a family of six, whose current house was so badly damaged it was falling apart. It was a huge shock to all of us to see how different their lives were to ours, and how little they had; it really showed us how fortunate we are for

what we have. The opportunity to give this family hope for the future was an extremely rewarding experience. Along with brick laying, building and cement mixing, we also visited the local school and taught the children about our lives and families back at home, as well as some English.

After leaving the village, we set off on a four day jungle trek across the Kulen National Park. This was one of the most memorable parts of the trip as we really bonded as a team and supported each other along the way, overcoming fears and setbacks. In the midst of our trekking, we witnessed breathtaking sights such as ancient monuments, golden temples, waterfalls and wildlife. We even learnt to meditate with Buddhist monks.

"TO SEE, FIRST HAND, THE INVALUABLE DIFFERENCE WE HAVE MADE TO THE COMMUNITIES WE HELPED"

However, the most memorable of all was watching the sunrise over the canopy of jungle from the top of Kulen mountain, it really put the whole trip into perspective.

After our trek we spent some time visiting Cambodia's incredible temples, including the world famous Angkor Watt, and learning about the country's absorbing history. We then spent another week in camp where we built a well and a toilet for a family.



Finally, when our trip was coming to an end, we traveled to Phnom Penh and visited the S21 Prison Museum and the Killing Fields, both memorials to Cambodia's 1970s genocide.

Although at times it was hard, it was all worth it to see, first hand, the invaluable difference we have made to the communities we helped.

- Macy Russell, Year 12

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OFF INTO THE BIG WIDE WORLD

Congratulations to all of our students for their outstanding successes in their summer exams! At Year 13, there was a 99.5 % pass rate, with 15 % of all grades at A*, compared to 13% in 2016. We wish them all the best as they move on to the next stage of their careers. The following students achieved three or more A*/A grades:



- Nathan Smith to Manchester University to read Theoretical Physics.
- Olivia Jack to the University of Leeds to read joint honours in French and English Literature.
- Hannah Chapman to Leeds University to read Natural Sciences.
- Matthew McCann to the University of Leeds to read Biology.
- Charlotte Lowery to the University of Leeds to read Psychology.
- Vicky Marriott to the University of York to read Linguistics and French, including a year abroad.
- Abigail Wafer to the University of York to read English Literature.
- Thomas Miller, who is taking a gap year to get a job before deciding what to do.
- Amelia Dunn to Manchester University to read English Literature. (not in photograph)
- Francesco Bello to Cambridge University to read Natural Sciences. (not in photograph)

Congratulations also to our Year 11 students on their fantastic GCSE results. In the new and more demanding English and Maths exams over 25% achieved one of the top three grades, and well over 80% achieved Grade 4 (old C) and above.

23 students achieved at least 8 A*/A grades with many scoring the highest grade 9 in English or Maths: Hannah Baldwin, Morgan Barber, Sophie Blackett, Bethany Brain, Madeleine Brandon, Sophie Brandon, Joshua Brown, Nathan Chong, Eira Hegarty, Maisie Hire, Patrick Holliman, Lucy Hundrup, Jenny Hutchinson, Emily Kelly, Madeleine McCabe, Rebecca Mould, Jessica Pellumbaj, Lucy Penhall, Stephanie Potts, Rosie Rice, Macy Russell, Josh Stewart and Pinzhe Xu. Well done to all of our students and staff for their hard work and fully deserved results!



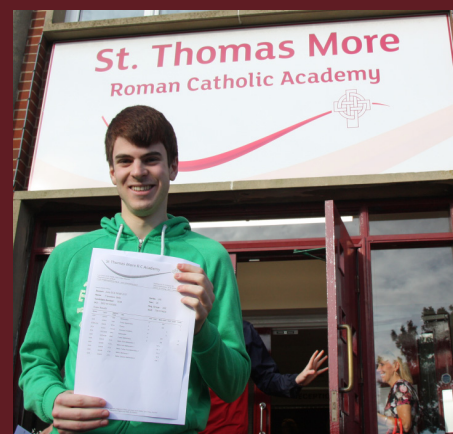
CELEBRATION OF ACHIEVEMENT EVENING

On Thursday 14th September, we held our annual awards ceremony to celebrate the exam successes of our students.



Special Subject Awards:
The St Oswin's Award for Outstanding Achievement in RE was presented to Rebecca Crow.

The John Bassett Award for Outstanding Achievement in Mathematics was awarded to Francesco Bello, who was unfortunately unable to attend the ceremony.



OPEN EVENING GOES OFF WITH A BANG...



Tuesday 26th September saw our second annual Open Evening for Year 6 students, and once again the event was a great success. Mr Watson presented two very popular talks on what students and parents/carers can expect from the school, leaving visitors to spend the rest of the evening touring departments, ably assisted by our excellent Year 11 Ambassadors and Sixth Form students.

In departments, staff and current students had a variety of experiments and activities set up for the Year 6 students to participate in. It was lovely to see the younger children getting involved in these activities, interacting with our current students and learning more about life at St Thomas More. We look forward to welcoming many of them here in September.



For more information on application to STM, please see our website at www.stmacademy.org.uk



TRIPS AND



YEAR 7 HISTORY AT ALNWICK CASTLE

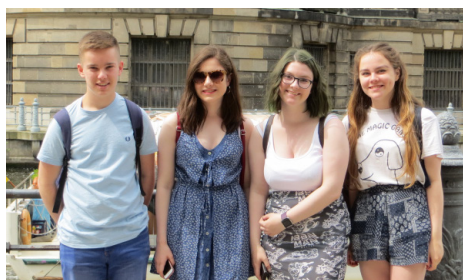
On Friday 7th July 2017, Year 7 History students visited Alnwick Castle. The first thing we did on our trip to Alnwick Castle was a workshop about how to arm a knight, which consisted of dressing up Charlie in a sheep wool jacket and a chainmail helmet. After discussing how we could be protected from a sword or an arrow, we were split into two teams, Scotland and England. We were to have a great battle, the battle of Bannockburn.

- Niamh Brown, Year 8

ACCELERATED READER AWARDS SUMMER 2017

On Monday 17th July the Accelerated Reader awards ceremony took place in the library. This was for the students in Year 7 who had done really well throughout the year. Prizes were handed out by Mr Watson and Miss Edwards. Aaryn McDonald-Brown got an award for reading 7 million words this year, the most in Year 7. I got an award for getting 100% in all my quizzes and received a book about the human brain as my prize!

- Lewis Heenan, Year 8



YEAR 12 TRIP TO BERLIN

At the end of June four A-level German students spent five nights in Berlin. We were not disappointed as we tried to experience the whole of Berlin in our short stay! Highlights included a tour of the former Stasi Prison, learning about the Berlin Wall at the Memorial, and of course a delicious 'currywurst'. Our trip was so rewarding, giving us an opportunity to practice our German and learn about the city's history.

- By Sam Smith, Eimer Simpson, Katie Salmon and Sara Lowden

CELEBRATION OF DANCE EVENING

On the 14th June 2017, the Performing Arts department performed in the brand new dance studio, giving us an opportunity to use the new lighting and sound system, tiered seating and the sprung floor that allows dancers to do more tricks. Dancers from Year 7 to Year 12 took part in the wonderful evening, showcasing their dance skills, and it was lovely to see how talented the dancers in lower school are.

- Emma Walker, Katy Burton and Elizabeth Graham, Year 13



YEAR 7 VISIT TO THE CENTRE FOR LIFE

On the 17th July, we went on a jam-packed day trip to the Centre for Life, filled with cool chemistry experiments, terrifying dinosaurs and shows with a bang! One of the highlights was taking part in a chemistry experiment in the lab. We tested various materials to see how well they absorbed carbon dioxide, in an experiment connected to the explosion on Apollo 13. We tested five materials and found that soda lime was the best at absorbing CO₂.

- Victoria Peleva, Year 7

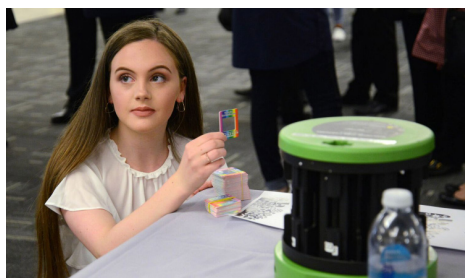
GIRLS ACTIVE

The Girls Active Leaders have been working extremely hard this year. Their Clubbercise event in July was fantastic, with over 100 girls dancing with disco lights and UV paint! More Clubbercise to come this academic year. The girls also helped with the Year 6 Primary School transition, visiting almost all feeder primary schools to give them an insight into girls' PE at STM. Thanks to all their hard work, our after-school clubs are getting off to a great start this year.

- Mrs Plummer



VISITS



SCHOOL PHYSICIST OF THE YEAR

The awards ceremony this year included a lecture on Soft Matter Physics, a term for materials that are easily deformed by thermal fluctuations and external forces. Applications include packaging materials, cosmetics and paints. This clearly showed how Physics can be used to further develop our society but more interestingly how inspiration can be drawn from the natural world. The evening was both exciting and engaging. - Mohammad Ahmadi and Jennifer Anderson

YEAR 11 MEDICINE THROUGH TIME AT BEAMISH

We spent the day learning about different views on the National Health Service in the 1900s. Mr Woolley's argument was that the NHS is too expensive and taxes are too high, whereas Mrs Bromage suggested that taxing people depending on what they earn is a fair way of funding the NHS. We also learnt about the difficulties of Georgian medicine, caused by lack of clean water, reusing of bandages and paint containing arsenic. - Amelia Bewick & Leena Ghimire



SPORT & EXERCISE WORKSHOP AT NEWCASTLE UNI

The Sport & Exercise workshop on 19th September was designed to give us a flavour of the degree courses offered by the University. At one workshop we created our own isotonic drink, which we learnt have a similar concentration of salt and sugar as human cells. They are needed by athletes to quickly replace the electrolytes and fluids lost during exercise. The active nature of all these workshops made the day both enjoyable and educational. - Erin Prior, Year 13

YEAR 12 IN THE LAKE DISTRICT #livingthedream

Year 12 Geographers spent two days in mid September in Keswick in the Lake District, collecting data for their forthcoming Independent Investigation. This will be for the 'Changing Places' topic, where they will look at the differences in character between the settlements of Keswick and North Shields. The students thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to do some hands-on fieldwork in such stunning surroundings. - Mr Murray



MARTIN LUTHER KING WORKSHOP

On Friday 22nd September, the Art and English departments hosted Newcastle University's Outreach programme to talk about Martin Luther King, focussing on a discussion and celebration of his 'I have a dream' speech. Year 10 GCSE students analysed patterns and words used and tried writing their own speeches inspired by the great man. They also looked at symbolism in Art and the power it has to make us think, understand and be inspired. - Mrs Pisarevic

WORLD'S BIGGEST COFFEE MORNING

On Friday 29th September we hosted the World's Biggest Coffee Morning in support of Macmillan Cancer Support. We had to organise everything from going to Tesco to buy the teabags, coffee, and biscuits, to designing and emailing invites to, most importantly, making the tea! We were all assigned a job which took us out of our comfort zones, but we worked well as a team and raised a fantastic £105.39 for an important cause. - Year 9 Vocational Studies Group



"THE LIMITS OF MY LANGUAGE..."

500 WORDS WRITING COMPETITION

Following the very successful BBC Radio 2 creative writing competition, St Thomas More ran our own challenge in July. Students from across Years 7, 8 and 9 entered fabulous pieces of writing - we read poems and non-fiction, as well as short stories and novel openings. The judging process itself was very challenging as the standard was incredibly high - we certainly have some very talented writers in school. A huge well done to all of the entrants and to the winners who were announced in the last assemblies of term. We hope that this is the start of an STM tradition - watch this space...
- Mrs Ronan

LITTLE BRAVE KNIGHT

by Olivia Smith, Year 10
Are you a knight?
Yes, I am a knight
Whose art is their words.
My pen, my sword
My notes, my armour.
I go to war
With the thorns in my mind.
Each day
I chop at the thorns
Wishing that one day
I will find a better me.



UNTITLED (EXCERPT)

by Sarah Tunmore, Year 10

I stared into the fire, gazing at the red sparks mischievously dancing to the beat of the smooth crackle of the ebony wood. I watched the hot red flames mirror themselves in my glossy eyes. Orange and yellow gracefully intertwined with one another while the black smoke silently moved from the burning licks of fire into the dark sky. Heat from the fire battled against the freezing air that surrounded it, but the fire was winning. Once-strong oak perished at the foot of the merciless flames that seeped into it. The air was heavy and longed to release the every growing heap of ebony smoke that was unwillingly bestowed upon it. I loved it. With every breath the thoughts spiralling inside my head were exhaled between my lips and towards the fire. The flames hungrily snatched them and imitated them mockingly.

THAT NIGHT AT AUSCHWITZ (EXCERPT)

by William Beattie, Year 8

I remember the day I saw the grey gates of Auschwitz clanging in the wind. We expected a fight, but no fight came; we expected machine gunfire to rattle through the hills, but none came; we expected shouts and screams, but the only noise was the wind whistling past our ears and the low moaning of the prisoners inside the barbed wire-topped walls. We thought it was a trap, but it wasn't. The gates were unlocked, so we pushed them open and a horrible sight met our eyes. "Oh my God" I whispered, but was there any God in this ghastly place?

A GIRL DROWNED IN A SEA OF INSULTS

by Molly Hay, Year 8

A girl once drowned in an ocean.
Of insults.
Slowly sinking deeper.
Worthless
Nothing
Disappointment
Useless
Each word pulled her deeper.
Until she could sink no more
Words wrapped round her like vines
Scratching her wrists in horizontal lines
Blue and black painted her skin.
Yet no one heard her plea
Her smile was taken as happiness and not an obligation
Thus her scream was never heard
Her cry for help was ignored
As so this girl drowned.
Drowned in an ocean.
An ocean of insults.

Winners were Molly Hay in the Year 7 category, Abigail Stephenson in Year 8 and Anna McCusker in Year 9. Congratulations to the winners, and to all who entered. Full versions of these entries and more are available at www.stmacademy.org.uk

GERMAN EXCHANGE 2017



The German exchange trip is an excellent opportunity for both English and German students as it gives both sets of students the chance to learn the culture of the other country. It was a good experience for the Germans as they could take part in English day to day life. I didn't think I would get on as well as I did with my partner, Nils, but we had lots in common. They got to visit some of the best landmarks in the North East, including Hadrian's Wall, Beamish and Alnwick Castle.

This gave them a great opportunity to not only learn about England, but to bond with their partners. Over the weekend I showed Nils many of the attractions in and around Newcastle, this gave us more opportunity to get to know each other, and also showed Nils what society is like in England. We were upset when they left but are looking forward to visiting them next year when we fly out to Dusseldorf for the return visit.

- Ben McManus



ALAN CAMPBELL MP MEETS WITH STUDENTS

During the National Election campaign, Tyne and Wear Citizens were given a promise from local MP Alan Campbell that he would meet with them after the election. We met at St Thomas More on September 15th 2017.

The pupils decided to focus their attention on Mental Health Provision and Tuition fees. At the meeting they spoke with eloquence, passion and compassion. It was at the end of the meeting, when one of the pupils fed back all the things Mr Campbell had promised to do during the conversation, and he duly started writing them down on his notepad, that I appreciated that these young people were making their MP accountable. They also got a promise from Mr Campbell to meet again in three months time. The sense of empowerment and growth in confidence in these young people was amazing, and their teachers were clearly very proud of them too - wonderful!

- Fr Chris Hughes, Governor



... ARE THE LIMITS OF MY WORLD"

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN





RUBY WATSON

BRITISH GYMNASTICS BRONZE

On 29th July Ruby travelled to the Echo Arena in Liverpool to compete in the British Gymnastics Championships with her Youth Mixed Team. She competed in the 'Stream' which consists of tumble, trampette, vault and floor, finishing a fantastic third overall. This is an amazing achievement, and shows that all that hard work and determination pays off in the end. Ruby has been doing gymnastics since the age of nine, and currently trains at Benfield Gymnastics Academy for over ten hours a week. Her next competition is in Bracknell, having been moved up from the Youth team to the All Girls Junior Team. Ruby is happy with her achievement, saying "It takes up a lot of time and means I don't have lot of spare time to see friends and do homework, so I have to squeeze everything in, but it's worth it". Well done Ruby for your fantastic accomplishment! - Mrs Plummer

EX-PUPIL SUCCESSES

We are proud to share a few successes from ex-pupils across the years. If you or a member of your family are a former student of St Thomas More and have a story to tell, please let us know at alogie@stmacademy.org.uk. We would love to feature you in a future issue of More Life.

MARK COLEMAN

1976-1981

Mark Coleman was at St Anselms from 1976-81. He went on to do a BA at Guildhall University in London, then later moved to San Francisco and received a Masters in Clinical Psychology in 1998. Mark has studied Buddhist meditation for 30 years and has taught meditation retreats internationally since 2000. He trains Mindfulness teachers in the UK and US and leads nature meditation retreats worldwide. He's a trainer for Google's 'Search Inside Yourself' program which teaches Mindfulness and Emotional Intelligence programs. He lives in Sausalito, California.



JANIE GONSALEZ

YEARS

Janie has just graduated from The University of Leeds with a BA in English Language and Literature. For her final year dissertation she conducted research on the 'Geordie' dialect and her work achieved a first. She is now completing a Masters degree in Media and Communications at Leeds, where she will also be contributing to an independent student-led magazine.



KATIE LOVELL & LAURA-JAYNE WATSON

2000-2007



Katie & Laura-Jayne are both practising Speech and Language therapists. They went to Manchester University, and have since worked in very different areas. Katie has worked with adults with learning disabilities and mental health conditions, while Laura-Jayne has worked with adults with voice disorders, neurological impairments and adults & children with head and neck cancer.

NEXT ISSUE CHRISTMAS 2017

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