



# OMNIBUS

*The termly newsletter of Wilson's School*

## THIS YEAR'S ACHIEVEMENTS

The Headmaster gives a very favourable report on this year at Wilson's



Last week's Activities Week and very enjoyable Year 7 production of 'We Will Rock You' brings down the curtain on a year that has felt even more varied, busy and successful than usual.

We started off the year with spectacular academic results and almost every edition of the Weekly Update since then has announced some further individual or group success and often several at a time.

I've particularly enjoyed this year seeing a number of new activities develop. It would be difficult to imagine anything ever taking the place of football in the school, but rugby has really begun to take off this year, thanks not only to the enthusiasm of the boys, but to the dedication and commitment of the teachers. It'll be a while before we are competing against the best rugby schools but we've built up an excellent foundation for future success, each of our three teams winning their age group in the emerging schools' league. You can see photographs of all of our rugby teams on this page.

Chess has been a part of the Wilson's tradition for many decades but until a few years ago it had been, frankly, in the doldrums for some time. What we needed, of course, was someone on the staff who was not only passionate about the game but also very good at it and we found that man in Dr Cooper (who can also do Maths). After a long period of consolidation, building of skills and incremental improvement, suddenly



over the last eighteen months the teams have broken through to achieve very significant success. Our single team has grown to three, our first team now vying

with the some of the best London and Surrey independent schools for the top spot in the first league while our second team topped the third league and will now move up to the second. The year ended with the retention of the National Plate and our recognition as a centre of excellence.



The arrival of Mr Beggs in September to help Captain Burton with the CCF has had the added benefit of our being able for the first time to launch the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, something we have wanted to do for some time but have not had the personnel to achieve. Thanks to Mr Jones, who volunteered to take a second group, we were able to meet the interest and enthusiasm of the boys to take part. Thirty eight boys have successfully completed the Bronze Award and many will go on to take the Silver next year. It is not only the very high standards that our boys achieve in almost everything they do but the extraordinary levels of engagement and participation by the boys that mark out the distinctive character of this school. They are lucky in having teachers who enjoy providing all sorts of opportunities outside the classroom for them to take part in.

Over five hundred boys have represented the school this year. Their successes support the morale and spirit of the school in a way that nothing else could and they are a source of great pride for us. The dedication and generosity of their teachers with their time and enthusiasm meets in equal measure that of the boys and together they make Wilson's the remarkable and special school it is.



# HYPOCAUSTS AND QUERNS

## Stephen Earls on Year 8's trip to Roman Britain

It was on the Tuesday of Activities Week that Year 8 had a trip to look forward to. On this occasion, Fishbourne was our destination. Our aim: to get in-depth info on the Romans, their culture and how they built houses and produced pottery.

Outside the main entrance, we were all chattering excitedly, waiting to board the coach. Eventually, at 8:30 we were able to board and relax as our cares were over... for the next 2 hours at least. People were awakened by the pungent smell of horse manure. This told us that we were nearing our destination.

We arrived at the Roman Palace at approximately 10:30. Our first part of the tour was around the West Wing, where we had the chance to see the hypocaust (Roman central heating), and gaze in awe at the 'Cupid on a Dolphin' mosaic. An interesting fact I found out was that years after the palace had burnt down, graves had been dug, and bodies dumped. It was at this point I realised that the pictures I had been taking on my camera were too dark to be visible. From then on, I had to take all my pictures in Night-Vision, even if I was in the blinding sunlight!

The sun was still in the sky as our class made our way to the Murray Rooms. During our time there, we were to get an idea about Roman materials and how palaces such as the one in Fishbourne were built. People sitting at tables could only laugh as the children making the roofs squabbled and argued where the assorted tiles should go. Midway through, a crackle of thunder caught everybody's attention. From then on, sheets of rain pounded against the windows.

To get to our following activity we needed to cross No Man's Land, AKA the car park in the pouring rain. We were told by our teacher that 'A bit of rain never hurt anyone,' before she pulled over her hood and legged it across the gap. We strode

across fearlessly, managing to be thoroughly soaked before reaching the other side. A tad ironic, I would say!

After that came the museum; in the museum was a carving, portraying a bireme with sailors on board. At the end

of the section was a skeleton in a glass case. I was attempting – rather unsuccessfully – to take a snapshot of the corpse, despite a whole group of my friends deliberately resting their

worksheets on the glass. One of the questions on the worksheet was to define a 'quern'. I still don't think anyone has answered that question...

The next activity we embarked upon was the Audio-Visual Theatre. It gave us an insight into who owned the palace in Roman times, and what the palace would have looked like. It was made even more exciting by the fact it was narrated by the one and only Tony Robinson!

Another quiz awaited our pens in the gardens. It was made up of intricate bushes and many different types of flowers. Before leaving, we were finally let loose on the gift shop.

Nothing really tickled my fancy, apart from an authentic Roman helmet – unfortunately, it was £180 out of my price range. In the end, I settled for 2 replica Roman coins, and a torch. The rain resumed as we all made a mad scramble for the coaches.



There was a 40 minute drive between Fishbourne and the Ancient Butser Farm. At first glance, it wasn't exactly farm-like, with old-fashioned straw huts and hardly any animals. After an announcement stating that there would be no writing, it was chaos as everyone rushed to replace their pens and clipboards. A few minutes later, we were led into a particularly big straw hut, and were told to sit around burning camp fire. I must admit, those were the lowest benches I have ever sat on in my life! The lady gave us a fascinating account about how walls are made out of animal poo, and how 2-year-old lamb is smoked.

We were once again let loose, and this time we had several huts to explore. Mr Fitzpatrick pretended to be a shop owner and locked me out of his shop. Well I never! The last thing I thought he would be was a shop-owner from Celtic times. I had to explain that I was paparazzi before he let me in. I was able to get snaps of everything, even the dog (who belonged to the lady who ran the tour).

Because the chalk carvings were running late, we were taken to look at the farm animals. In a small enclosure were three pigs, one boar and two sows (and they both stayed away from him). High voltage electrical wire surrounded them. Right next the pigs, was a box of sheep. There were a few more



of them. We all found enjoyment out of impersonating the sheep – some sounding surprisingly life-like.

Later, a lady led us across the field to a miniature shed, where



she gave us a talk about pottery. Somehow, I agreed that I had been to Pompeii and Farnham Forest with the rest of my group (the majority hadn't really; we just wanted to seem like experts!).

After this, we had a go at a chalk carving. Smoothing of the surface seemed to take an age, before rubbing a dock leaf to cover the chalk and give it some colour. We used flint to carve our shapes. I've never been good at art, so it didn't come as a surprise that my carv-

ing had no resemblance to anything.

A short trip to a Roman villa followed. Here we used ground rocks mixed with water, acting as paint. Once again, my painting was not of a high standard – a vase with some smudges.



On the way home, the rain stopped and started randomly. After an exhilarating day out, we were all full of energy. Nearly everybody was listening to music, there was much

banter, and even some rain entered the coach! On this day of mosaics and straw, I think it is safe to say that Year 8 had a good day out. Our learning experience ranged from pottery to construction, from heating and hypocausts to transport and querns (?).

## WATCH OUT FOR YEAR 10!

### Sam Brougham on the impact of the Year 10 Debating Skills Day

Let's not kid ourselves: winning an argument feels great. The ability to dispute any minor point of contention until you're red in the face, and then come out as the champion, is a skill even the most humble of us would want. Yet losing your train of thought, leaving open-ending sentences, or tripping up on some point of self-contradiction can lead to you tumbling face-first into a pit of embarrassment, which is why Year 10 students were given the opportunity to avoid such humiliation as part of activities week.

The 8th of July saw all of Year 10 crowd into the sixth form centre to begin "Debating Skills Day", hosted by the English Speaking Union. Pupils were instantly subjected to a heated, if slightly tongue-in-cheek, debate regarding whether or not gang leaders should be killed, conducted by the ESU instructors. The purpose of this was to showcase first-class debating skills, the likes of which we should all have adopted by the end of the day.

After being split into groups of varying size, the instructor launched into an explanation of the structure of a good argument. They proceeded to detail the main rules of a proper debate, before thrusting us into the spotlight with an exercise many pupils were already familiar with: talking about a random topic without hesitating – a concept that may seem simple at first, but in actuality manages to elude the majority of students, often leading to entertaining outcomes.

The morning continued with similar exercises, forcing pupils to think on their feet and act quickly. One of the most notable highlights was an activity where three pupils are given a word, though only one student is told its definition. The other two instead have to concoct a lie; the rest of the year then have to work out who's telling the truth. Needless to

say, this led to many amusing and challenging moments, as students did their absolute best to outsmart their peers.

The rest of the day took on a more sober tone, as groups were assigned a topic to debate, and one other group was assigned the same topic, but from a conflicting viewpoint. Following instructions to begin formulating our arguments, pupils had several hours to frame their main lines of reasoning, and prepare for the big debate that would follow. Topics ranged from abortion, to STDs, to a statement a lot of pupils would no doubt advocate: mixed schools are better than single-sex school.

The climax of the day culminated in the main debate, in which each pair of groups met to dispute their given topic, and battle it out in front of the year. In order to gauge the winner of each argument, a show of hands to indicate students' beliefs was taken before and after, with the group that swayed the most people to their side being declared the victor.

Some chose to enhance their speech with humour, while others took on a more conventional approach, using figures and statistics to support themselves. Every speech exhibited a sophisticated structure and sound reasoning, thanks to the skills that had been taught by the ESU during the day.

Without a doubt, the day proved to be a huge success, allowing pupils to effortlessly and articulately challenge one another. Thought-provoking topics ensured every student could show passion and confidence in their debate, while the strong structure of the day guaranteed a stimulating experience. Be warned, though: never challenge a Year 10 pupil again.

# A TRIP BACK IN TIME

## Arjun Gill on Year 7's trip to Rochester

What would it be like to return to medieval times? On Tuesday, July the seventh, Year 7 embarked on a trip to the medieval town of Rochester to find out. Once all of us got off the coaches after an hour long journey to the 900 year old town, Dr. Meddleton gave us a quick briefing on what we were doing throughout the day. Year Seven were experiencing their first activities week and had already gone to the London Science Museum the day before, but we had not been to an open space like this before.



There were six parts to the day: the exterior of the Castle; the Guildhall Museum; the Keep; Rochester Cathedral; Rochester High Street and obviously lunch. It would be impossible for the whole of the year group to do the same thing at the same time, so we were split into our form groups to do the different activities.

The first area for me was the outside of the castle and the keep. We were told that we had to find some facts by using the notice boards and our own observation of the area. Some of this information was not as easy to find as others. We spent lots of time looking for the justice tree, when we found it was a cement tree! There were some other tricks to find.

After that, my form went to the Rochester High Street. The point of this was to find out about the area and how it was in medieval times. We were also allowed to go to a few shops and buy some souvenirs. Among the things we were supposed to look out for on the high street were a green letter-box, a few charity shops and a specific piece of pavement that had a meaning – to narrow it down. This was the same for everybody – in all form groups.

After Wilson's had spotted the local specialist sweet shop, all other shops were about to go out of business! The delicious range of confectionery included chocolate bars, some mas-

sive jars of sweets, candy canes, various fudges and a pic 'n' mix. After buying our 'souvenirs', we met up at the Guildhall museum.

You would normally think museums to be boring places where you

look at artefacts you are not allowed to touch. However this museum was the opposite, and probably one of the highlights of the day. The Guildhall museum did have some exhibits inside glass cases, although the environment around us suited the period of time. Every time period from prehistoric to late medieval and 19th Century was catered for by the museum. My best part of the museum had to be going inside the Hulk. This room looked just like what the inside of the ship would have looked like.

There was also the lower deck of the Hulk. At first it seemed quite daunting to go down the decks but there really is nothing there. Some things you have to look out for are the wax models. If you don't know they are there, and turn around – you are in for a shock!

My group then visited the Keep of Rochester castle. Here Mr. Cole showed us around the long spiral staircase (which took a great deal of effort to climb!) ruins and as we travelled nearer to the top of the Keep, we began to feel the sheer size of the Keep. Definitely one of the main highlights of the day was going to the top and seeing the town of Rochester and the river Medway for miles from the battlements. It became apparent why the Normans had built the castle at this point. After this experience, we had found out that Mr. Cole had got a bit too enthusiastic about the Keep and we were running slightly late for the Cathedral.



Although I and some others in my form made it to the Cathedral ten minutes late, the only part we had missed was the introduction from the lady working in the cathedral. After that we wondered around the place with Mr. Englefield, learning some facts about the cathedral – even about someone who was killed there! We got to pass over the pilgrim steps and find the obvious and the less obvious pieces of evidence about how it had changed in the reformation, like the doom paintings being removed.

The day was ending well – we were going to eat lunch on the nice dry grass before departing on the coach – until it started to rain cats and dogs. Our lunch had been cancelled. My form was lucky, since the other forms were getting drenched on the castle green. Therefore the trip had been cut slightly short and we left half an hour earlier than we planned for Wilson's as the weather didn't look like it was going to improve. Everybody in Year 7 had a fantastic day out and I would like to thank all the staff who organised the trip and supervised us on it.



# SPEAKING THEIR MINDS

## Jack Taperell and Aaron Abrams on the Year 8 Speak Out Challenge

*Jack reports on the day as a whole*

It began like any other normal Monday. Get up, shower, breakfast, run for bus, school. But Monday the 6th July was no ordinary Monday. It was the Year 8 Speak Out Challenge public speaking day, where participants would learn professional skills and ultimately, perform a two minute speech in front of the Headmaster himself. The course started in the lecture theatre, where Mr Cole gave a short talk on the importance of public speaking. We also discovered that in a recent international poll, public speaking was deemed the most feared thing, even beating death!

We split into groups of about 12. My teacher for the day was Mr Mulcahy. First of all he taught us what to physically do when speaking, like stride, stance and smiling (appropriately). Then, using what we had learnt, we gave a short speech about ourselves including our name, where we were born and our likes and dislikes. We analysed the speeches for the good points and less good points. We then had to perform an impromptu talk on a topic of Mr Mulcahy's choosing. I had to describe the meaning of the word "fub" (meaning a small person) - that was difficult.

Next, we learnt some good ways to start a speech (like rhetorical questions and quotations) and how not to end it (don't say "that's it!"). With this information under our belts, we were set topics on which we had to compose and present a two minute speech on either: Why go to Peru? China, the great British weather, Freddie Flintoff or the worst thing I've ever broken. I chose the latter option. We then had fifteen minutes to write and practise our speeches. After break, we'd be back in that room to perform in groups of six.

Mine went pretty well with no major problems. But this was only the beginning. Over the weekend we had composed another two minute speech: mine was debating the issue of "working for your pocket money". The best speaker would be selected for the finals in the afternoon. Who would win? Only time would tell...

Practice was over and it was crunch time. I was to be the sixth speaker. The five before me gave very good speeches, so I had some hard acts to follow. Aaron Abrams delivered an excellent speech on the history of skate boarding, which was very interesting and held our attention. Aaron and I were equal first so it went to a group vote where Aaron narrowly beat me by 6 votes to 5. After lunch, it was the time we'd all been waiting for: the final performance. It was a good turnout for Camberwell because out of twelve finalists, five of them were in Camberwell, my house! The subjects for the speeches

of the finalists were wide ranging, some funny, some controversial, but all interesting. Cheese seemed to be a popular subject with Henry Watson talking about the niche sport of cheese rolling, and Tanay Verma extolling the virtues of cheese in general.

History was a favourite with "The Battle of the Somme" by Benjamin Flook, the resident military historian of 8C. We heard about the history of skate boarding from Aaron Abrams - I never knew there was so much to that sport, and Jack Crowson on the history of computing - another fascinating subject. Alex Micallef spoke on tennis - very topical after the previous day's epic final between Andy Roddick and Roger Federer. Mirae Tejura spoke on the controversial issue of animal testing. Luke Costick spoke about "getting outside" meaning we all need more fresh air. "Nurses" was the chosen subject of Edward Priest. He maintained that they should be paid more. Will Stanley spoke about "risk taking" while Joe Perry explained all about the London Eye - London's premier attraction but not for those who suffer from vertigo. Finally, Ahmed Naqvi spoke eloquently about the benefits of sport - perhaps Ahmed could be an ambassador for 2012. I'll let Boris know!



The competition was incredibly close. All speakers were excellent and it was going to be a difficult job to decide the winner. The hubbub died away and there were a few moments of silence before Mr Charnock announced the winner. "Aaron Abrams!" The whole of Year 8 erupted into cheers. Luke Costick and Will Stanley were declared runners up and they were also cheered by the crowd. We all learnt important life skills that will stand us in good stead in the future. People who had started as nervous wrecks were confident speakers by the end of the day. I would like to make a special mention of Karim Bacchus, voted as the most improved speaker in my group. But in the end, of course, we were all winners.

*Aaron reports on his winning speech*

The day had been leading up to us delivering our two minute speech in the best way possible to the group, and then voting someone through to the final 'speak off'. We had a considerable amount of time to improve and mould our speeches, which was rather necessary in my case as I had one and a half pages of notes. We weren't allowed notes either in the classroom or in the final, so I set about shaving my speech into four, easy to remember points, learning them off by heart and then practising them.

Finally I had learnt my speech but still had a problem with the length. This became a stumbling block in the classroom practice as my two minute speech went on until just over

three minutes. I did find it hard, not because of nerves or lack of confidence but simply down to the fact that I couldn't remember half the points I wanted to say. When you have to talk non stop about a certain subject, in my case 'skateboarding', for a whole two minutes, because you are constantly thinking about what to say next, the things you want to say, slip your memory. Nevertheless we managed to get through our entire group without one person fainting or going in to shock. I managed to get through to the final, closely beating Jack Taperell (Camberwell), a worthy opponent indeed. Graciously, Jack offered to help me further shorten my speech during lunch. I immediately accepted thankfully and by the time the bell went at five past two, I was sitting in the lecture theatre, ready for what I was about to face.

By the time Mr. Cole read out my name to speak, all I had

managed to remember from the tuition was the poster of 'antimatter origins' in the maths classroom. I spoke and sat down, followed by two more contestants.

The judges' scores were in, after much deliberation from Mrs. Mitchelmore and Mr. Charnock, the winner was read out. It was me! I shook hands with the Senior Staff and sat back down in my seat. I was genuinely stunned.

I am glad that we got the opportunity to learn about this valuable life skill, and pleased that I was able to share a passion of mine with the year group and staff. My only wish now is that I will see all the senior staff down in Mellows Park, showing the rest of the general public how to skateboard!

# SCIENCE MUSEUM SENSATION

## Caleb Bakare reports on Year 8's entertaining trip to the Science Museum

On the 8th of July, Wilsons' Year 8's enjoyed a memorable trip to the London Science Museum.

Accompanied by a band of teachers, including Mrs. Jones, the head of science, Ms. Wing, Mr. David, Mr. Simmons, Mr. Parkinson and others, the year was split into 3 coaches, with at least one teacher on a coach. The coach drive was predictably long and us kids just about had enough to entertain ourselves with, but the mood changed once we entered the South Kensington museum.

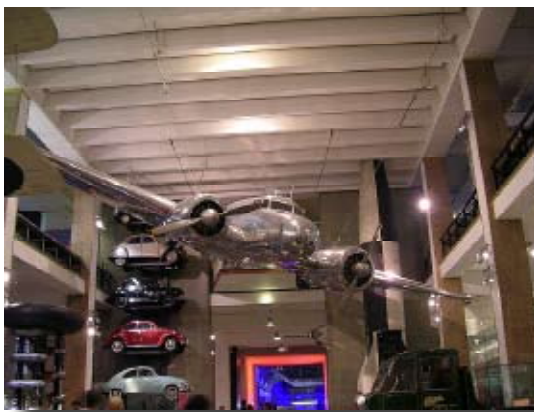
On entering the building, my form 8G were split into the first eleven and the last eighteen, and my group, the first eleven, went with Mr. Davi. To begin with, we ventured to the first floor, entitled 'Who am I?' On this floor, there were about 12 silver pods which individually taught the user about the different parts and functions of the body. These pods engaged the user by giving you a range of information, some games and websites to help develop your knowledge.

However, the small group of eleven still managed to lose 3 people, Aaron Abrams, Athavan Bosch and Richard Brocklesby and Mr. Davi and the remaining eight members of the group looked hard for them, and finally we found them on the crowded ground floor of the museum.

After this, the whole of 8G were put back together and the whole year went to see the 3-D adaptation of 'Fly Me to the Moon'. Despite the movie not lasting more than an hour, the year group as a whole was very entertained by the Imax theatre, with its 'out of the screen' effects and the movie's general humour.

This really good movie was then followed by another tour of the ground floor which contained both ancient and recent history including the Apollo 10 Command Module, the Lockheed 10A, the steam train 'Stephenson's Rocket' and many other unique artefacts.

Coming up to 12.00, we had our lunch opposite the dining area, and some people went to the canteen to buy food and drink from the over-priced café.



After a re-visit to the pod area, we entered the vast gift-shop, which sold loads of good quality items, albeit way too pricey, but looking around at the interesting products that were on offer was fun.

Finally, after a long day, 12 members of 8G had a 1-pound ride on the rollercoaster simulator. Paying for the ride was very complicated as 2 people had 10 pound notes and therefore paid for everyone else, but then we all had to pay

them a pound. Unfortunately, for some reason, we were a pound short and Paul Heller ended up paying 2 pounds to Stephen instead of 1!

But despite this epic failure, the actual ride was fairly good and you could argue that it was made better by the constant screaming, shouting and very loud group singing and overall rowdiness of our group which was endured for around 5 minutes inside the simulator.

Overall, it was an excellent trip to a very enjoyable place, where the whole year had a lot of fun while still learning some key facts about the world of science.

# DOWN CAME THE RAIN!

## Henry Stanley visits the Kent Coast with Year 9 Geographers

Monday 6th July 2009 was cold and overcast. However, Year Nine Geography students boarded their coaches and headed for the North Kent coast. But just as we stepped off the coaches ...it started to rain.



Huddling in the ruins of Reculver Abbey we attempted, despite the elements, to fill in our case-study booklets. As the storm began to ease

the groups, led by Mrs. Prestney, Mr. Cady and Mr. Vidler, began their trek across the beaches, noting the various coastal features along the way.

A look at a river rejuvenation site revealed how the river's rock type had changed before and after its rejuvenation. Then we quickly stopped in Herne Bay for a lunch of fish and chips

before continuing on our journey having seen Neptune's Arm (a man-made spit which provides some protection for the beach from the harshness of the sea).



From Hampton Pier, we could see the wind turbines out at sea, providing green electricity for the local area and other parts of England.

After a stop at Long Rock to see the natural spit there, we clambered up Tankerton Slopes where we met our coaches again.

On behalf of all the students who went on this trip, I would like to thank all three of the geography staff and also the coach drivers. All involved had an enjoyable and educational day.

# TO BOLDLY GO...♦♦♦

## Kouros Pakroo ventures into the South Downs with the Duke of Edinburgh Award

This is the first year that Wilson's have conducted the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, a scheme which provides young people with the opportunity to better their skills, their potential and themselves. Mr Beggs and Mr Jones assumed the role to help the Year 10s in achieving their bronze award, the first in a path to silver and then gold.

As well as the main expedition, with which everyone is commonly familiar, it was necessary to everyone to get active in a new skill, a new sport and in voluntary work to help give back to their community. These varied from a range of ideas from learning new instruments, bettering fitness and supporting other groups, such as Beavers and even local stores.

After the necessary training which took place over a few months, a practice walk began to test just how really able we were to walk with carrying our huge rucksacks over long lengths and up steep slopes in the area of Box Hill, which is made of 490 acres of wooded downlands, built upon chalk. It was also a chance to trial our navigation abilities. Thankfully, due to our prior learning of map reading, and the way in which to use a compass efficiently, we coped with finding our way around with a few near misses. However the real challenge was not unveiled to us until the practice weekend which would be the real challenge to our fitness, navigation and outdoor abilities.

For this we travelled to the hilly South Downs in June, with a group of teachers who we could rely on for support when it was needed. The weather was in the higher 20s, and although

the pleasant sunshine and warmth appealed to some at first, the cruel sun did not truly unveil its scorching rays and harsh heat until later on in the day. However the SPF 30 managed to drive away the possibility of some very embarrassing tan lines! The importance of water was crucial but thanks to more than a minibus of supplies we were safe.

It was the first time we camped overnight with our tents and some light rain overnight did little to relieve us from the heat of the next morning. We ploughed on the next day, partially on our own for some of the distance. In total we covered an estimated 30 km. This really demonstrated to us what we were getting ourselves into and demanded that we were well prepared for our assessed expedition.

Our final expedition was in the rainy period after the heat wave, and although to outsiders it may have come across as unfriendly, it was actually a welcome relief for the groups, who did not have to rely so much on the water in our rucksacks. Assessors from the Duke of Edinburgh scheme came to us to monitor our walking and to test our knowledge of the countryside code and what to do in a medical emergency. They were surprisingly friendly and did everything to make sure we were getting along without too much difficulty. But thankfully, due to all the skill and knowledge we had been given from our teachers and from our own team, our determination succeeded and have all gained our bronze award!

We just hope the silver, involving two nights - no challenge to us Wilsonians - gives us some kinder weather throughout!

# EXPLORING THE UNKNOWN

Robert Cochrane reports on the Year 7 trip to the Science Museum

The first day of Year 7's activities week began with a trip to the Science Museum in South Kensington. I had visited the museum many times before, so I was looking forward to the trip as I, along with the rest of year 7, boarded the coach in the playground. Once we had arrived, we were taken to the new and improved Launchpad, where we heard a talk about rockets and played with the various exciting activities and displays in the exhibit. Included in the exhibition were a water-powered rocket, a sand machine and a camera that took pictures of shadows. As Launchpad had recently been moved from the basement to the third floor, many of the displays had changed with the redevelopment and, although some of the better parts of the previous section had gone, Launchpad was still the best part of the trip and very enjoyable.

After a hurried lunch spent squeezed between the many other groups that were visiting the museum, my group set off to the energy section where we were given tasks to do by the various teachers around the exhibition. Some of the exhibits in this area were more exciting than others, although the

metal pole in the centre that electrocuted people who went too close was a hit with everybody. During the tight fifteen minute schedule we filled in the activity sheet we had been given, before being rushed to the space section to do more worksheets underneath the shadow of a 50 metre long rocket.

We then headed to the shop to spend our money on some of the hundreds of useful and strange items in there. These included a robot that walked up walls, a tin full of green gloop and an acre of land on the moon that you could own and do what you liked with, although the point of this gift wasn't very clear! After being torn away from the various robot piggy banks and remote control helicopters, we were escorted back to the coaches for the delights of mile-long traffic jams through Tooting on the way back to school! Our coach finally arrived back at school 45 minutes behind schedule after taking a wrong turning, but most of us enjoyed the trip despite the delay and would like to pay the museum another visit.

## SUMMER BOOKS SPECIAL

Bhavraj Chana gives some recommendations to keep you entertained over the summer

After hearing Miss Hairé's assembly on World Book Day and all her reading suggestions, for those like me who had lost their reading tastes as they got older or those who had finished the school library and needed something new to read, I decided to take it upon my self to use my book token and two others I had nicked off friends, to re-light my reading passion. My first book was the brilliant "Crusade" by Elizabeth Laird, an amazing story in which 2 boys during the 3rd crusade (1187-1192 A.D) discover the truths about their enemy and how the opposition are not just voo-doo devils but are humans themselves. Salim, a merchant's son in a local coastal town along the Middle East, is looked on disapprovingly by his father who can't see Salim going anywhere in the world of finance and trade unlike his older brother Ali. So when alarm bells ring and the Imams claim that the horrid Franks are invading, Salim's father quickly hands him over to a wise friend, a Jewish doctor, as an apprentice.

Soon Salim and the doctor get caught up with the legendary Mamluk warriors and eventually become the great Saldin's personal health carers. Meanwhile in England Adam the serf is indefinite about his future. His mother has just died, his father left him ages ago and he has now been made a dog boy by the unpopular Lord Fitz-Guy himself. Soon a messenger arrives at the castle and via the remarkably influential priest; the call goes out for all who can be spared "to aid King Richard in his holy crusade"...

"Twilight", another brilliant read, is completely different to Crusade. This book would probably be more enjoyed by those above years 7&8. It's an amazing romance where Bella,

a girl from Phoenix, Arizona finds herself in her dad's dreary, rainy, almost English town up in Washington State. It is in that tiny little high school where she meets Edward, who turns from her obsession into the centre of her life. All she can think about at night is Edward, but what she doesn't realise till later on is that gorgeous Edward is actually a vampire...With three more books in the series, there is still plenty more to know in this international bestseller which even became a movie in November of last year.

However after reading this full bodied piece of romance, I, at least, felt like something less rich. I chose my cousin's suggestion for my next read: "Quadehar the Sorcerer". This much lighter novel is like any fantasy story. Robin is an ordinary boy who seeks to be a member of the powerful knights of the lost isle, an island stuck between the real world and the uncertain world. When however he is affected with the Tarquin effect, witnessed by none other than Quadehar the Great, the only sorcerer feared by the Shadow, Robin's life suddenly changes. These books are just some of the many excellent choices available. After reading these three I then joined the Croydon Libraries Online Reservation System so that I could gain access to almost any book Croydon Council owned. With the recession you may find book buying expensive. However if you are high-tech feel free to buy a Sony e-reader which can hold hundreds of your favourite books. I prefer the less green choice of normal paper books. It's only a matter of choosing a favourite book and finding a review on it online to work out the titles of similar books you might enjoy too. Good luck and enjoy reading something new over the summer!