

8 November 2019

Dear Parents/Carers, Students, Governors, Old Olavians and Grandparents

Headteacher's Newsletter 48

There has been lots going on in the English Department already this term. You may be aware that our students performed in another superb Black History Month show, again focussing on the contribution of black artists to British culture including poetry, novels and music. This was complemented by a further edition of our Black History Month magazine with a range of fine articles written by our students. The Newsquest Young Reporter Scheme has now been launched with students writing articles on local events and an article by Derin Burke being the most read article so far! Our playwriting group are making excellent progress with writing their own plays for the National Theatre competition and will shortly begin workshopping the first draft of their plays. Auditions for 'Showstoppers' have taken place and auditions for the school play, 'The Crucible' took place last week, and we will soon commence rehearsals. A group of our students visited Newstead Wood for their Power of English event in which a range of guest speakers highlighted the value of studying English in a variety of careers. A more detailed write-up can be found below.



Nine Year 11 boys travelled to Newstead Wood for a conference to affirm the power of studying English in the 21st Century. A broad array of speakers eloquently outlined the skills they used in their careers gleaned from studying English. Joe England, a barrister specialising in employment law, celebrated his ability to skim read, choose the right words in court and tell convincing stories. Carly Smallman, a professional comedian, entertained students with hilarious anecdotes about being a struggling stand-up eating tins of beans but nevertheless passionate about what she does. She enthused about writing every day, explaining that she produces lots of material for herself and other comedians. She shared a secret with students that she, an unassuming housewife from Streatham, writes some of Frankie Boyle's most explicit material. She also stressed how useful English had been in preparing her to write in different voices and see life from new perspectives. A CEO of her own accountancy business revealed that 75% of her day was communicating with board members, clients and staff while a junior doctor confided that her communication skills were vital to the success of her placement in A&E. Ramzan Karmall told students that he was a passionate storyteller giving up Investment Banking to join the BBC as a business news reporter working on Radio 5 Live's 'Wake Up To Money' and the 'Today' programme on Radio 4. The session convinced all attendees that English provides vital skills for the modern world and proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable occasion.



Thank you to our PE Staff at school, our players and the teams from Chislehurst and Sidcup Grammar School and Blackheath RFC for a tremendous night of rugby last Friday. The First XV won 22 - 12, the Second XV lost 12 – 22, and the Under 13A team won 8 – 5. Playing rugby under lights is a wonderful but very different experience, and congratulations to all students who took part.

Congratulations to Old Olavian, Seren Ford, who has won an award for her performance in last summer’s Salters-Nuffield Advanced Biology Examination. In recognition of her achievement, Seren has been invited to attend the Salters’ Institute Awards Ceremony on Friday 6 December.



You will be pleased to know the school achieved the Eco-Schools Silver Award in July 2018. Through the action of Environmental Society and thanks to the hard work of students, staff, governors, and parents, we are now close to achieving the highest level of the programme, the Green Flag Award. We will be visited by an assessor from Eco-Schools next Wednesday to be examined on the topics of Waste, Litter, and School Grounds. Fingers crossed for a favourable outcome.

As we prepare for our Remembrance Service on Monday, we remembered School Captain, Leslie Yorath Sanders, known to his classmates as ‘Phi’, in assembly this week. His life and time during the First World War are highlighted in a book written by his mother entitled: ‘A Soldier of England’. Reading this book is an extraordinary insight into the life of someone experiencing the horrors of war and his realisation that his life would be short. Some of the more poignant extracts from this publication are:



Extract from a letter received the night before he went to the front, February 1915

“I estimate my chance of getting wounded as one in four; of getting killed or totally disabled at one in ten. These are pretty heavy averages and I should be foolish not to be prepared for the worst. In a sense, therefore, I count myself already dead. Wear no mourning for me if I am killed; if I die, I die gladly. I have lived longer than many; and life has been very good.”

Extract from the last letter he wrote. It was written to his fiancée, but never posted, 9 March 1917, the day before he died

“Yet you know, I’ve never regretted coming out here. There at home, in comfort and safety – well I suppose I was doing useful work enough. But here I am doing a man’s work.”

Letter from the Colonel to his Father, 11 March 1917

"Dear Sir,

Your son was killed yesterday, and died as fine a death as any could here. During a heavy bombardment of the headquarters where his work lay, he worked on cheerily and quietly till a shell exploded in the room itself, and killed him instantly. Such men can never be replaced and leave behind them a gap in the affections of all who knew and admired him. I saw him buried today in a quiet spot some way from the line – a photograph of it is enclosed. I wish it were possible to add any comfort of any use in your bereavement."

192 men died as far as the school was made aware in the First World War. Many others may have perished on the battlefields who, to date, are not commemorated. During the long four years of war, barely a few days passed before the news of another casualty reached the school, usually a victim of exploding artillery shells and shrapnel, sniper rifle fire or machine gun attacks. These were all clever, educated committed boys and men; despite their lives being short, they displayed enormous amounts of courage.

Wishing you and your families a restful weekend.

Yours sincerely



Andrew Rees
Headteacher

The [St. Olave's website](#) and twitter page - [@saintolaves](#) has many more stories of student endeavour and success. Please do keep sending me news items and student successes either via colleagues or email. The email address is publicityteam@saintolaves.net. Do not forget to include all the details along with a hi-resolution photo you are willing to share and have published on the school website.
