TO BEE OR NOT TO BEE?

Robert Lander goes behind the scenes at the Times Spelling Bee

Can you spell words like tyrannosaurus or guillotine? If you think you can, you may make it into the Times Spelling Bee team! This year the team was composed of Luke Shortland (7G), and Vishal Shah, Alec Walker and me (all 7B). Miss Haire was our team coach. We all got into the team after a really competitive process; this included spelling words out on paper, followed by words spelt out loud. The words varied from jettison to conscientious. I felt that it was more difficult to spell out loud than on paper, which was annoying as the whole point of the spelling bee was to spell out loud! It was hard to get used to, yet practice with Miss Haire every Friday helped us improve our oral spelling skills, which made us confident of success in the local heats. Every Friday lunchtime we practised spelling words of increasing difficulty out loud. “Ecclesiastical” was a team favourite!

Finally the day of the local heat dawned. We set off for the Vue Cinema at the O2 in Greenwich to meet our rivals from the London area. For those readers who are unfamiliar with the format of the Spelling Bee, there are two rounds. The first round is a spelling play off, where you spell words in turn from player A to C in each group, and each player is eliminated whenever they incorrectly spell a word. Congratulations to Alec Walker (7B) in the local heats who was the last man standing out of the 30 players playing - well done Alec! He spelt “reservoir” correctly and won the Collins Medal for this impressive achievement. You can see a picture of Alec with his medal above.

The spelling play-off was the most nerve-wracking round as you began to get very unsure on words later on, (about round 6) like “malevolent” or “rendezvous.” The second round is a quick fire round, in which you spell as many Easy, Medium or Hard words (depending on team choice) as you can. We scored the highest score of 40 in this round on medium words: that’s 20 correct words in two minutes! Thanks to that high score, and Alec for his 14 points in round 1, obviously along with the other points from the first round. We won with a score of 74, and were very confident about winning the semi finals. We were also lucky enough to travel back to London Bridge on the Thames Clipper (thanks to Alec’s mum) and you can see a picture of us on the boat below.

The tricky words we had to spell were a lot tougher than in our local heats. I won’t mention names, but we incorrectly spelt “xenophobia”, “onerous” and “lassitude”. Vishal got to the sixth round, I got through to the fifth round and Alec got through to the fourth round. It was a disappointment yet it wasn’t too big a deal. A groan went up from the team when the spelling play-off was won on the word “diphthong” - a tricky word which we had actually practised on the escalator on the way up to the Bee! Overall the spelling bee experience was great fun for all of us, and I hope that Miss Haire found it exciting yet fun as well. I hope that the new Year 7’s will try out for this educational, yet enjoyable experience. I would like to thank Miss Haire for the chance to take part in such a fun activity, and I am sure that, along with myself, Luke, Vishal and Alec would like to thank her too.
FROM THE HEAD

Mr Charnock pays tribute to the longest-serving teacher at Wilson’s

Mr Keith Potter will retire from Wilson’s School at the end of the summer term this year. His leaving marks an historic moment for the school since is the last member of staff to have worked at the “old school” in Camberwell, albeit only for one term.

It is very unusual these days for a person to work in just one institution throughout his career and we are enormously privileged and fortunate that Keith has chosen to spend the thirty seven years of his teaching career in the service of Wilson’s School. For twenty five of those years, Keith has led the English department, guiding, nurturing and supporting students and colleagues in one of the school’s most important activities.

Keith joined Wilson’s, fresh from University and training college, as a newly qualified teacher of English in September 1974. He is also a qualified PE teacher and throughout 70’s, 80’s and 90’s as he was a very active in Games and was a particularly successful as a football coach for many years.

Over the years, Keith has fulfilled a number of different roles at the school: teacher of English; 2nd in charge of English; teacher in charge of the Library; Head of English and General Studies, Curriculum Manager, Senior Teacher. Throughout his career, he has been a form tutor or academic tutor. Most recently, he has been responsible, as Senior Teacher, for guiding and training beginning teachers who are undertaking teaching practice at the school as part of their PGCE courses before gaining qualified teacher status.

Keith has been a wonderful teacher. Hundreds of boys will say and think that he has been one of their best. On hearing of his retirement during his last assembly our sixth form gave him a standing ovation. He has all the hallmarks of the great teacher: an infectious passion for his subject; outstanding subject knowledge; bell-like clarity; impeccable professionalism, a good line in banter and above all, an unwavering commitment to the boys, a profound interest in them and in their welfare, a determination to help them succeed.

Both students and colleagues know him to be a genuinely kind and deeply patient man. His love of literature has taught him a human wisdom that is evident to all who know him. He speaks ill of none – neither student nor colleague – and finds the good in everyone. His calmness, his dry sense of humour, his intelligent, thoughtful conversation in the common room are things that will be hard to replace as will be the wise support and measured guidance so untringly given to colleagues over many years in the English department.

Keith has given all his working life so far to the school. It is impossible to imagine a better example of service and loyalty than that which he has shown. His deep affection for the school is matched by ours for him and for our infinite gratitude for all that he has done. We are delighted for him as he starts this new part of his life, in excellent health, full of interest and enthusiasm for what lies ahead. We wish him every happiness, further success and huge enjoyment for his retirement.

ON THE BRAKES?

Brandon Lundini listens to Tom Brake MP

It’s been a tough year for students, as the Liberal Democrat-Conservative coalition made the decision to raise tuition fees, with the average price tripling from three thousand pounds to around nine thousand pounds across the country.

Students did not respond well. On 10 November 2010, fifty thousand students marched in Westminster to protest against the cuts. However, the protests soon turned violent when the Conservative Campaign HQ at Millbank was vandalised by a group of protesters. Similar protests then followed on 24 November (when the famous “kettling” incident occurred), 30 November and 9 December.

A great deal of these students pointed the finger squarely at the Liberal Democrats. The Lib Dems had, after all, made a pledge not to raise tuition fees, and gained a large portion of students’ trust, many of whom felt alienated by Labour and at odds with the Tories. The move to raise tuition fees felt to some like a stab in the back – which is why, when Tom Brake made a visit to Wilson’s recently, he might have felt as though he had a lot to answer for.

It must not have been an easy job. But then, Brake is, after all, a politician, and as such gave a politician’s talk and a politician’s explanations. The vast majority of his talk was not focused on tuition fees, but instead on matters such as terrorism and the economy.
Whilst his talk was interesting, one couldn’t help but think that the subject matter was perhaps slightly irrelevant to the majority of people in the room. He did address the issue of tuition fees, albeit briefly, claiming that he voted for tuition fees because that was the best and fairest thing to do.

Since the majority of his talk revolved around terrorism and the economy, the majority of the questions were on the same matters. It was, however, fascinating to witness the power of speech firsthand – watching a politician who voted for tuition fees speaking calmly to a room full of indignant students was a true testament to the power of speech.

This is an edited extract from a longer article which first appeared in the Sixth Form Mercury.

A FEAST FOR THE EARS

Luke Shortland goes behind the scenes at the Year Seven Celebration Evening

and Sam Gates reports on Junior Music this year

The Year 7 Celebration Evening, held on 7th July, was a major success, with all of the Year 7 boys showing off what they had done over the year. The evening started off with Mr Lissimore introducing us, but after that the whole evening was run by us – the Year 7’s.

Mr Shaw and Mr Winstone and Miss Tyler directed two groups, who put on a brilliant silent movie. They were excellently put together, with one boy acting as a girl! He (she?) played the part of a damsel in distress perfectly, crying when her puppy was stolen, and jumping for joy when it was found. Emil Lundh (7G) played the part of a clumsy bandit, constantly falling over and acting dizzily. You didn’t need any words as you could see what was going on perfectly and their facial expressions were great.

Some of the boys, who had never even been on stage before, read out lines of their funniest moments from Wilson’s (such as when one boy sucked his pen so hard, it exploded in his mouth,) or memories from their first time (for example when a boy got lost in the Art department and took a while to find his way out. At least he learnt a lot about impressionist art!) Others, who had never read out speeches before read out speeches about what extra-curricular activities they had taken during the year. Their voices were loud, clear and it sounded like they had practised for hours perfecting them.

Robert Lander (7B) said: “The celebration evening went really well. I think the silent movies were choreographed excellently and the speeches were brilliant. You could hear every word – there was no mumbling into scripts right up to their faces. It was good that everybody had a part to play in it so nobody was left out and I will remember that day for years to come.” This was one of the highlights of the year – well done to all who took part. Bravo!

Luke Shortland

Founder’s Day was held on Tuesday 23 September, at the beginning of this year, and it was a great opportunity for all students from year 7 to year 10 and the Sixth Form to come together at Croydon Parish Church. The Choir, the Chamber Orchestra and the Brass Ensemble all played in the church, and the entire school also joined in with the singing.

Near the beginning of the year, the Year 7 Soloists evening was held in the Bowden room. Several students from year 7, including me, had the chance to perform solos in front of other people. There was a wide variety of instruments played, and everybody enjoyed the evening very much.

House Music was a chance for people to compete against the other houses in a unique event where many house points were available to be won. It was a very competitive event, where all the solos in each class were judged carefully, and the winner went through to the final. Everyone played very well and had a great time taking part, and the results of the competition made a very large difference to the house point total.

Senior orchestra meets every Wednesday after school, where we prepare many interesting pieces to be performed at exciting concerts. It is very enjoyable playing with this orchestra, especially in the concerts, where we get the chance to show an audience what we have been working on.

Sam Gates
A HIVE OF ACTIVITY

Vassily Berdnikov rounds up the latest developments in Gardening Club

Are you a budding ecologist looking to find more about the environment? Why not come to gardening club! At gardening club you get to learn how to grow plants, take care of wildlife and even go on gardening trips. And it's all free! It's fun and interactive so why not come along? We accept all years and you don't need to know much about gardening to join.

Our school is fortunate enough to have an orchard so we are going to take full advantage of it. The orchard is coming along well and now has a variety of different trees growing. In the orchard and in the vegetable patch, we have planted crops to grow food for the school. We have also made a compost heap for future garden club members to use for their plants. You can even see the compost heap on Google Earth!

We have also planted a tree in memory of Mr McDonald to honour the contribution he made to the school. If anyone would like to visit this tree it can be found in the school orchard, or you could ask Mr Philips to take you on a visit there. Overall, if you join the gardening club, then you can help the school community and give something back to the school.

Some teachers have even been learning about the school's bee hive in an after school club run by Mr Philips. The bee hive is doing pretty well as the bees have been enjoying feeding on the lavendar outside the school - despite the best efforts of the rosemary beetles!

But one of the most exciting things that we have done this year was our trip to Wisely Gardens. There we entered a gardening competition and built our own mini garden. We used a variety of plants and the theme we were using was time. We considered the theme carefully and created a range of displays to reflect lots of different aspects of time; the future, the present and the past all featured in our garden. It took a lot of hard work to create the garden and we were very pleased with the results.

We won for the first time in three years and it was worth it because over 30 other schools competed with us to win. You can see some pictures of our garden illustrating this article.

So far in gardening club we have been doing tree grafting, garden planning and visiting gardens to see how we can improve our own. We have also had meetings on how to improve the garden and have gone to the school gardens to see how to improve them. If you would like to join then go to the North-East end of the astros on Thursdays for more information or ask Mr Philips.

CHECKMATE!

Alex Nielsen gives readers an insight into Chess Club

On Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays various different numbers of people climb the stairs to F2 during lunch. They pick up a chess board and a set (usually having to add a few missing pieces) and sit down to play a good old game of chess. The ever-helpful Dr. Cooper teaches any eager people how to play the game, and then they can compete against others and feel either the glory of winning the game or the disappointment of losing – which is what usually happens when you are just starting out!

The club this year evolved quite nicely, starting out with a large number of interested students and then moving to a smaller group of more dedicated chess players. I am sure this is solely due to the pressures of academic work rather than a dwindling in enthusiasm for chess!

In the first term a fun rankings competition was held and, before Christmas, over a hundred people competed. You could challenge anybody that was higher than you in the rankings as well as lower – but you are limited to people who are up to half your rank. This gets very competitive, and inspires people to play more and more to move up the rankings. If you lose the game, you stay at your rank. If you win, then you move up to your opponent's rank. If there is a draw, nothing happens.

In the second term, everybody who wanted to participate in the first stage of the UK Chess Challenge could sign up for this free activity. They would play seven games and receive points according to the result of the game: three for
a win, two for a draw, one for a loss and none for a no-show. The maximum number of points was therefore twenty-one and prizes were on offer for students who gained a certain number of points, ranging from a badge for three points to a mystery prize for the full twenty-one. Anyone scoring over 17 points was given the opportunity to apply for the second stage of the UK Chess Challenge: the Megafinal. Those who performed well in the Megafinal qualified for the Gigafinal and the fortunate (or talented) high scorers of the Gigafinal moved into the final stage: the Terrafinal!

In the final term, only a handful of people attended Chess Club, most of whom were very advanced players dedicated to the game. In order to take a break from more serious games, we sometimes played a vigorous game called “Exchange”, where you play as a team with two or more boards, and the pieces your team-mate takes can be placed on your board in any position. This was not played all the time, but it did spice up life in the club! In May, the Dr Cooper Chess Challenge 2011 took place, in which Dr Cooper played simultaneously on around thirty boards, and we came out with an eventual winner, who bagged £10! All of the other competitors lost or did not finish when Dr Cooper was beaten.

The Chess Club also played a number of matches against other schools throughout the year. One of the most exciting matches was on the 8th of July, when we had a mega match against Sutton Grammar. Both team provided over thirty players, each of whom played two matches. After the end of the first round, Wilson’s was winning, and we maintained this to win by ten points!

If you would like to join Chess Club, all you need to do is come along to F12 on a Monday, Wednesday or Thursday lunchtime. If you don’t know how to play, you will soon learn how to!

**A YEAR TO REMEMBER**

James Harris reports on recent successes in Senior Music

Music at Wilson’s this year has been at the highest standard the school has ever seen. The year has seen events such as orchestral concerts, recital evenings, founder’s day and summer jazz concerts which have all been well attended, with a response beyond any previous year.

Music is more than a subject to a lot of the senior musicians of the school, it’s a way of life and a way of expressing themselves in a form that gives the utmost freedom and has the most rewarding result. I speak on behalf of all the senior musicians when I say this year has topped most in the achievements and progression of the Wilson’s School music department.

Senior recitals, a vital and obligatory part of the music course, are events in particular that senior musicians look forward to as the standard is always high (and is getting higher!) and with a vast range of styles and instruments from rock and bass to wind, strings and brass, the musicians at Wilson’s certainly cover all the bases!

Orchestral evenings and Summer Jazz Concerts are also prime time for senior musicians to showcase their talents and this year has seen the return of star senior musicians who have left the school and have returned to join the up and coming stars of the music department, most notably Jack Chandler playing alto saxophone with Senior Jazz.

All these events showcase the students’ talent. However, not one senior musician would be at the place they are today without the outstanding leadership of the music department. Mr Lissimore has been a teacher like no other this last term, single handedly taking the role of not only teacher but head of music and peripatetic staff manager whilst also moving with a forceful and intelligent hand GCSE and A-level students to produce great marks.

The loss of Helen Bright from the department was felt by everyone but especially senior musicians who had moved through the school with her as their constant teacher and guide. With the loss of Miss Bright however we did gain Mr Lamb, a great teacher who helped me and my class through a particularly tricky part of the A-Level course.

Overall, music at Wilson’s this term has been a complete rollercoaster, from great performances, to sad loss of teachers, to gaining more experience and knowledge in a subject all senior students have come to adore. Great thanks are due to Tim Lissimore, Helen Bright and Andrew Lamb. Here’s to an even greater musical year to come!
As the long summer break begins, we at Omnibus felt that our readers might be looking for inspiration as to what books to read, games to play and theatre to watch. Jack Taperell has gathered a team of contributors to give our readers hints as to how to occupy those long summer days...

ENDGAME: RISE AGAINST

Karim Abu-Seer reviews the latest album from Rise Against

Rise Against are a punk band from Chicago, Illinois and were formed in 1999. As soon as the first track of the album, “Architects”, starts off, you can hear that this long running punk band has lost none of its fiery nature, even though there has been a major change in their songs since they first broke onto the American rock scene. Frontman Tim McIlrath’s voice has mellowed over time, as he has progressed from a 20 year old hoping to impact on the world with insightful lyrics, to a 31 year old father, whose aim remains the same.

Some say that this new album, with more melodic, less brutal riffs are an attempt to appease and gain mainstream success and audience-which this album has gone a long way to achieving. But Rise Against have always performed this way - they simply have matured over time.

My personal favourite song on this album is “Survivor’s Guilt”. The song is a Rise Against classic, varying slow rhythm with sudden outburst of chainsaw guitar playing. Like all Rise Against songs, it deals with an important issue-this being the much covered area of war, showing Rise Against’s skill at writing cutting edge lyrics remains with them.

My favourite music video is for “Help Is on the Way”, which depicts an African family fleeing a tsunami. However, upon the reflection the obvious choice for me to make was “Make It Stop (September’s Children)”. This tackles the topic of bullying, and was created after Tim McIlrath was approached by a fan, asking did he mind that he was of a different sexuality. The band reacted in a surprised manner, and together with the organisation It Gets Better, released the video which was premiered on MTV on the 21st of last month. It is a must see!

Rise Against have shown that their caustic and abrasive manner remains, whilst still being able to retain their brainy songs. The one fault that seems to be recurrent is songs running over their allotted time. “Architects” in particular can seem repetitive. However, this is a minor fault of an otherwise flawless album, from a band which seems to value integrity over all other qualities.

4.5/5 Stars

The Green Book

Tom Wadsworth peeks inside the mind of a controversial political figure

The Green Book is a political philosophical tract written by Qathafi. Muammar al Qathafi is a Libyan revolutionist and the political leader of Libya. He has been a dictator since 1969 when he over through the Libyan monarch in a bloodless coup, this has influenced the book in many ways. It also seems to be inspired by Chairman Mao’s book the Little Red Book that is also a political ideological text.

The book is split into three sections. Part 1 claims to be the solution to the problem of democracy: “The authority of the people”. Part 2 deals with the solution to the economic problem: “socialism”. Part 3 is called “The social basis of the third universal theory”.

The book criticises modern liberal democracy and proposes the need for direct democracy (where people collectively make decisions rather than representatives). Qathafi talks about how the modern political system portrays the views of the party rather than that of the people saying, “The party is not a democratic instrument because …they [the members] form a party to achieve their own ends.”

Qathafi also criticizes the modern system of ‘free press’, suggesting that the media should instead be government owned, on the basis that public control of media would be undemocratic.

Whilst this is a small book it is a terrible read as it contains many non-sequiturs and the style of writing is poor. However, it is an interesting look into the (somewhat troubled) mind of Qathafi.

3/5 stars
**SUMMER REVIEW SPECIAL**

**AT HOME by BILL BRYSON**

Jack Taperell dips into the prolific Bryson's latest offering

I have been a passionate fan of Bill Bryson ever since I read his charming *Notes from a Small Island*, and his latest offering doesn't disappoint. Previously, he published a popular science book called *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, but *At Home* could easily have had the same name, so thorough is its coverage. The general structure is that of Bryson going to each of the rooms in his house in turn, and exploring the sometimes bizarre, but always humorous and interesting history of those spaces.

After reading the first few chapters, you will have enough useless bits of knowledge to last a lifetime, but this is also Bryson's downfall.

One gets the impression that the author is... prone to rambling, to say the least. Before we even get started, he has spent about ten pages explaining the difference between a Rector and a priest, and somehow also managed to fit in the design of the Crystal Palace. Had any other writer done this, you would be bored stupid, but luckily Bryson's way with words makes these sections far more enjoyable (but still seemingly irrelevant).

Therefore, although Bryson is very fond of going off on a tangent, this wonderful book reveals facts about homes that I doubt any of us have ever considered. After reading *At Home* you may just come to view those four walls that you live in as less of an old friend and more of a stranger.

4.5/5 stars

**PRETTY LITTLE PANIC**

Tom Coates is entertained by the Cambridge Footlights

On the 27th June a packed audience at Wilson's was lucky enough to be graced by the Cambridge Footlights for a show that was clearly for one night only. The troupe included former Wilsonian Adam Lawrence, further proving the top quality of Wilsonians.

On the night, regardless of the heat, the hall was packed for what promised to be an outstanding performance – after all, the Cambridge Footlights have produced such famous performers such as Fawlty Towers' John Cleese and Stephen Fry. The Footlights' summer tour is recognised as a hotbed of new comedy talent, and on the basis of the performance we saw, this year's cast should be preparing for careers on stage and screen!

The Cambridge Footlights are a world-famous comedy sketch group, based in the ADC theatre in Cambridge consisting of and run entirely by students from Cambridge University. They are one of the most prolific comedy groups in the world and are famous for producing and running a new, informal show, known as a Smoker, every week. They also run many large shows and tour every year, with material performed in the West End and abroad.

Overall, an astounding show was given by the troupe, who had the fluidity of mercury as they flitted between one sketch and the next. The material, as well, was truly varied, ranging from a running gag about a malicious voice in one performer's head to comedy based on the modern problems of flying on an airline. The hour that the show was in simply flew and it was impossible to look away from the stage.

The variety of roles depicted by each performer was truly outstanding – with one performer playing everything from a driving instructor driven over the edge by his trainee unintentionally hitting a small girl to a bewildered drug smuggler trying to get heroin past the guards at an airport by claiming that his grandmother gave it to him on her deathbed.

The quality of the jokes, too, was extremely high, and the audience was in stitches. Whilst some of the subject matter may have been serious and the jokes not entirely politically correct, some were hilariously puerile.

One last aspect that had to be praised was the minimalistic use of props. The only props

*Continued overleaf*
the troupe used were four black boxes, which were moved around the stage to represent anything from a car to a masseuse’s bench, and a screen, for performers to wait behind.

Whilst this may have hugely damaged any other troupe’s act, for the Cambridge Footlights it only seemed to emphasize the skill of the performers.

Overall, it was definitely worth seeing the performers the Independent described as ‘the most renowned sketch troupe of all.’

5/5 Stars

PORTAL 2: A NEW DIMENSION

Tom Wells steps into a new world via his games console...

Portal 2 is an adventure physics platform game for various consoles in which you use portals (unsurprisingly) in order to complete a series of challenges in order to open a door and pass through.

In the game you play as Chell, a silent woman who we can only gain knowledge about through the characters GLaDOS (Genetic Lifeform and Disk Operating System), and Wheatley. The levels are achieved by firing portals so that you can move objects, redirect lasers or just moving yourself and the gameplay is amazing! You could be puzzling over a single level for over three hours without being even slightly frustrated thanks to the fun and ingenious style of the game! Every achievement feels like a massive breakthrough, simply because it is.

The designs of the levels themselves are a stroke of genius on their own. Every level uses the idea of momentum to fling you across the arena, but when this is combined with the repulsion gels, you end up being flung and bounced every which way! However, the levels still prove to be challenges; it can sometimes be an effort just to find the door let alone get through it!

The gameplay is then further extended with the co-op, where two people can do a level together, as the two robots, P-Body and Atlas, both of whom are a lot of fun to play as.

However, compared to the dry wit of Wheatley (Stephen Merchant), the dark humour of GLaDOS (Ellen McLain) and the hilarious moronic ramblings of Cave Johnson (J.K. Simmons), the actual game almost becomes a sideshow. It’s rare to find a game that offers this combination of humour and addictive gameplay.

This does not mean it is perfect. In fact, the dialogue can be very annoying if you keep dying and are forced to hear the same joke nine times, especially when it is not a very good one. The only other negative I could see in this game is that sometimes you are forced to run around for ages unnecessarily.

However, the near perfect balance between great gameplay and amazing comedy that makes the portal series so popular among hard-core and casual gamers alike, and in my honest opinion one of the best games of all time.

5/5 Stars

BEST WISHES FOR A RELAXING SUMMER BREAK TO ALL OUR READERS!