



# THE WORD ONLINE

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AGSB





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# THE FIRST LEGG



## STAR OF THE WORD



As my time at AGSB comes to an end, I think back to all the experiences, memories and skills AGSB has given me. I am a keen rugby player and I would not have had such success without the AGSB staff pushing me to fulfil my potential.

With Publications, I have completed ten editions of 'The Word' and two 'End of Year Reviews'. With the digital world more prevalent than ever, I have gained some essential skills that I will be able to transfer into later life. I enjoyed success at the Shine Awards in 2018 and it was an experience I will never forget. As I progress to Univeristy, I turn to you as the reader. You can be a part of Publications and continue a legacy that has lasted since the school was founded. I have implemented many changes to 'The Word' and I am proud of the progress I have made. You could do the same.

James Legg  
Assistant Editor

A Sadiq is a committed and hard-working Year 9 pupil who has really impressed me in this edition. His article on cryptocurrency is very topical and gives a brilliant insight into this new phenomenon. I also really enjoyed reading his interview with Sifat Symum. With an ever increasing number of students applying to medicine at AGSB, it gives a realistic and personal experience that our younger readers can take advice from. Well done Sadi.

# HEAD TO HEAD



A very warm welcome back to readers of The Word. This Spring term brought news that 14 students in our Sixth Form have received offers for places at Oxford or Cambridge. After two years of disruption, they have successfully traversed a challenging process of aptitude tests and interviews from courses ranging from Medicine to Italian and Spanish. I have every confidence that these leavers, together with their peers holding offers from other leading universities will go on to make a real difference to society when they leave AGSB. This has, as ever, been a very busy term which has included a plethora of activities both inside and outside the classroom. It continues to be a real delight to see so many pupils engaged in such a wide range of co-curricular activities. We have enjoyed great success in national academic enrichment competitions across the arts, humanities, modern foreign languages, and the sciences. Those parents who attended the musical productions this term will no doubt have been impressed by the quality of the performances. Equally, the many pupils who participated in Model United Nations and Public Speaking competitions, acquitted themselves admirably and with great success.

On the sporting front, we have recently experienced several successes, enjoying National and Regional success in table tennis and tennis. In hockey, special mention goes to the Under 16s who are County Champions and the Under 18s who reached the semi-final of the indoor and outdoor National tournaments. In rugby, we have been busy on the rugby sevens circuit and in football we have a number of teams in the latter stages of the Trafford Cup.

We continue to strive to ensure that our community is a respectful and tolerant one. Anti-racism training has continued for staff and pupils, and we celebrated LGBTQ+ History Month with a series of pupil and staff-led assemblies. Through these activities we seek to stimulate boys' thinking around important issues and to inspire them to ensure that our school is a happy, safe, and inclusive community.

There has also been a warm sense of community at AGSB: students and staff have raised significant funds for three important causes: Altrincham Stand up for Cancer, the water crisis in Pakistan and for those affected by the Ukraine crisis.

I wish all the AGSB community the very best for the term ahead. We particularly send our best wishes to Year 11 and Year 13 who are working hard preparing for their public exams – the first since the summer of 2019.

G A Wright  
Head Master

"14 students in our Sixth Form have received offers for places at Oxford or Cambridge"



With this being my last Head-to-Head, I would just like to say this past year at AGSB has been excellent. We managed to weather the Omicron storm. We have spent the whole year on site, and got back to in person concerts and held our session orchestra event for the first time since March 2020. We are finally back to in person exams... yay?

In all seriousness, the upcoming exam season is going to be a stressful time for most Year 11 and 13 students, especially having lost in person learning during last year's winter lockdown, which is why I must once again emphasise the importance of seeking support. The school has a well-established support network. If you do find yourself needing it, please speak to a trusted member of staff for more info. An exam season is a ridiculous amount of time not to do anything fun, so make sure that in between putting in the hours you are taking the time to relax and live like a normal person, whatever they do.

Looking forward to my last day at AGSB, I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on a few of my highlights from my days in the school. The Year 8 trip to Italy remains a memory I'll always be fond of, and if you would like to verify that claim the picture of me and my head-shaped ice cream lives eternally on a noticeboard on the C-corridor. Year 10 sports day with a newly introduced house system has to be another favourite, as I dressed in all yellow and put a Sainsbury's bag on my head (it wasn't a plastic one I promise) to support Tatton.

I'd also like to talk a bit about my time as Head Prefect over the last year. This has been an absolute joy for me, from delivering assemblies to all years on a variety of issues to running the sixth form 'House Wii Sports Competition' alongside my best friend Dan. I always set out with the goal of making the lives of students at this school better in whatever way I could. I have loved each minute of donning the blue tie (which I totally didn't lose in the middle of Altrincham and have to go through six Year 12s to relocate) I honestly couldn't have had a better senior prefect team to work with so a huge thank you to them.

I would like to thank all the staff and students of AGSB for this excellent last year, and I wish everyone the best of luck in upcoming exams.

A Saeid  
Head Prefect



# BROKEN SHADOWS

This article is a piece of prose, written from the perspective of Andrei, a fictional 11-year-old Ukrainian boy who, living in the town of Mukachevo, must make the 50 km journey to the Hungarian town of Tarpa, 8km away from the border, where his aunt lives. However, the journey isn't as straightforward as it seems...

Day 1: 8 a.m.

"Поспішай (Hurry up), Andrei!" Mother shouted, breath bated, words heavy. Washing the last bit of grime off my face, I stepped out of the cold bathtub, grateful; Mother said it would be my last for a long time. My things were gathered in a small duffel bag, just light enough for me to carry, though the thought of leaving home seemed to add a weight too heavy to bear. I pulled on my itchy sweater, tattered jeans, and took one last glance at my bedroom; the grey, peeling walls and half-broken bedframe washed an aura of nostalgia over my thoughts as I bode my room goodbye. The thought of forever was intimidating; I tried not to consider it.

Mother met me at the door, duffel bag in hand, tears welling in her eyes. She took my hand, revealing the bare skin underneath my jumper, saying: "Do not reveal this to anyone. I am writing my number and the number of your aunt in Tarpa. Run and do not stop. Do not look back. Keep going." Her voice became cracked and hesitant and as she inscribed the numbers in black marker on my hand, my heart began to sink, and emotion began to rise. "Don't cry," Mother hastily retorted, "My little soldier does not cry. I will be with you soon, my sweet prince. I promise."

And with that, I was on my own.

Day 1: 12 p.m.

It had been 4 hours since I departed. The wind whistled past my face, blowing away my tears as I ran south-west to the border; It was as though nature spoke for Mother, reminding me of her constant presence. As my legs began to ache and my muscles began to fatigue, the lasting echoes of mother's voice whispered in my ears:

"I will be with you soon, my sweet prince..."

The trees and grass of my countryside neighbourhood was soon replaced with the urban buzz of the city. The nearest train station was 17km away in Hat', there I would contact mother and my aunt but for now, there was only one objective; get there. I knew mother said not to stop, but my 11-year-old frame had its limit. I slumped down by the side of the road. Judging by my map, I was around 10km away. I pushed my hair back, sweat dripping from the tips of my hair in the scorching sun. The streets of the city were quiet, the sound of shelling and gunfire still audible. The Russians had taken the neighbouring cities here in the south, and the news said that we were next. Desperate attempts to flee

had cost many lives. I could only hope I did not have to pay the same price. My body grew tired and my eyes heavy, and before I knew it, I began to sleep.

Day 1: 6 p.m.

I was abruptly woken by tumultuous shaking. Through my hazy gaze, I spotted a woman, exclaiming "вставати, вставати!" Understanding what she meant, I immediately rose, and I could see why; the mechanical whirr of armoured vehicles and a rapturous cacophony of shelling and gunfire burst my eardrums. Neglecting my duffel bag, I only took one thing; the voice of my frightened mother telling me to "Run and don't stop." And so, I did, in the hands of this stranger, working our way towards the border, through twists and turns, rocky roads and forestry, escaping Russian advancement. We must have been going on for at least three hours before the blanket of night cast itself upon the sky. The sky was not a brilliant blue, but a scorched orange, the blemishes of war like scars art on the palette that was the sky that night. As I gazed and watched the destruction of my home, a passion, a burning rage started inside. However, the guilt of leaving my homeland attacked my conscience as I lulled myself to sleep.

Day 2: 8 a.m.

I discovered that I had fallen asleep in the village of Zhniatino, 8km away from the train station, my hopes in reaching distance. I rose from my bed of nature and discovered the woman who had led me here had gone already. Her kindness, I shall never forget. I started towards Hat' early, walking at a steady pace. It became more natural, being alone. The things I had braved over the 24 hours made me feel invincible; I could take on the world.

I arrived in Hat' finally at 12 noon, the train station not too far from the edge of town. The station was crowded with people of different stories and experiences getting here, some from distant lands, some from closer home, but we all shared the same goal: leave Ukraine. I shoved and pushed my way to the front of the platform, penniless, pockets empty.

I could not afford a ticket, I realised. My journey through the most unimaginable circumstances seemed useless, that is until I met her. She introduced herself and said nothing. She saw me on the ground, slumped in my disappointment, and took pity handing me €200, enough for me to board the train.

Day 2: 3 p.m.

As I sat down in the carriage, and looked out of the window, exiting Ukraine, I thought about mother. Her "sweet prince" had made it. And, though I knew not what was in store, one thing was certain: she would be with me soon. She promised.

T Ariyo





# WHY DO YOU KEEP TELLING ME THIS?

It's an odd feeling to be so aware of everything. We're the only species to be so aware of the world withering around us while at the same time, throwing fuel onto the fire. I wonder if other animals reflect on their actions like we do. Does a tiger eat a rhino and realise it's endangered? Do beavers even realise how many trees go into their dams? All these fish excreting into the sea and not even cleaning up after themselves.

Selfish. The lot of them.

Maybe they deserve all this. You know what I'm talking about. This. Maybe the rest of the earth should've learned to play the cards that are dealt to them. It's not our fault we were just smarter, stronger, better to adapt. We learned to build farms and houses, to ride a boat and craft a bridge, to make factories and plantations. We learned how to use. We conquered nature. We won.

Don't look at me like that. I didn't start it. I'm not the narcissist here. You played as much of a role in this as me. Plastic straws are just more convenient.

I sometimes wonder where the plastic straws go. I've looked it up before but haven't found much. I'm honestly not sure anyone does. I know they go into my bin, and then to the binmen, and they take it to the dump. But where does it go after that? Yeah, yeah, I've heard about how plastic takes around 300 years to decompose but seriously, does it just sit there? Does my plastic straw lay upon its throne of garbage and waste, accompanied by its disciples and princes of rubbish? It watches its empire expand and grow. Oh, how we feed it. How we gorge it. It will never grow hungry. It won't die, not for 300 years at least. It will form a coalition with the sun and a trade deal with the winds. It might have to barter with the ocean but it's confident it can win her vote. And as it does and judgement day burns us all, I wonder. Will someone, because there'll always be someone, we're too resilient for them to wipe us out completely, will they find this plastic straw, the imperial ruler, and will they point to me? Are they going to blame me? Point and cuss and direct their generations of anger towards me and my plastic straw? I wonder.

Ok. I feel you staring now. Come on, it's not like I tried.

I never wanted to be the reason this is happening; I did try my best. I was an activist! I still am- I think. I attended all the protests! Preached about it constantly, I shared your anger! And look at what we did! We just went back to school, I mean, we didn't have a choice, did we? And yeah, they're making deals in Paris and they're talking about in Glasgow and all right, we have a set date now, we'll reach the targets by 2040 or maybe 50, it depends on the markets you know and maybe we can squeeze it in right around this time but look Tesla just released a new car and they're making more rockets and please can I have that and c'mon

we'll take the car it'll be quicker and but please can I have this and man this is really negatively affecting my business and where's the efficiency and you're talking about people's jobs and think about how much this'll cost goddammit and you are so selfish and...

God. The bus already left. It left decades ago and you're scrambling for the timetable. And yeah, maybe we didn't build it, and we didn't lie to the world about it. To some extent, I agree with you, it's not our fault. By our, I mean me and you here. But you're screaming for the bus to slow down, and it's gone and I'm sorry and maybe I'm just another cynical, pretentious nihilist.

But come on now, if you could have made bajillions of cash and the side effect was catalysing the inevitable, are you telling me you wouldn't?

Oh, you wouldn't? I guess there's the difference then.

Either way, I admire you, you're a lot more resilient than I am. And a lot more optimistic. But seriously, look at us! For every life that we live there are a hundred others that aren't fulfilled. For every play that's performed and song that's sung, their existence is reliant on the existence of this. For every article that's written. You want to fix this? There's not going to be time for passion projects you enjoy. Alright, I'm not arguing that these things aren't important. But for the change that you want, and that you need, writers and poets can only get you so far. They can inspire and energise, but they aren't the soldiers we need.

Woah, hold up, I'm not arguing for a revolution. Just saying, 2050 is too little too late. So if the ballot paper isn't fixing this, and we don't have the gall to fix it ourselves, what really is there left? Wait for the economic incentive I suppose, that's the only positive of a finite resource.

I'm not trying to be a downer. But we've got finite time left, that's nothing new. And for the first time in history, so does the earth. That's a little more special. I'm just glad I was born now, and not in 30 years time. I'll be in my 40s right when we really start feeling the impacts. Wow, that's a life there isn't it. So, listen to your music and recycle your cans kids. Eat less meat and grab the tram every once in a while. Remember to pick up your litter and bring your own plastic bags to the supermarket. Oh yeah and please don't exploit resources and people for the purposes of hoarding wealth.

C'mon, I wasn't wrong. Plastic straws are just more convenient.

W Kashif





# FOOTBALL SUPERSTAR- ANYA DONELAN

I was recently very fortunate to be able to interview Anya Donelan, superstar defender who currently plays for FC United of Manchester.

Anya spent two years playing at Monroe College in New York and two years at the University of Akron, where she studied criminology and criminal justice – she aspires to become a detective in the future.

Anya has also recently appeared on the smash hit football series - Ultimate Goal. After a successful application, she featured on the second season of the BT programme, which aims to find the next female football star.

During the interview, Anya told us of her experiences playing the 'beautiful game'. We covered a wide variety of topics ranging from progress of the women's game to biggest superstitions.

We're really thankful to Anya for giving up her time to take part in this interview. I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed the interview with her, it was extremely interesting to hear her thoughts and we all wish her the best of luck with her career in the years ahead.

## Question 1: What inspired you to start playing?

Answer 1: I've been playing since I was five or six years old, and always used to play with the boys on the playground at break and lunchtimes, but I soon realised that I wanted to take it further - it was the sport I wanted to do. I really just tried to play and watch the game - men's and women's - as much as possible. I soon managed to find a local girls' team in Warrington and played with them for a while.

## Q2: How did the training change you as a player evolved and progressed through levels?

A2: I found there was a huge step between the coaching at the grassroots level and then the coaching at centre of excellences, or as they're now called Regional Talent Centres. I found that when I trialled at Liverpool, Everton, Blackpool. When I got accepted at Stoke the coaches weren't just parents with level one badges, but they were coaches who did that as their job professionally and had UEFA A and UEFA B level qualifications. This meant there was a lot more classroom teaching and analysed footage etc. (something that I had never done before) so I found that my understanding of the game's tactics improved a lot. There were also many sports psychology sessions too, and this helped improve my confidence on the pitch as well, as often it can be hard balancing the pressure and competition of an academy with school and exams.

## Q3. Do you often find yourself facing criticism or prejudice over being a female footballer?

A3: When I was younger, more so - I used to get called a boy for playing football and then even in high school P.E, I remember that they used to separate the girls and boys, so that the boys would play football and the girls would do dance in the studio. This really infuriated me, especially because there were three or four girls in the class who were probably better than the majority of the boys, but because of our gender we were split up based on what were perceived as 'male' and 'female' sports by the teachers. I don't think any sports have a specific gender, and I think you should be able to play any sport regardless of who you are. I also remember one instance when I was playing for Stoke academy U15's and both the boys' and girls' team travelled together- we turned up to our home ground and the boys' team had full personalised kit, suitcases, nice changing rooms and they played on the nice grass pitch. And because we were the girls' team, we didn't have any of that- we had maybe one or two shirts, the pitch was bobbly and muddy and we had a tiny, stingy changing room. I just couldn't believe that we both represented Stoke City, but because we were girls, we were essentially just put to the side.

## Q4: Do you think that the women's game is expanding at a dramatic pace?

A4: Yes, I definitely think it is getting better. You see it on the TV, on big channels like Sky, and if you go back and compare that to when first started playing football and you'd probably only get 100 or 200 in the crowd. Now you see hundreds of thousands watching the World Cup and watching the England team doing really well. The top two leagues have especially really taken off and all the players that compete in that league are doing that as their full-time job and are getting paid, back when I started playing all the women who even played for bigger clubs like Arsenal and Chelsea still had a part time job because they weren't getting paid enough to play football. There's still a big contrast to the men's game and we're not there yet, but it's definitely improving.

## Q5: Do you have a superstition or pregame ritual, and what's the strangest one you have seen?

A5: I'm personally not too superstitious although I've recently got into the habit of always putting on my left boot before my right. Now I just do it instinctively because I'm left footed. But if I ever accidentally put on my right boot first, I make sure to take it off so I can put on my left one first. When I was younger, I always used to set myself a little target before the match, whether that was scoring a goal or making an assist from a free kick, for example.

I've seen quite a few funny superstitions, but the strangest one was when I played for a team called the Zips in Ohio. Our mascot was a big kangaroo, and I remember every time we left and entered the changing rooms, we would have to hit the sign on the kangaroo's shirt or else the team wouldn't have good luck!





**Q6: Do you feel that the women’s game receives the attention it deserves, and does this differ at all in America?**

A6: I would say that it still deserves more attention and I do think it needs to be taken a bit more seriously, because I think there’s still quite a few people who don’t think it’s as good as the men’s game or don’t want to give it a try. But I think that it’s just about educating people really and just helping them realise how much it has improved. I feel that it’s kind of a domino effect- women’s football needs money and it needs to take off and be big, but in order to do that, they need to be given that boost in the first place. People argue that male footballers deserve more money because they have more fans and viewers, but that’s because in the first place, men’s football is shown more on TV and played at the bigger stadiums, whereas women’s teams are always the ‘second best’ or like the ‘second team’.

One big difference I’ve noticed between here and America is that here, people really try to distinguish men’s football and women’s football- it’s either described as the men’s game or the women’s game (as though it’s almost a different sport). In America it’s just soccer- it doesn’t matter whether you are male or female – you’re just a soccer player. And at every university there, it’s not as though the male game is the default. That’s really the same with all the sports there, it’s a lot more equal and diverse.

**Q7: You’ve told us you’re a Manchester United supporter, where do you think they’re going to end up this season?**

To be honest, I don’t really know. I’m not too sure how I felt

after Ole (former United manager) got sacked because I did think he was a nice guy. I don’t really know if it’s the managers that we’re having that are the problem, or if it’s the players. I support the club, so I’m obviously going to be biased but I’m hoping for top 4 – we might get 4th. That may be unrealistic with the season we’ve had so far, but you never know – the Premier League can be surprising!

**Q8: What was the most important lesson you learned during your playing time in the US?**

A8: I’d probably say that it was during my last semester. I had tested positive for Covid, a few hours prior to my senior night (last match before you graduate in a few weeks, usually family would come and give you flowers on the pitch but obviously that couldn’t happen because of the pandemic) and so I missed it and ended up sitting at home watching it on my laptop. In that moment I think I just realised how much I love football and what it meant to me. I realised that I didn’t know what I would do if it was taken away from me permanently. Usually, I’m always worried about getting injuries, and learn my lesson when I do something minor like spraining my ankle. I realise how lucky I am that it’s short term - maybe a few weeks- because I can’t imagine how some players feel being out for a year. So, I really just learned not to take football for granted and how important it is to get the most out of every match.

M Inegbu





# ISOC UTC CAMPAIGN

Before the pandemic the AGSB Islamic Society enjoyed huge success running its annual Asian food sale. In 2019 the Yemen Crisis was our target where we raised money for winter packets, clean water and lifesaving vaccine packets. To our surprise, the sale smashed the previous year's target and £4,500 was raised for those in need in Yemen. In February 2020, we joined forces with the Human Relief Foundation to help Syrian refugees. The Zaatari refugee camp provided mental health support to those affected by the horrifying tragedies of war. Our total for that Food Sale was a staggering £5,300. Two weeks after the 2020 Asian Food Sale, the country fell into lockdown and halted our efforts in running another Campaign in 2021.

This year, we have been fortunate enough to escape the effects of the pandemic and our goal was to raise money for the Pakistan Water Crisis. Our intention was to support and raise money to build water wells, fund open heart surgery for people in Pakistan and end open defecation by providing sanitary packets to those in need. These changes will benefit people for decades to come.

The lead up to the Asian Food Sale was an arduous but enjoyable process. Posters put up around the school by members of the Islamic Society attracted attention from pupils and staff. The assemblies held for the whole school informed pupils about the initiative for this year and where the money would go. Furthermore, there were efforts from both parents and pupils in providing food which was highly appreciated and the Food Sale would not have been possible without their contribution. Additionally, this year we made two major changes to the Sale. The introduction of card readers made the food sale run more smoothly and made counting the final total a much faster process. Also, we were proud to announce our new Meal Deals System which was extremely popular amongst students.

On the 7<sup>th</sup>- 9<sup>th</sup> March the 2022 Asian Food Sale took place. It was a huge success with hundreds of students gathering to buy food. The Coleman Hall was bustling with pupils, the volunteers rushed between stalls and everyone was full of excitement. The return of the Food Sale after two years was a memorable moment.

Finally, there was an own clothes day on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> March, where students were encouraged to wear traditional clothes as a celebration of the efforts in the UTC campaign. This event raised further funds, with a total of £1,400 donated.

Co-operating with the Salam Charity this year has meant that we will be able to fund the construction of multiple deep-water wells, mechanised solar powered water wells and enable doctors to carry out open cardiac surgery for many Pakistanis. The money raised will have life-long impacts on thousands of people.

The final total of the sale was a staggering £7,001.20! This figure is a testament to the hard work of all those involved from the people who contributed to the event, everyone should be proud. The fundraising week was truly inspirational, and the unity achieved through this has been tremendous.

A Abdelaal





# MEDSOC VS CANCER

'Altrincham Versus Cancer' is an extremely important annual event which has been held for almost a decade. This year, AGSB's Medicine and Dentistry Society led the week in which the school raised awareness about cancer as well as funds to combat it.

Cancer can affect any part of your body and is not selective in who it affects. Young or old, male, or female, single or partnered, cancer does not care. Unfortunately, approximately 10 million people passed away due to cancer in 2020, according to WHO (World Health Organisation). Numbers like this are ones we have almost become immune to, but the scale of cancer is unimaginably huge.

Treatment of cancer can cost a lot, meaning your donations are even more necessary, but it has progressed massively over the past 20 years. Scientists describe the past two decades as the most significant yet in cancer treatment: new ways of treating cancer are constantly being developed – with more funding these methods can be used to treat and save more lives.

Funding to tackle cancer is also needed for other areas. The UK currently has no screening programme for prostate cancer, despite it being so prevalent. This is an initiative Tony Collier MBE has been pushing for: having stage IV prostate cancer himself, Tony knows the impact that a prostate cancer screening programme can have in the UK.

At this point in time, drugs exist to save so many lives. However, the funding is not present to distribute them: The drugs are locked away and donations from you and I provide the key to opening them up.

Tony Collier MBE gave an inspirational talk during a sixth form assembly as well as during a session of the Medicine and Dentistry Society: He explained how the drugs that are keeping him alive were funded by the charity. Hundreds of others exist, like Tony, never knowing if the drugs they rely on will stop working. This makes it even more essential that we, as the next generation, fight cancer not only for Tony's generation but ours too.

A donation to the fight against cancer is not simply a donation: it's an investment into your future and this entire generation's future.

H Jafar and I spoke to Altrincham HQ regarding the campaign we led:

"Some of the most striking statistics are related to cancer. One in two of us will be affected in some way or another, whether it is a friend or family member or even ourselves; cancer is a journey a lot of us will be a part of. So when we wanted to have an initiative for our campaign, it was about fundraising for a greater cause, one which requires effort from all of us in the hope that one day we will find

a way of reducing or overcoming what is one of the most common causes of death worldwide. But what motivated us the most was that funds have already shown that we can make progress, from better and easier access to screening to the development of life-saving drugs to combat cancer-millions of lives have been saved. Cancer research has fuelled this progress, with even more promising breakthrough on the horizon, but this can only happen with a steady stream of funding through fundraising from campaigns like Altrincham VS Cancer and the participation of all of us in such campaigns".  
H Jafar

"Altrincham VS Cancer has always been an important event. Now that I was finally a part of the sixth form, I was excited to help and lead the event. We are all aware of the numerous passings each year, due to cancer. However, before research and talks from Tony Collier, I wasn't aware of how drugs existed in the UK that could treat cancer, immediately. The development of drugs often isn't the problem – it's the distribution. Donations and money raised can help people immediately get the drugs they need to survive. We often allude to the idea that cancer requires huge funding to treat or cure – although this is sometimes true, even saving one person can bring so much benefit: someone's father, mother, sister, brother or friend can be so significant. The event was a huge success and I'm very thankful to everyone who helped organise and run it, as well as all the students, teachers and parents who donated throughout the week. The money we raised will be used to save lives now and in the future."

T Arshad

As well as daily assemblies, H Jafar, S Breingan and Y Ahmad and I hosted an array of fundraising events including sweet sales from the yard and an own clothes day.

We are very proud to reveal that the total we managed to raise during this week was £2586.03 which is fantastic and will benefit so many people.

I would like to thank all the staff and students for their continued support and donations throughout the campaign, all members of AGSB Medicine and Dentistry Society for assistance in running it and Mr Gallamore without whom this would not have been possible.

T Arshad





# TWO YEARS ON FROM AGSB

**Have you ever wondered, what is it like after AGSB? What is it like to be a part of the Publications Committee? Will I benefit from this opportunity down the line?**

I recently had the pleasure to have a zoom call with Sifat Symum, who left AGSB two years ago. Sifat is now studying Medicine at Cambridge.

**A.S (Me): Are there any skills that you have been able to practise from the Publications Committee?**

**S.S (Sifat):** I found that I was in an environment where I got to collaborate with people from across all years as well as take on a leadership role of training and mentoring new members. I learnt to balance my school work with my Publications responsibilities and adapt.

I found out James Legg was an Assistant Editor when Sifat was in the Committee! James is still an Assistant Editor and he's responsible for collating this edition of the magazine. Anyway, back to the interview.

**A.S: For how long we're you a member of the Publications Committee?**

**S.S:** I joined because I was taking Design and Technology for GCSE and Mr Williams approached me telling me that I should join the committee. I was a member for three or four years.

**A.S: Did you face any challenges generally when you were at AGSB?**

**S.S:** I mainly felt the most pressure just before my A Level mock exams. I wanted to go on to do Medicine and had two exams: The BMAT and the UCAT. I also had my Cambridge Interview one day and my UCL interview the next. My interviews were just a week after my mocks.

Sifat chose Cambridge university and I wanted to know why. I am sure we all know how highly accredited and prestigious Cambridge is but I wanted to know what the deciding factor for Sifat.

**A.S: Why Cambridge over UCL?**

**S.S:** It has always been a dream of mine from younger age to go to Cambridge. So when I got accepted, it was like a dream come true. I also really liked the fact that it was a six year course with the first two years being purely scientific based, a year to be able to do something else and then three years clinical. Cambridge has great research opportunities.

**A.S: You're now in your second year of the course, what are you thinking of doing next year?**

**S.S:** I want to take a year out to study neurology, as that is the field I want to go into once I finish my degree.

**A.S: Do you have any advice for anyone reading this article?**

**S.S:** If I had some advice to give it would be work consistently for high aspirations. Don't pile things up, rather work little and often. Working hard is important and everyone has potential but I feel that not everyone reaches their potential because they pile things on and leave things too late.

That's the end and great advice from Sifat.

I hope that you enjoyed reading and found something valuable. If you did, I'm working behind the scenes on securing another interview in this style. It will be the same questions to another student that's now left AGSB so make sure to look out for that in the September edition.

A Sadiq





# CRYPTO ASSETS

"I think bitcoin is on the verge of getting broad acceptance by conventional finance people." - Elon Musk

We have all surely heard of crypto-assets but how much do we really know? Why is Elon Musk saying, "I could either watch it happen or be a part of it."?

A cryptocurrency is any form of currency that exists digitally or virtually and uses cryptography to secure transactions. Crypto is de-centralised which means that there isn't a central issuing or regulating authority. This means that if there is any issue like fraud, there is no helpline you can ring for help or anyone who can help you. Popular cryptocurrencies include Bitcoin (BTC), Ethereum (ETH) and Cardano (ADA).

Crypto is often described as being extremely volatile because of the rapid and dramatic value changes. As an example, the market rate for 1 Bitcoin as of this second is 33,235.72GBP and I am almost certain that this will not be the price when you read this.

## But why does the price change so rapidly?

There are a variety of factors such as supply and demand. When there is more demand, the price of crypto increases and when there is less demand the price decreases. This is a general trend and crypto is quite unpredictable. Current affairs and what is happening in the financial markets can take a toll on the value of cryptocurrencies. Competition between coins can drive down the price. Value can be affected by developments in regulation such as on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022, President Biden signed an Executive Order on Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets.

There are costs for trading cryptocurrencies. In my research, based on Coinbase and Revolut prices, each transaction takes around a 3% cut. This means taking this figure that if you were to buy £1000 of a cryptocurrency, you must buy £1030.93 worth as £30.93 will be taken in fees and you will be left with £1000 worth of your cryptocurrency. If the value of your investment increases to £1100, after fees you would be left with £1067.

So what does this example mean? Fees for the purchase and selling of crypto is quite high and you need to take the fees into account when dealing with cryptocurrencies.

## Crypto also links into NFT's. What even is an NFT?

An NFT stands for a Non-Fungible token. This means that it is unique and cannot be replaced. NFT's are digital assets such as digital works of art. It is great for digital artists because it protects their work. Otherwise, once they upload their work onto the internet, anyone can download and save the image and you cannot distinguish between the download or the original. NFT's use blockchain technology. A blockchain means that it is a distributed public ledger that

records transactions. NFT's are great for investors. A famous speaker, author and media personality known as 'Gary Vee' says NFT's are the future. According to him, 'Our tickets went from paper tickets, are now QR Codes and will be NFT's.'

## How to I trade NFT's?

The most popular marketplace is called Opensea. This is where you can sell or purchase NFT's. Purchases are through bidding using Ethereum.

## What is the most amount of money an NFT has sold for?

After some research, the answer varies from different sources. However, dexerto.com claims an NFT by the creator 'Pack' called 'The Merge' sold on 2nd December 2021 for \$91,800,000 with almost 30,000 investors chipping in.

I am sure that I missed out some information but crypto is a very deep subject and creates endless questions.

## Disclaimer:

**You must ensure that before you invest in any Crypto or NFT you do extensive research. You must be 18 years old to hold a crypto asset in your name. This content is for information purposes only and does not constitute financial advice.**

A Sadiq

Source Credits:

The Verge

Forbes.com

Wikipedia

Dexerto.com

Kaspersky.com





# MANCHESTER'S PAST

In February eighteen of our school's Year 9 students participated in what was a unique and informative experience, exploring Manchester's statues and monuments. The students, led by Mr Croxton and Mr Sampson studied memorials that celebrated and reflected upon figures and events that helped mould Manchester into what it is today. Some memorials studied had associations with Manchester in a more direct way. In addition to these we looked at others that may not have necessarily had a personal link to the city, but helped to change the lives of the people there.

After arriving at Manchester's Piccadilly station, we stopped just outside, to view a statue dedicated to the blind veterans of the First World War - known as 'Victory Over Blindness'. The statue was erected just before the hundredth anniversary of the ending of the First World War. It depicts seven soldiers with their eyes wrapped, placing their hands on those in front of them to guide them. The principal reason for the statue's location in Manchester, is that Piccadilly station was where large numbers of injured veterans arrived back from fighting in the conflict. Servicemen would have been taken back to Manchester to recover in what was one of England's largest military hospitals situated just a few hundred yards beyond the station. The statue was funded by Blind Veterans UK - a charity established during WW1 that has the aim of supporting those who've suffered damage to their vision during conflict, and it is still operating today. The purpose of the statue is to raise publicity around the charity so more blind people who've suffered visual injuries in conflict can seek support from them.

Afterwards, we proceeded towards Piccadilly Gardens, where we observed four statues all in close vicinity. These were: The Duke of Wellington- military leader and Prime Minister; James Watt – industrial figure famous for the development of the Boulton and Watt engine and its aid in advancing British industry; Robert Peel - Conservative Prime Minister (born in not too distant Bury) who established the modern metropolitan police service; but the main reason for our visit to the gardens was the dominant statue of Queen Victoria.

The Victoria statue, commissioned on the (now second-longest reigning) monarch of England's diamond jubilee - 1897, was completed in November 1901, ten months after her death.

A short walk led us to the foot of Manchester cathedral, where two memorials were located, the first being one of Mahatma Gandhi. It is a relatively new statue, erected only in 2019 (150 years from 1869 - the year of his birth). Gandhi did visit Manchester in 1931, expressing dissatisfaction in the inequity of the cotton trade in addition to sympathy towards the workers of the mills of 'Cottonopolis'. Gandhi's key teachings were felt to align with the values of Manchester, being the modern multicultural community it is today.

'Glade of Light' was the second. It is a recently constructed memorial that pays tribute to the victims of the Manchester Arena bombing of 2017, it inspires remembrance and gives an opportunity to reflect. It is a beautiful memorial designed with the help of the friends and families of those who lost their lives during the bombing. It features many flowers and trees such as the Hawthorne tree, which blossoms in May.

St Ann's Square's 'The Last Shot' memorial, dedicated to the Manchester Regiment's soldiers who fought in the Anglo-Boer War captivated us with its vivid portrayal of two soldiers: one armed and prepared to fight, almost protecting the other – who's wounded and vulnerable at his feet. Four bronze plaques cover each side of the memorial, three of which state the names of the men who served in the war, amounting to 317 in total.

The sheer height of the Abraham Lincoln statue in Lincoln's Square, creates an imposing atmosphere, that, for many perhaps alludes to his admirable nature.





His unions' tactic of placing an embargo on trade with the South, directly meant the supply of cotton to British cities such as Manchester were significantly cut (various sources mentioning around 60% of Manchester's cotton mills fell silent during the American Civil War). This ultimately meant the profits of factory mills in the city were reduced greatly and many Manchester residents lost their jobs. Many Mancunians felt that this embargo was affecting their livelihoods, and so, favoured the confederacy. Despite the economic damage the embargo was causing, the mayor of Manchester at the time, Abel Heywood, opposed these feeling by speaking of the moral importance in supporting the Union and Lincoln himself. Information of this speech can be found on the plaque, along with the letter of thanks addressed to the supporters of the union in Manchester that Lincoln personally replied with. The statue is accentuated by the names and quotes of famous figures on the ground below it.

'Deeds not Words' is the quote that encapsulates how Emmeline Pankhurst's approach to suffrage helped win the vote for women in Britain. It is this same quote that can be found just behind the statue of Pankhurst opposite the Central Library on Dickinson's Street. Born in Moss Side, Pankhurst is a colossal part of Manchester's history, being the founder of the British Women's Social and Political Union in 1903, relatively close to the location of the statue itself, on Nelson's Street. Her persistence and dedication to the movement has inspired many.

Historians believe the site of the Peterloo Massacre is next to the modern-day Manchester Central, hence the unveiling of the Peterloo Memorial there on 14<sup>th</sup> August 2019 and it being our next visit. This date was approximately two hundred years since the massacre, in which people (amounting to 60,000 in total) from towns all over the North West (many appearing on the memorial) gathered, demanding suffrage, justice, freedom and reforms in parliament. However, the date was made infamous, due to cavalry charging at the unarmed, peaceful protesters, including children. The memorial commemorates those wounded and killed during the massacre, but also reminisces upon massacres of peaceful protestors from across the globe.

The penultimate statue of our trip was that of Friedrich Engels. The statue lay in Eastern Ukraine until 2015 before its arrival at its current, permanent position outside Manchester's Home Arts Centre in 2017. Engels spent a significant amount of time in Manchester in the 19th century, studying and writing books on the living conditions of the poor. In this time, he gained insight into the hardships faced by the industrial working class in the North West of England, and his input into Marxist thought is often deemed to be as a direct result of these studies.

The Alan Turing statue in Sackville Gardens was our final memorial of the day. Turing is portrayed as being in a contemplative state, an accurate detail due to his renowned brilliance in fields such as maths and cryptography. Most famous for the key role he played in deciphering the Enigma at Bletchley Park, Turing lived in Manchester for several years in the late 1940's whilst working at the University.

It was in his time at the university that he worked on the development of the computer. The apple that Turing holds in the statue, for some, may be a reminder of the tragic circumstances within which he died, whereas for others it may be a symbol of human knowledge. However, it cannot be doubted that Turing was one of history's most important figures in computer science.

Many thanks to both Mr Croxton and Mr Sampson for organising and leading the trip. As a direct result, we were able to gather a more complete picture of the city and understand to a greater extent its importance on a global scale. Whether you choose to analyse Manchester's past of politics, science, revolution, innovation, people or their resilience – you will find something exceptional about the city.

M Inegbu





# YOUTH VACCINATION

The end of 2021 saw the increased threat of COVID-19 due to the increased spread of Omicron. The silent reaper took 1,575 of our loved ones in the period between Christmas Eve 2021 and the beginning of January 2022. This came shortly after Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced that 12–15-year-olds were now eligible for the second dose of the vaccine. This started with not only the growing threat of Omicron in late December, but with the end of the term for many across the nation, and the hanging threat of further disruption in education.

The vaccine rollout in the UK has been a relative success; The UK boasts 139 million doses given to around 73% of the population, a monumental milestone in the race to herd immunity. The younger population has been proven to be less affected by the symptoms of Covid-19, but the UK has left no stone unturned, with 1,850,287 children aged 12-17 having received their first dose as of early January, that number rising steadily into February and continuing to increase throughout the following months. The consensus is that the vaccination rollout will ensure that there is limited interruption to a child's education and will ensure that children will stay in school for as long as possible. However, not all parents and carers are as receptive to this.

Data from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) shows the percentage of vaccinations for 12–15-year-olds in state-funded education by ethnic group and the rend shows that pupils from the Gypsy/Roma and Black Caribbean ethnic groups were least likely to have been vaccinated, with only 12% of their youth population vaccinated. However, on the other end of the spectrum, Chinese, Indian and White British 12–15-year-olds were the most vaccinated with 76%, 66% and 59% of children with first doses, respectively. Although race and ethnicity played a huge part in the effectiveness of the vaccination rollout, parents and carers also had their concerns about the vaccines. A survey conducted by the ONS with 582 parents of 5–11-year-olds showed that the majority showed concerns about the side effects (54%) and wanting to wait to see how it works (49%). The vaccine rollout may have been a tremendous success for over 18's but the reservations over vaccines in younger demographics still look like a cloud over the supposed "party of success" that is the UK vaccination programme.

we have taken steps in the right direction to ensure that all students who would like to have one have now received two doses of the vaccine, a testament to both the administrative staff and the healthcare staff supporting education and getting us into a recognisable form of normal. Within the student body, the response is similar; following a BBC interview with Altrincham Grammar School for Boys students, the majority were unopposed to getting the vaccine, if it ensured the safety of others and protected those more vulnerable than them. Vaccine safety was not established as a major concern.

Within the AGSB community and beyond, it is encouraging to see an acceptance of the vaccine initiative and hopefully - in the not-too-distant future - we will begin to view COVID-19 as an endemic and in the unlikely event that it strikes one of us, we will be ready.

T Ariyo





On Thursday 27th January, twelve Year 9 History students visited the Holocaust Memorial Event at the Robert Bolt Theatre in Sale Waterside. The theme of this year's memorial was One Day. It was to remind us that all it takes is one day to change your life for the worse. Many people and schools presented what they are doing to remember the Holocaust.

Belinda Hochland, a former AGSB Art teacher, gave us a speech about her father who became an orphan and was one of the Windermere Children, which detailed the reality of post WW2 Jewish orphans in Europe.

Other presentations included that of Lostock Community College, where a Syrian refugee talked about his harrowing escape from Syria and his experiences of racism in our country.

Another presentation was by Chazan Michael Isdale who recited a Hebrew prayer for the souls of the departed. It was beautifully read and touched the hearts of many in the theatre. It is important to remember that genocide is not something of the past but something that is happening in the present in Ukraine. We should also remember Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur. Remember the Holocaust.

A Shaikh



## HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL EVENT



In December, students from all year groups were invited to an Alumni careers talk from one of our former students, held in the new library. The talk was about opportunities for a career in Information Technology and was given by Matthew Scullion, an ex-student of AGSB. Matthew talked about his experiences in working in technology and how he founded Matillion, his software company.

His business started ten years ago when he and Ed Thompson, another ex-AGSB student, decided to start a company and since then, it has grown and is now valued at \$1.5 billion! Matillion sells software to other companies, and their aim was to make data useful. Matillion also manufactures software and sells it as subscriptions.

He emphasised how useful a degree in computer science can be to those interested in pursuing a technology-based job in the future and how AGSB gave him a set of values and improved social skills to progress in later life.

The students who attended were incredibly grateful for Matthew and his insightful view on a career in technology.

A Buncall



## ALUMNI CAREERS TALK: MATILLION





Many people own a Rubik's Cube, however many do not know how to solve it! One of the best-selling toys of all time, The Rubik's Cube is not only challenging and fun, but it is good for you in many ways.

The Cubing Club takes place in C5 every Tuesday lunchtime. It gives everyone who attends the opportunity to do something fun and addictive. They feel a sense of satisfaction when they beat a personal record. Not only is it a fun hobby but cubing also sharpens the brain and increases memory. I started 'Cubing Club' with my friends Aaron and Kaushik because it meant a lot to me. I seized the opportunity that I had to start the club and the school was kind enough to purchase some puzzles for the members of the club and the club is growing weekly.

At Cubing Club, we have a variety of cubing puzzles: 3x3 Cubes, Pyraminxes, Megaminxes and 2x2 Cubes. We are expanding our repertoire every week and are inviting new members.

In the future, we would like to attend official competitions and for members of the club to compete together and improve. We aim to create a cubing team for the school and compete in national competitions. We are looking to purchase more cubes for the club so that everyone can take part and receive advice from the more experienced members.

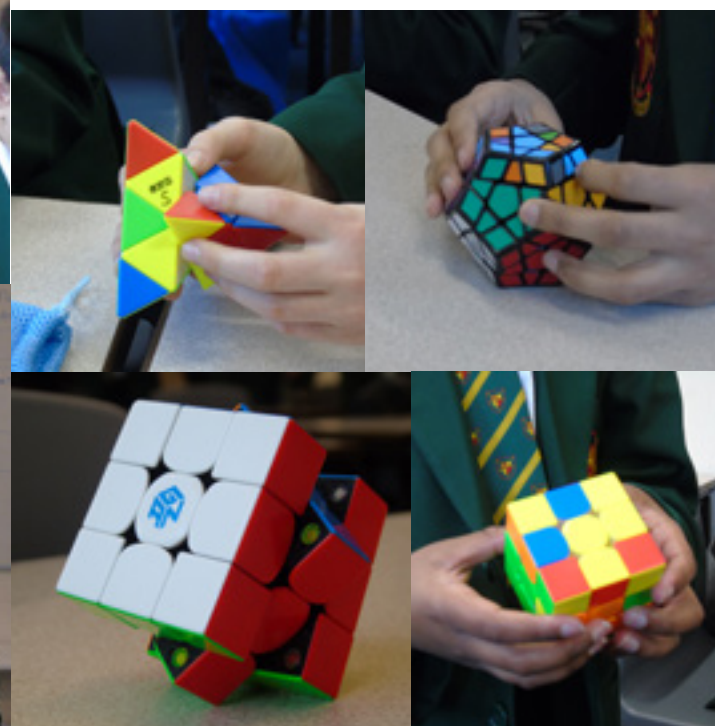


## RUBIK'S CUBING CLUB



If you believe you are a cubing connoisseur, or simply a beginner who wants to improve their cubing skills, please go to C5 every Tuesday from 12:20 to 13:00.

S Parupadi and V Saini



In January, the Medicine and Dentistry Society alongside the Philosophy Society hosted a collaborative event on vaccine mandates. Vaccines have recently become a topic of huge discussion, with over 10.5 billion doses of the COVID jab having been administered since the pandemic began making this topic of even greater significance. The event occurred in the new library.

Taking a vaccine can be a difficult experience, and while they should be encouraged, we do not believe they should be mandated as they once were for health workers in the UK. During the event, H Jafar and I from the Medicine and Dentistry Society presented the low risk of blood clots and other circulatory issues due to vaccines, the risk of myocarditis and the importance of herd immunity in moving forward from the pandemic. Using studies conducted in Israel and America, we explained how statistically, the health issues related to a vaccine were often more likely to occur if you weren't vaccinated, as opposed to them occurring as a side effect of vaccination. Furthermore, we explained the rigorous testing vaccines went through before being distributed – any that didn't meet the very high standards were quickly declared unfit for use by regulatory bodies and never reached the public.

The second half of the presentation was led by T Coates and A Saeid from AGSB's Philosophy Society. He discussed the ethics and philosophical views on mandating vaccines: the



## VACCINE MANDATES



harm principle and how our liberty may be encroached upon depending on the impact on wider society; utilitarianism and the potential for vaccine mandates to lead to greater vaccine hesitancy; social contract theory and the extent to which our lives can be regulated and various other ethical theories and dilemmas associated with them.

Thank you to all the speakers for hosting a very intriguing and interesting discussion as well as Mr Sampson who coordinated and arranged the event.

T Arshad





After what seemed like a very long month of endless rehearsals, the long-awaited Session Orchestra Concert finally took place. This was performed by the recently assembled Session Orchestra along with the support of the Odyssey and Ignition singing groups.

It was, in Mr. Monument's own words, a Queen-fest, with many superb renditions of Queen songs being played by the Session Orchestra, such as 'The Show Must Go On' and 'Bohemian Rhapsody'. All songs were great, and the concert had an outstanding reaction from everyone who attended.

Everyone, from the Year 7's in the Ignition singing group, like me, to the Sixth Formers in the Session Orchestra performed enthusiastically and everyone looked like they were having the best time of their lives and were enjoying themselves, the key to the best song.

Overall, with the addition with the PFA refreshment stand at the interval, it was a roaring success. There was very large turnout with people raving about the performance. Thank you to Mr. Monument, Mr. Smith, and the Music Department for arranging the concert and making sure that it was a huge success for the school and making sure everyone, including me, had a good time!

A Kugan



## A PROPER QUEEN-FEST



In March, all the bands and choirs of AGSB played thirteen songs to a capacity crowd showcasing the great talents, music, and voices of AGSB students, under the leadership of Mr Monument, Mr Smith, and Mrs Jarratt.

Many songs were performed, such as 'Burritos to Go' and 'Alexander Hamilton' and the audience enjoyed every song. The bands and choirs were mainly led by the music teachers, however there was also the student-led Jazz Band and the also student-led Staff Choir. All students and members of staff performed amazingly and were the reason the concert's remarkable success. Every band and choir received a standing ovation from the near sell-out audience at the end of the evening.

We are thankful to the Music Department and all the bands and choirs that participated in this concert as well to Mr Harrison and the students in charge of the lighting, and making it was a superb success. We will all be waiting for the Spring Concert next year!

A Kugan



## SPRING CONCERT





For World Book Day this year the library ran a series of events. Prior to the day we showed our love for reading.

Every pupil in school received a World Book Day voucher. In the library we held a WBD quiz with excellent questions prepared on Kahoot by the student librarians. It was a close contest and the staff team narrowly lost out on the first place spot on the podium. The winning team from Year 9 were rewarded with special World Book Day books and chocolate.

The event also continued with the return of the Masked Reader competition where five members of staff willingly concealed themselves to see if pupils could guess who they were. Whilst Ms Clark's dog Ted was a popular image as they read 'The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time' together, the image of Mrs Walters proved the real challenge, and no-one guessed she was the Mad Hatter! Along with Mr Williams looking freakishly like his Rob Burrow book. Our million-pound prize is safe this year. Better luck next year!

Year 7 were also treated to a live zoom with historical fiction author Emma Carroll, who shared with the pupils her processes when writing and her influences. Her latest novel, 'The Week at World's End' is based around tensions between the USA and Russia resulting in the Cuban Missile Crisis. Her explanation of the key facts around this event were particularly prescient in the current climate.



## WORLD BOOK DAY 2022



We will be continuing the love for reading this year as Year 7 will be doing their annual Readathon for the charity Read for Good later this term.

C Mahony



Whether we like it or not, one of the effects of the COVID outbreak is the transformation into the digital age. Wherever we look, people are doing what usually was being done in the physical world, through a computer screen. AGSB is no exception, here I explore the different ways school life has transitioned into the virtual world.

The first thing that is extremely important to discuss is the transition of parent's evening. It becomes somewhat bearable for students and teachers alike when there are allotted online time slots for parents and teachers to converse. After five minutes are up, the screen goes blank, no more overrunning chats.

The advent of online lessons also bears the trademarks of this transition. The school is well prepared for any more unforeseen circumstances. Classes can now be easily run through Microsoft Teams and interaction between students and teachers hasn't been easier. Slideshows are much easier to present, and pupils and teachers can work together from the comfort of their homes.

The little shop of horrors, a production by the AGSB music department, was a massive success too. Despite the difficulties surrounding COVID restrictions, they managed to pull off a spectacle of a show with collaboration from students of all years. There was music, drama, action, everything you could have wanted from an impeccable



## TRANSITION TO DIGITAL AT AGSB



show. This too, was streamed online, and was greeted with open arms.

Finally, the house events on offer at school have been exhibited online too. We got to see debating, public speaking competitions as well as some of the more entertaining sports fixtures. The tug-of-war competitions held throughout the winter term are a spectacle and invite a large following from students espousing their respective houses.

AGSB has adapted so well to the times and has demonstrated how far we can go if the school community works together. With the advancements of technology, I can safely say that the transition into the digital world has been a great benefit to students, teachers and members of the AGSB community alike.

M Dave



# YR 7 & 8 HOUSE CHESS COMPETITION

For all the joyful and eagerly expectant students, the Year 7 and 8 house chess competition was a fantastic occasion. This was their opportunity to show off their chess skills and array of openings and strategies. The competition had two members from each house and spanned over each year group. A knockout round between the eight contestants, followed by a semi-final between the last four and a grand finale between the two chess masters would determine the winner.

When the chess tournament date approached, the corridors were electric with anticipation as students persuaded their house captains to allow them to participate in the competition. The matches were scheduled to begin on Tuesday lunchtime, with the final on Thursday.

The Year 7 round got off to a fast start. The House Chess Competition's strength and structure, 15-minute games, this allowed little tolerance for unexciting rounds. In fact, a checkmate had already been delivered on two boards 5 minutes into the opening round! Nicholas V (Stamford), Luca S (Massey), Joshua Y (Tatton), and Cameron S (Stamford) all advanced to the semi-finals in the first round. During the semi-final, some daring tactics and skilful techniques were witnessed. The players' hands trembled as they analysed every move. The finals were determined after a series of close calls and great manoeuvres. Joshua Y and Nicholas V were the chosen ones who would fight it out over a chessboard to determine the Year 7 chess champion once and for all.

The stage had been set. The two contenders sat beside the board on a gloomy Thursday, rain pelted against the glass. Their brows were furrowed in concentration, and thoughts were fixed on the victory. The game began, and what a game it turned out to be! Nicholas had acquired an advantage throughout the opening and middle games, and he pressed it for the whole of the game, coming up with inventive tactics. Joshua, on the other hand, continued to find plenty of defensive tactics and counterplay. Joshua had an edge in the endgame since he possessed one additional pawn. Nicholas' ability to hold his composure while Joshua's passed pawns pranced down the board during the last moves was incredible to see. Finally, Joshua had the upper hand, no matter how hard Nicholas attempted to manipulate the situation. His win was sealed when his pawn was promoted, and he was crowned Year 7 Chess Champion. What a fantastic victory for Tatton!

The next week brought the start of the Year 8 House Chess Competition. After the success of Year 7 House Competition, the other houses were raring to prove themselves worthy of claiming the coveted title. The setup of the games and round were the same as the Year 7 games with the Year 8 competitors battling to the final and then one worthy chess connoisseur would prove victorious.

The first round saw many participants eliminated, either by tactics or blunders. Valentine F (Stamford), Nate L-V (Bradbury), Rey B (Massey) and Vishakh S (Bradbury)

advanced to the semi-finals. During the semi-finals, Nate, the runner up of the past Year 7 Chess Championship, defeated Rey with ease, finishing their game in a matter of minutes. Vishakh and Valentine's game was a much more tense affair. Vishakh was the favourite for this match as he was the last year's Year 7 Chess Champion. The two rivals had played many matches in the past with varied results. The game consisted of many brilliant tactics and moves; however, Vishakh tragically blundered his rook during the middle game. Regardless of the devastating loss, Vishakh managed to keep the game close and took it to the endgame, with only 2 minutes left on each player's clock. But finally, Valentine had the upper edge and closed a well deserved victory after winning the endgame.

The final was between Nate (Bradbury) and Valentine (Stamford). The game was extremely tight as both players competed on an equal footing throughout the match. The opening and middle game consisted of brilliant pawn play and spectacular strategies. Surprisingly, during the match there was a power cut in the science lab which rendered the board unviewable. However, this did not interrupt the play as the game resumed after the lights were restored. Nearing the end of the match, Nate blundered by taking Valentine's bishop with his queen, not realising it was protected by his queen. A few moves later, Nate decided not to prolong the inevitable and resigned as Valentine was about to promote his pawns. This was a spectacular finish to the Year 8 House Chess Championship!

Many thanks to Dr Sully for opening the doors of her classroom and supervising the wonderful games.

V Saini





In this edition the spotlight has fallen on Darren Birtwell. Darren once threw an entire glass of red wine over me at a Christmas Party ruining one of my favourite pink shirts. I don't actually think that it was a Will Smith, Chris Rock moment but I have harboured a resentment about this for twelve years so now have a chance to get my own back.

Lockdown was tough for us all, but seeing Darren move from Mr Auburn to Mr Silver shows that life was either very stressful, or there was an extreme shortage of 'Just for Men' as well as toilet rolls throughout that period.

As teachers of Technology and PE, our paths do not cross often except for school events like above and the (in)famous "Jolly Boys Outings"; I am not a veteran of these events but have been on a few. What some of you don't know is that Darren has a profound knowledge of curries and the exacting ingredients that should be in them. He also gets upset if the curry does not meet his own high standards. He also has a somewhat strange knowledge of Dog Poo and can draw up conversations about these two 'interests' whilst on nights out with the staff. Mr Cummings came up with a rather unique nickname as a result of one particular evening. Ask him what it is when you see him next!

Apart from his love of AGSB and pupil learning he is a huge Blackburn Rovers fan and for two whole years Blackburn were the football crème de la crème. Led by Liverpool Legend Kenny Dalglish, they followed up their 2nd place in the table with the Premier League title in 1994. Making the young 27-year-old Darren the "Happiest man in the world".

Outside of AGSB he and his partner have two young daughters and when they were born, he stated that he was the "Happiest man in the world", but on reflection not as happy as watching Tim Sherwood lift the Premier League trophy at Anfield.

Let's find out more about the man we call Birty!

A Williams

What was the favourite lesson that you have ever taught and why?

I love teaching A Level, but I also used to teach a bit of history and miss the yearly Battle of Hastings re-enactment.

Are there any sports that you don't like? Are there any sports that you feel are not 'real sports'?

I will genuinely watch any sport. I've even been known to settle down to some crown green bowls. Golf has its place, but I've never understood where people get the time from to get good at it. If pushed, I would say that that Formula 1 isn't a real sport. Posh folk driving round in expensive cars. Who has got the best car this year? Who cares?

Who's the most athletically gifted student you have taught in your years of teaching at school?

You might squeeze into the top 20 Leggy! I'd probably say it was a spotty, socially awkward young man named Ryan Cammack. He was playing at Blackburn's Academy whilst at school and pretty much living my dream.

Would you be able to tell us about the white (well mossy) VW Golf you used to drive to school in?

I've had some beltlers over the years. The Golf, with a hole in the floor and various rare types of moss and fauna on. The salmon pink Astra was my favourite though. Genuinely the most reliable heap of scrap you could ever find. My partner told me that if I was coming to pick up my new-born child in it, then I needn't bother. I got £80 scrap for it.

Have you ever lost to a student in PE whilst trying your hardest?

No. Anyone who has beaten me, I've let them win to boost their confidence and street cred.

Are you the longest serving member of the PE department and what is your most embarrassing moment when going on a PE trip?

I've been at the school for 22 years. I can't say I've ever done anything genuinely embarrassing on a trip, at least none I can remember. I did get beaten by Mr Rawson (Chemistry) once at ten pin bowling, after years of being undefeated. It was like a scene from 'The Big Lebowski'. He had his own glove and kept singing 'The Proclaimers' every time he got a strike.

What is your favourite sport?

To watch, cricket, I love nothing more than a day at the Test. To play, probably still football, although my frustration with just how hopeless and unfit I've become over the years is hard to take.







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