

Extracts from a New York Diary

As I begin this diary of my week in New York, we are in mid-flight. It is 4.30pm British time, and we have been in the air for about three hours. The whole experience so far has been amazing. Our car picked us up from Liz's house in Haywards Heath at about 10.30am – earlier than expected, but who's complaining – we were pacing the floor, desperate to be off, anyway! When we arrived at Gatwick, we were amazed to be treated to a drive-in check-in. Yes, I'm serious! The driver pulled into a special check-in building, where our luggage was taken and we were issued with our boarding cards. We were then driven to the departure lounge, and that was it! No queuing, no waiting, no luggage! It was wonderful! We happily made our way to the VIP lounge for something to eat and a drink, and before long, we were boarding our plane. What a way to travel! My wonderment had hardly begun, however. We were travelling in Upper Class, and our seats were upstairs. They were huge and our air steward, Joseph by name, welcomed us with glasses of champagne. The food was wonderful and we each had our own television screen with a choice of six films. Joseph was all the attention and most courteous, with an endearing habit of blessing us every other sentence. After dining and wining, Liz and I dropped off to sleep, waking about a hour later, to a smiling Joseph who blessed us once again, and assured us we had slept like babies!

Sunday dawned, bright and clear. We had slept well and were excited to start our first real day in the Big Apple! We had already agreed that we wanted to go to Solemn Mass at St Patrick's Cathedral. The girl on the reception desk confirmed that the time of this service was 10.15am. Breakfast was served in our room by John, a bright Brooklyn young man, cheerful and talkative. Showered and full of breakfast, we set off for St Patrick's which was only a short walk up 5th Avenue. We arrived at about 10.00 and people were pouring into the Cathedral. We followed the hordes. The previous Communion Service was still in progress and the place was packed. We jostled with the crowds at the back of the Cathedral as the service ended. Neatly dressed ushers guided the celebrants out and we were allowed to take our seats . . . or pews. The first 12 or so pews were roped off for the regular parishioners. We took our seats about 20 pews back from the altar. Each pew seated about six people. When our six were in place, a communal kneeling stool was lowered, and I knelt to greet God in this beautiful house of worship. By the time the service began, the entire Cathedral was packed, with all the seats in the Lady Chapel and other ancillary chapels filled. Television screens were strategically placed for those in seats too far away to see the altar. The service was taken by Cardinal O'Connor, a soft-spoken but powerful man. Behind us and above was the choir, with one of their number at the front to lead the singing. She had an incredibly beautiful voice and sang with passion. When it

was time for the congregation to sing the responses, she raised her arms high and led us into soaring worship. Cardinal O'Connor took the pulpit after the readings, and began by inviting those who were still standing at the back, to take the empty seats immediately in front of the altar. The ushers quietly led them forward, and I wished we had been late arriving, so that we could have taken these privileged seats. All too soon, the service ended, and while the choir sang, we silently left this amazing House of God. We didn't speak much as we walked slowly up 5th Avenue. We had both been so moved by the service that speech seemed somewhat inadequate.

Darkness was drawing in, as we headed back. At the edge of the park were several horse and buggy teams. We had already decided to end our visit to the park with a ride in one of these. Before we could approach them, however, a young man appeared and in a soft Irish brogue, invited us to ride in his buggy. He smiled at us with his sparkling black eyes and before we knew it, we were seated in his buggy with a warm blanket wrapped safely round our legs to keep out the cold. He introduced himself as Peter and having gently encouraged his magnificent white mare forward, he turned back to us and treated us to a highly informative tour, pointing out all the places of interest. He told us of his father's farm in southern Ireland, saying that each year, he returned for the lambing season. We were enchanted! As we neared the end of the tour, he asked where we were staying. I told him the name of the hotel and Peter replied, with a slight smile on his lips, "Well, I've finished for the day, and heading back to the stables. I'll take you to your hotel." We looked apprehensively at the teeming streets, full of fast-moving cars. The night was now fully dark and all the headlights and street lights were on. Before we could prevaricate, however, Peter had turned back to his horse, and with a gentle "Get along there, now, girl," she suddenly transformed herself from dobbie to Red Rum, and we were off! We were flung back into our seats, as people leapt from under her flying hooves, and cars mounted the pavement. I was terrified and exhilarated. Before we had had time to draw breath we had arrived. The mare once again slowed to a gentle trot, as Peter urged her to a stop. "Here you are, then ladies," he said, as if this had been a completely ordinary ride. We stuttered our thanks and paid him the agreed fee for our tour, although I must admit, I added a slightly large tip!

Dinner in the hotel was a sumptuous but quiet affair. During the evening Liz had received a call from some colleagues of Jeremy, her other half – two Americans who absolutely insisted on taking us to lunch the next day. We readily agreed! A change to our original plans was a simple affair, and we spent the following morning visiting several more mind-blowing shops, before making our way to a restaurant called Citay. We were greeted loudly by two vastly contrasting Americans; one slight of build with a merry smile and twinkling eyes and the

other larger than life and very jolly. Our meal was exquisite and the company brilliant. Kerry and Whippy were gentlemen of the old school, rising when we left the table and ensuring that glasses were permanently filled. By the end of the meal, we were like old friends, and they insisted we accompany them back to the dealing floor where they worked. It felt as if we had walked into a film set and was hard to accept as reality, although I was assured that the floor was relatively quiet, as they were winding down for a day's holiday – 11th November when Americans celebrate Veterans Day. At last, we made our excuses and left to much protestations to come back and keep in touch. As we walked back to our hotel, Liz and I talked about the promised Veterans Parade on the following day, and agreed we would go along and watch. Tired, and I must confess, slightly tipsy, we decided to have another quiet evening. After all, tomorrow we were also going to see *Phantom of the Opera*!

Next day, we headed up 5th Avenue and were soon engulfed in brass band music as the Veterans Parade made their way along this famous road. As each group of soldiers passed, they were enthusiastically applauded, and, of course, Liz and I joined in. The weather had turned showery, but this did not detract from the splendour of the parade. As the last group passed us by, the weather began to clear, and Liz and I headed once again for the shops. I had really caught the bug by this time, and not satisfied with one shop, we agreed to split up to enable us to cover a greater territory! Some two hours later, and loaded down with parcels, we met again in the hotel bar. After comparing purchases, we adjointed to our room to begin the preparations for the evening ahead. This time, as we were dressed up, we took a taxi (I really enjoyed hailing one, just round the corner from our hotel!). We had already decided to have a couple of cocktails before going on to the theatre. I was so exited by this time, that I could hardly talk ... an unusual occurrence for me, I know! At last, it was time to make our way to the theatre and take our seats. We were lucky enough to have seats just 4 rows from the front, and as the show began I completely lost myself in the splendour and wonder of it all. How can I possibly describe this show? Words like magnificent, powerful and passionate spring to mind. I was absolutely enthralled and wept buckets as the story reached its climax. Too moved to do anything else, we walked slowly back to the hotel in silence. Neither of us could possibly envisage simply going to bed, so we headed for the bar, and as we ordered our first drink, we began animatedly discussing the show. Several drinks later and very tired we made our way to our room and were soon asleep.

Suddenly, it seemed, it was Thursday and the eve of our departure. We still needed to visit the Statue of Liberty, and took a taxi as early as possible to the harbour, where we caught the ferry to Liberty Island. Queues were comparatively light and within half an hour of landing, we were inside the statue. Here we were faced with a choice; either take a lift to the feet, or climb to the crown. I had wanted to go all the way, but inside the

crowds had gathered, and the climb would have taken at least 4 hours, at a slow crawl. This did not appeal, so we opted for the lift to the feet, where we were presented with an outstanding view of Manhattan. We spent sometime, simply gazing at the amazing sight until finally we made our way back to ground level and went into the museum. Walking slowly round, I was fascinated by the explanations of how the statue had been built. An unbelievable undertaking. However, further into the museum we discovered details of the first immigrants to arrive, who were greeted by this magnificent lady. Their deputations and histories were so moving, I found myself silently weeping. At last, we left Liberty Island and took the ferry to Ellis Island where the immigrants were processed – a sad place where many desperate people were de-humanised and some poor souls were sent back to Europe, as they were considered to be carriers of communicable diseases. Finally, we left for Manhattan and hailed another cab back to 5th Avenue. Time for us was now short, and we split up again to do our final shopping. We met up quite late in the hotel, and once again gleefully displayed our new purchases. A splendid evening meal followed, and finally exhausted, we fell into bed.

It was Friday, and our last day in New York. Somewhat subdued, we packed our bulging bags in readiness for vacating our room at midday. We decided to go out for one last walk round and headed for Trump Tower, which was mind-blowing in its opulence. Time was, however, nor our enemy and we soon had to leave to book out of our room. Liz had decided that we would have one final, magnificent lunch in the restaurant attached to our hotel, which is reputed to be the best in New York. It certainly lived up to its reputation, and replete, we wandered back to reception to see if our car had arrived. Imagine my amazement when we were shown to a stretch limousine! So, in splendour, we swept majestically through the streets of Manhattan, back to the airport. An uneventful wait at the airport was soon followed by a restful and easy flight back home. We were on the 'red eye', which meant that after the evening meal, we in Upper Class were offered sleep suits and the lights were dimmed. I slept fitfully, but even so, it seemed no time before we were being woken for breakfast. As I watched the English coast below me, with each town like a gold and silver jewel on a black cloth, I thought back to my holiday of a lifetime. I still found it hard to believe that I had finally fulfilled my long-held ambition to visit the Big Apple. So many times when one wishes hard for something, and if finally arrives, it can be a disappointment and not live up to expectations. Not in this case, however. New York had been all, and more, that I had wanted. Instead of satisfying my desire, however, this short visit has only made me want to go back. As the words of the song say New York, New York! So good, they named it twice!

Tina Johnson, Admissions Secretary

Duke of Edinburgh Awards

Group One's Purpose – trees and plants

Dulcie Bailey, Amy Drinkwater, Cassie Kamtarin, Kinal Patel.

Introduction

In our group there was Sarah Gartside, Dulcie Bailey, Amy Drinkwater, Cassie Kamtarin and Kinal Patel. Originally our purpose was the state of the footpaths, though we later extended it, while we were on our expedition, as we felt our purpose was a little dull, especially when we compared ours to everyone else's! So we also decided to investigate the different types of leaves we passed along our route. Once we had got to the campsite, as we had got there a couple of hours earlier than expected (due to not many rests which lasted more than a couple of minutes, brisk walking and we had obviously been on the safe side while we were writing the expected time that we would be at a certain place at, so we allowed ourselves lots of extra time which we did not need), so we found it quite amusing by winding Mrs Dempster and Mrs Abbott up by trying to convince them that we had all clambered into a taxi! Even though we were quite tired after our long walk that day we still managed to find the energy to enjoy ourselves in the evening by playing some games, then I think everyone found it very relaxing to finish the evening off with toasted marshmallows and all sorts of different songs around the campfire, until we finally retired to bed and prepared for the next day.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the trip and we are now going to run you through what we did and what information we managed to gather from our purpose.

Day 1

We left school at 8.45am and arrived, still tired from the early morning start, at the RSPCA centre. We set off at 9.30am raring to go and ready for whatever the day threw at us. We trekked for miles in heavy boots, over-sized waterproofs, and incredibly uncomfortable rucksacks. But as the day progressed, we started to ignore the aches and pains, and began to enjoy the beautiful countryside that surrounded us. We decided, early on, to concentrate on our purpose the second day, as we were trying to concentrate on our route so much



the first day! After thinking we would never see civilisation again, we regained our knowledge of where we were on the map and headed quickly to our destination – Park Wood. We arrived first, much to the annoyance of the other groups, and decided to bask out in the sun, while waiting for our other companions to return. We cooked for dinner: pasta shells, our special home made sauce and some chocolate we had saved over. That evening, when all the groups had finally returned, we all sat by the campfire which Mrs Abbott and Mrs Dempster had made (with the help of our group, collecting all the fire wood!) and sang lots of well known, typical campfire songs. Whilst toasting our marshmallows, we listened to everybody's recollections of their day, and laughed at all the messes they got themselves into! Shattered from the day's walking, we all retired to bed, glad to finally be comfortable and rested.





would say! It felt like walking up a vertical angle of 90 degrees! Finally, having climbed on virtually all fours to reach the top, we slumped down for our lunch, over-looking the countryside that surrounded us. It was breath taking! After lunch, we staggered all the way up to Foredown Tower, to be greeted by another group, who were just as worn out as we were! Going home on the minibus, we were all silent, completely exhausted from the weekend's expedition, but having gained a lot of knowledge and information about camping and other issues.

Day 2

We were awoken by our faithful friend Becky, in the morning, screaming at the top of her voice 'Morning!', so Cassie and I decided to get her back by running through our rendition of 'Morning has broken', as loudly as possible. Although, I don't think the rest of the campsite were too impressed – I can't think why? We scrambled out of 'bed', and laughed at the sight of everyone this early in the morning! (Especially the teachers!) After reviving ourselves with a cup of absolutely disgusting tea, we started on breakfast. We cooked ourselves some bacon rolls, and dived into our cereal that we had gathered from home. After munching through piles of bacon, it was mine (Sarah) and Cassie's turn to do the washing-up, great! Luckily, though, we managed to dive out of the way of Mrs Lewis and her dreaded camera! We set off, from the campsite, at 10.30am and decided to storm the countryside with our presence. We had a few breaks, but managed to keep going all through the day. That is until we came to the dreaded hill. More like a mountain, I



Group Two's Purpose – Gravestones

Laura Brooks, Zulehkha Waheed, Naomi Stephenson, Samantha Compton, Felicity Carr

Introduction

Our purpose was to survey the gravestones in The Holy Trinity Church at Poynings. The oldest gravestone we found was for 1823. The youngest was for 1917 (this was in memory of a soldier who died in World War I).

Day 1

We started at the RSPCA car park in Patcham and as soon as we got out of the minibus it began to rain and so we all hurried to get our waterproof clothing on. We then started on our walk. After an hour of walking we began searching for Poynings (unsuccessfully!). We were on one side of an extremely steep hill and kept on returning to Pyecombe. Firstly we struggled up and down a very steep hill and then we had to walk through a field of horses, which petrified 3 members of our group! After 4 hours of searching we found Saddlescombe Farm which led to Poynings. Later we met up with our assessor, who told us to carry on with our walk towards Fulking. By this time we were all worn out and tired! We made our way to Park Wood, where we stayed the night. Everybody had already arrived before us, which they all found extremely funny.

Day 2

What a day! so many things happened today – thank goodness and all the team work because we did not get lost! We'd learnt that we needed to look at our surroundings more than just following the paths. When we started, our spirits were high even though most of us were suffering from hayfever, sore

feet, asthma, blisters and lack of sleep. Our pace was fast and confident and we were on time even though we had set off later than planned.

As we were walking, all of a sudden – aaaghhhh! I had fallen down a ditch with a bed of stinging nettles surrounding me. I was in shock and had been stung on my face, neck and arms – but everybody kept calm and worked well in a team and got me out safely and treated me well. Our next big obstacle confronted us when we had to climb a steep slope of about 50/60 degrees. With teamwork and support we conquered it. When we arrived, the sense of achievement was sensational – one that all will always remember!

Zulehkha Waheed

Group Three's Purpose – Dictaphone Diary

Julia Bezanson, Sarah Cockett, Charlene Evans, Irene Kwong, Lauren Lansdowne, Faye Woodbridge.

Entry 1: Unfortunately, Sarah began to wipe it as Mrs Dempster had rewrapped the tape and Sarah didn't know this. However, this is Saturday morning, we had arrived by minibus. To start off with it was raining which was very annoying to those wearing glasses.

Entry 4: The rain eased off and it was getting very hot. We were joking about Jack because Charlene had been talking about him on the practice expedition as well.

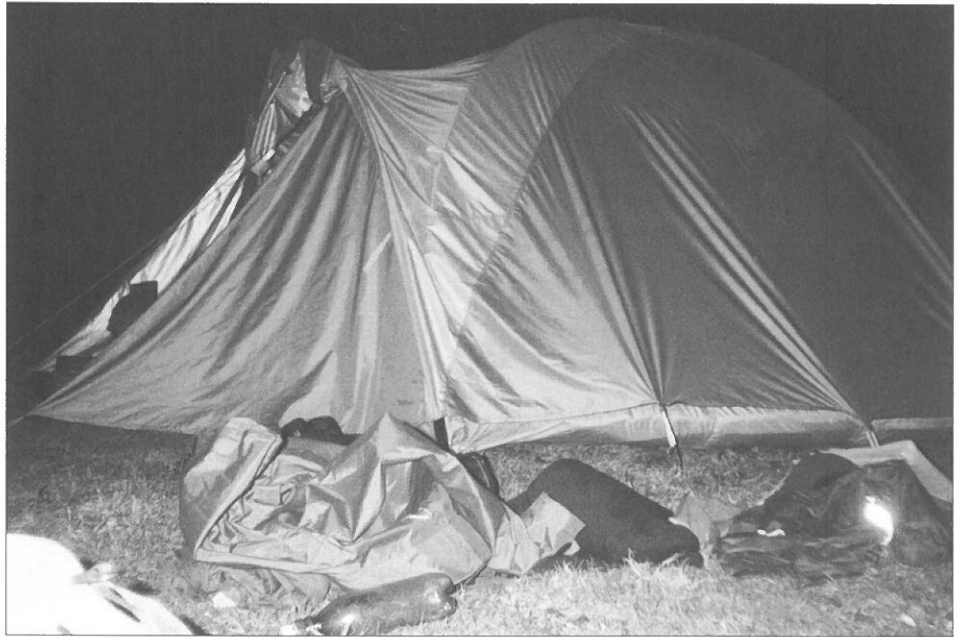
12 o'clock: We were in fact really close to the right path, we took a wrong turn but we stopped quite quickly, however, we lost a lot of time in the field working out where we were.

Lunch stop: Irene had not yet taken off her water-proofs, so she decided to then. She had them round her ankles which looked very funny.

1.50pm: Faye and Lauren both want to be actresses so throughout the day they were practising accents, but mostly Scottish as it's their favourite.

2.15pm: Irene getting runover was one of the biggest events of the weekend. Faye and Lauren who saw it (the bike) coming, parted to let it through. However, Irene didn't see it and so got hit. We were very careful with First Aid, using gloves, sterile dressings etc.

Evening: we were all very relieved to reach camp. We were in fact 2 hours late. Once we had rested we felt much better. The evening was good fun with one assault course and campfire. Because we were in the woods it was really pretty. We had a lovely clear night sky and there were loads of glow worms which were really cute.



Sunday:

Morning: we were all quite tired in the morning although we all slept better than on the training expedition. We left half an hour late which didn't help our arrival time. Sunday was less eventful than Saturday although we kept getting lost. The footpath we were looking for at one point turned out to be a huge chalk road which looked like a construction site. Because we thought it was something else we avoided it which cost us a lot of time and extra distance. Because of the detour we had to climb over more barbed-wire fences and ended up along a main road. When we saw the SMH minibus we were very relieved because we knew we were close.

When we finally reached the tower we almost collapsed but we had a great feeling of achievement. Several of us are planning to do Silver, but even those who aren't are pleased we did Bronze. We all found it a very worth while experience: though it was exhausting we were all pleased to get home and have a bath or shower. Despite all of the difficulties we had, we overall had a very enjoyable trip.



Group Four's Duke of Edinburgh Project – Bronze Award

Laura Bowes, Clare Moss, Amie Noone,
Kerrie Trembling, Becky Rowland

Laura Bowes (Age 14)

"I'm really looking forward to it. I love camping!"

Kerrie Trembling (Age: 15)

"I can't wait to go camping!"

Clare Moss (Age: 15)

"It's going to be soooooooooo good!"

Amie Noone (Age: 15)

"This expedition should be really good. I hope we don't get too lost!"

Becky Rowland (Age: 15)

"I can't wait to go. I love camping"

Our purpose

Our purpose, 'the state of the footpaths and the investigation of different leaves', was quite an interesting purpose to choose!

We decided to leave our purpose until the second day of our expedition as we were too pre-occupied with other things so the thought of doing any work was totally out of the question, we were also too busy talking about whether we would still be around the following day as Notradamous predicted the end of the world.

However, when we arose on Sunday morning finding we were still alive, we thought we would get on with our purpose. As soon as we started our walk we picked leaves off trees that came in the way of the footpath; by the end of the day we managed to have quite a collection of leaves! We then sorted them out the following day at school and got rid of the leaves where there were more than one from the same type of tree. From these leaves we managed to study them and it was quite interesting to see which trees kept appearing in the way of the footpaths more than other types of trees.

From our leaf investigation we found out that the tree that kept appearing in the way of the footpath most of all was the Silver Birch Tree. We passed a lot of Oak trees but they did not get in the way of the path that much. We also came across Beech and Ash trees which tended to be tucked away from our footpath but one Beech Tree almost blocked our footpath at one point!

Our second section of our purpose about 'the state of the footpath' we found a lot easier to do, as we did not have to stop on route, it also kept us always having to do something as we were constantly looking at the footpath. Even though we were concentrating on our purpose more on the second day we found the footpaths on the first day a lot easier, as at one point we had to walk for what seemed like miles on this lovely hard soil, which was very flat and it must have been this road that made our journey so much faster as we were able to walk so much faster.

However, on the second day the footpaths were not quite so nice, at one point we had to walk through this really overgrown field which at some places it was almost impossible to see the path as the stinging nettles grew either side of the path along with lots of other plants. It was also very difficult to walk up the very steep bumpy hills, although once at the top it was a lot easier and we were all relieved at finally getting to the top! Once we were here it was an easy walk back down to Foredown Tower along narrow green paths in lovely fields which made our walk a whole lot more enjoyable to be able to look at the beautiful scenery.

After the first day we were all absolutely exhausted. To say we got lost in an understatement. When we finally arrived at the campsite four hours late (don't ask me how!), we must have walked our distance for that day at least twice (or that's how it felt) and the group was just glad to pitch the tent and get some food cooking.

After getting some food inside us came the chore of washing up (burnt sausage is definitely a real pain to get off pans) and then the assault course. We eventually ended up toasting marshmallows and singing songs around the campfire (where I successfully burnt myself with a burning stick – clumsy is my middle name!). By this time it was really dark, and as we trooped off to our tents we saw all the little glow-worms. The stars were really bright and the evening was peaceful.

All five of us piled into the one huge tent, and after much shuffling and fidgeting we all slept well.

Here are some thoughts on the day:

"Hello – this is Laura!

We got lost more than once today and my stress levels rose! We went through many fields of cows, which wasn't good when they started to walk towards us (I am scared of cows). My feet aren't as bad as last time and now I am at the campsite I am actually able to walk. We have had dinner – noodles, sausages and vegetables – and we have also been through the assault course. Kerrie is covered in mud!"

"Hi, it's Clare.

Words cannot say how I feel. I'm looking forward to a long sleep. We've been lost 6 or 7 times today! It's 9.48pm and getting dark."

"Hi, it's Kerrie.

Today didn't exactly go as planned. We got lost at least 8 times and I'm a bit stressed, but we had a laugh (most of the time). I went skidding down a hill on my knees. I also got completely covered in mud going through a tunnel in the assault course. Well it's getting dark now and I can't see much, so BYE."

Day 2

Day 2 was definitely a lot better organised. After Cassie and Sarah's (in the other group) lovely version of 'Morning has broken', and persistent shouts from Becky, we all dragged ourselves out of our sleeping bags. Some went for wash while others started a filling breakfast of

tomatoes, mushrooms, sausages and bacon. When the washing up was done we were off again. We actually walked quite fast and were ahead of time, so we took an extra break at a little pub called the Shepherd and Dog. After climbing a gigantic hill (we all swear it was a mountain) we collapsed for lunch. After a slight confusion over which way next to go, and some help from some dog walkers we set off again on our route to Foredown Towers.

After walking for ages we finally spotted it – I think I can say for the whole group that it was an extremely pleasant sight – and that gave us our last little boost of energy and determination to reach it. To our amazement we were only about half/three quarters of an hour late, and the first (!) to arrive. Once there we met Dave and the lovely Mrs D ferried a truly relieved and exhausted group back to SMH in a minibus. Once there we sorted out our rucksacks and returned the school's equipment. We phoned our parents and we went home tired and aching, but with a great sense of achievement. We just hope we pass!

Jack Williamson's widow planting a tree to his memory



Fifth Form outing to the Britain at War Experience, and the Houses of Parliament

The whine of the all-clear penetrated the darkness of the air raid shelter. The door opened, and eight more fifth form students emerged from the shelter, looking rather shell-shocked. It was the 16th September, and it was the annual fifth form trip to the 'Britain at War' experience and the Houses of Parliament. We had arrived in good time, and were thoroughly involved in being at war. We looked at posters, listened to genuine recordings of radio broadcasts, and read the rules and regulations posted on various walls.

We were busy admiring the soldiers' uniforms of the war era, when a caretaker kindly interrupted to ask if any of us would like to try on some genuine wartime uniforms. The result was several girls looking rather strange, in a mixture of school uniform and army trousers or jackets, all wearing oversized camouflage helmets. Some even braved the 50 year gas masks!

When we had finished being 'soldiers', we sat in a life-sized Anderson Shelter to listen to the noises of the air raid warning. Doodlebugs, German bombers, Spitfires, and finally the all clear. The experience was exactly the same (though much shorter) as that of the war, and truly terrifying. There was always a tense atmosphere in the air raid shelter, even though we all knew that it was only a simulation, and we weren't really going to be bombed; most people were glad when they left that piece of memorabilia behind.

We had one final experience to taste, that of the Blitz itself. Whilst we waited in a small wartime bar, some of us got carried away by the 40s music playing from the juke box, and couldn't resist the urge to dance and sing along. However, all too soon, we were transported into a world of smoke and sirens – a newly struck bomb site in London. Seemingly precariously balanced wooden boards marked our path through the debris, and allowed us a ringside view of a fireman rescuing a woman from her burning home, a severed water main, several collapsed houses, and, most horrifyingly, models of people who were dead or dying. The experience brought home the horrors of the war in a frightening visual and noisy display. As we left the 'Blitz experience' for the relative safety of the gift shop, there were few who didn't breathe a sigh of relief that Britain is not at war today.

It was time for lunch, so we walked across the road, through a shopping Centre, and onto the walkway at the side of the river Thames. We arrived at Parliament just in time to hear a Conservative MP, Patrick Jenkin, talk about his daily routine as a shadow Transport Minister. The working day of a politician is far longer than I expected, often starting at eight or half past in the morning, and continuing until ten or eleven at night. In addition to long working hours during the week, MPs have a

responsibility to take surgeries on Saturday morning to hear the views of their constituents on any major issues. After the talk, we were invited to ask questions, and discussions on how the Conservatives planned to regain power at the next election, and how PR (proportional representation) could effect our government in the future then ensued.

After all the questions had been asked, we were spilt into small groups, and taken on a tour of the Houses of Parliament – with strict instructions not to sit down in anybody's chair, in case we were 'removed'. We admired the Lords' Chamber, were shown what happened in the opening ceremony of Parliament and walked, like Blackrod through the lobby, and to the door of the House of Commons. We then walked round to enter the Commons through the entrance at the end where the Speaker sits, after going through the 'voting lobbies', where, if we were MPs, our votes on an issue would be recorded. I was lucky enough to hold onto the same box that the leaders of Britain do when they are debating in the Commons – which (for me anyway) was an unforgettable experience. After meeting the other groups back in the main lobby, we all returned to the coach for the journey home – after a most memorable day out. We would all like to thank Mrs Carnochan for organising the trip.

Hannah Redman, VR

Trip to Ypres ('Wipers')

Everything prepared the night before. Set both alarms for 4 a.m. but beat them by two minutes. Ablutions, coffee and out to arrive SMH 5.15. Most of the third form, some fourth and four staff ready to leave by 5.30. (Last year noticed a crow chewing a dead snake in centre of Five Ways road junction).

Tedious but unavoidable motorway haul to Dover.

Everyone well awake and quite excited once parked in bowels of ferry. Slight whiff of vomit on staircase ascent to main decks but all is fresh on arrival at neon lit, impulse shoppers paradise – a miniature, floating Churchill Square.

Out of ferry to uncluttered Northern France and comfortably short journey to Belgian border. Into Poperinghe, THE town for all soldiers in transit to Flanders front and original meeting place of Bud Flanagan and Chesney Allen. Coach driver indicates first major relic, an old brewery once used as a delousing station. The purging of lice and eggs (known as 'chatting') became a favoured past time of resting soldiers.

On to Ypres and Hellfire Corner, a junction and focal point for well-aimed German artillery. First stop – Sanctuary Wood and Hill 62. Enter a private, well-stocked 'Steptoe's Junkyard' of a museum. Some pristine items, but many rusting and the worse for wear. Most memorable are the wooden, stereoscopic viewing boxes offering what must be some of the most striking images recorded from any war. Slightly concerned that girls would be upset by horrific photos but no nightmares reported as yet.

Out of museum to surprisingly shallow section of preserved zig-zag trench and occasional but still living battle-scarred tree. Contemporary aerial photos of trench lines look like hastily stitched wounds. Museum and trenches owned by same family since 1930s but wealthy owner very irascible and clearly suspicious of school parties. Artefacts for sale: 20 quid for a hand grenade, 30 bob for a bullet (much cheaper and more prolific at Albert on the Somme).

Stroll up incline to understated Canadian memorial on Hill 62. No hill on Western Front is higher than a few metres but most saw the bitterest fighting. Drive across neat and fertile ploughed fields to Tyne Cot cemetery (largest British war cemetery in world). Impossible to comprehend that this area of few square miles consumed more lives and material than any other in history. Cemetery a white, bright example of 'English Churchyard' concept of architect Edwin Lutyens. Assist girl looking for grave – she has correct row but wrong cemetery!

Leave Passchendaele Ridge and cross No Man's Land. Difficult to make leap of imagination to envisage area as one massive, foul swamp ready and able to swallow men, horses, vehicles (many water-filled shell holes were 20 feet in depth). Observe freshly-harvested evidence to propel that leap of imagination across 8 decades.

German cemetery at Langemarck. Enter through squat, blockhouse style porch flanked by two chambers of remembrance, each dimly lit by single energy saving light bulb. Walls panelled in plain wood displaying a multitude of carefully carved names. Visitors book much more a book of condolence. Surprisingly small ground area contains tens of thousands of burials. Black marble grave markers lie flat (in submission?) Three black 'figures of mourning' keep vigil. Boughs of huge trees block sun's rays, hence marked drop in temperature. Apologies Christians but no note of perpetual light here. Cannot conceive of a more poignant symbol of Germany's tragic loss and, indeed, ensuing 30 years.

Back to 'Wipers' and rebuilt Cloth Hall housing well thought out, multimedia, interactive museum. Two elements always missing from war museums – smell and fear. Down to Menin Gate – for many the memorial of Great War. Cannot stay for daily sounding of Last Post at 8pm. Ponder on thought that a handful of tones from harmonic series can rival many great symphonies in ability to elicit emotional response. 6.30pm encoach for Blighty.

Farewell to land of scrap metal and scrapped lives. Arrive at Brighton 11.30pm.

Roger Roser

Te Deum Laudamus!

Following the success of last year's Festival event with John Rutter, we welcomed the composer Andrew Carter to lead a workshop on his *Te Deum*.

His lively manner and amusing anecdotes – and especially his surprise cartwheel – endeared him to the singers which ensured they kept their eyes on the conductor!

The event had been organised by Portslade Community College Choir, with sponsorship from Macdonald Music Service, Steyning, and the Oxford University Press, Andrew Carter's publishers. Our Intermediate Choir and some of the Elliott Choir joined choristers from Brighton Parish Church, the Choir of St Christopher's School, Hove, and The Sixpenny Singers from Henfield. They brought joy to the proceedings in three colourful movements which taught the adult singers so much about vital performance. They were the highlight of the whole day.

The new Johannus organ console was wheeled to centre nave, where rapport between audience and performers was at its maximum. Charles Macdonald provided two outstanding solos and a 'bon bon' in Walton's 'Facade' with a recitation of 'Popular Song' from a surprised Headmistress, who had had no rehearsal! The 150+ spectators in the gallery helped to end the jolly proceedings with a rendering of 'Oh, I do like to be

beside the seaside!'

We are delighted that St Mark's Chapel is now a venue for Brighton Festival events. Next year, Bob Chilcott, once a member of the Kings' Singers, will take us on another musical excursion.

S M Meek, Headmistress



Geography Trip to London

When we went to the University of London we saw lots of experiments and got to take part in all of them.

Experiment No. 1 was seeing how water infiltrates the ground in different areas, there were four areas urban, forest, clay and beach.

The urban area let out the most water through the tubes in the sides of the tank, then the clay, then the beach and then the forest. In real life it would be the same.

Experiment No. 2 was seeing what effect a dam can have on a river. This experiment was really fun because we were able to position settlements.

At the end of 10 minutes we found out the effect of the dam. Our sand base had eroded and our settlements had been washed away. Then we found that the only settlement left was the one up on the mountain, but not for long, because soon the mountain collapsed from the amount of water rushing by and eroding it.

We entered our results on a computer in the lab.

Fiona Barley, IH

Simulation Exercise Flooding



The Great Egg Race

This was a Science and Technology Challenge to be solved by family teams. When I gave the letter about this to my mum she said "Your brother would love this," and so we joined a team of mum, brother, my friend Rebecca Labertouche and myself.

When we arrived we found the hall laid out with tables, clamp stands, rubber bands and a little egg in a basket. What would we have to do? We had 10 St Mary's Hall dollars with which to buy any extra materials and equipment we wanted during the evening.

First we had to make an egg bungee jump into a bucket. But there was a catch! It couldn't hit the bottom or the egg would crack, but you also couldn't miss the water because that would be a failure and there was one other problem the water was only one inch deep!

Our team wove rubber bands together to make a bungee rope which was held by a clamp half on one side, half of the rope on the other side. One side had the egg, which was in a net, made of, guess what, rubber bands, and the other side had some weights on it.

After our team had woven a rope out of rubber bands ours didn't work well so the egg never touched the water but it was very close.

The second thing we had to do was make the egg 'fly' along a nylon thread about 3 metres long. We spent 2 dollars on balloons, 1 on card and 2 on neoprene, which we used to protect the egg.

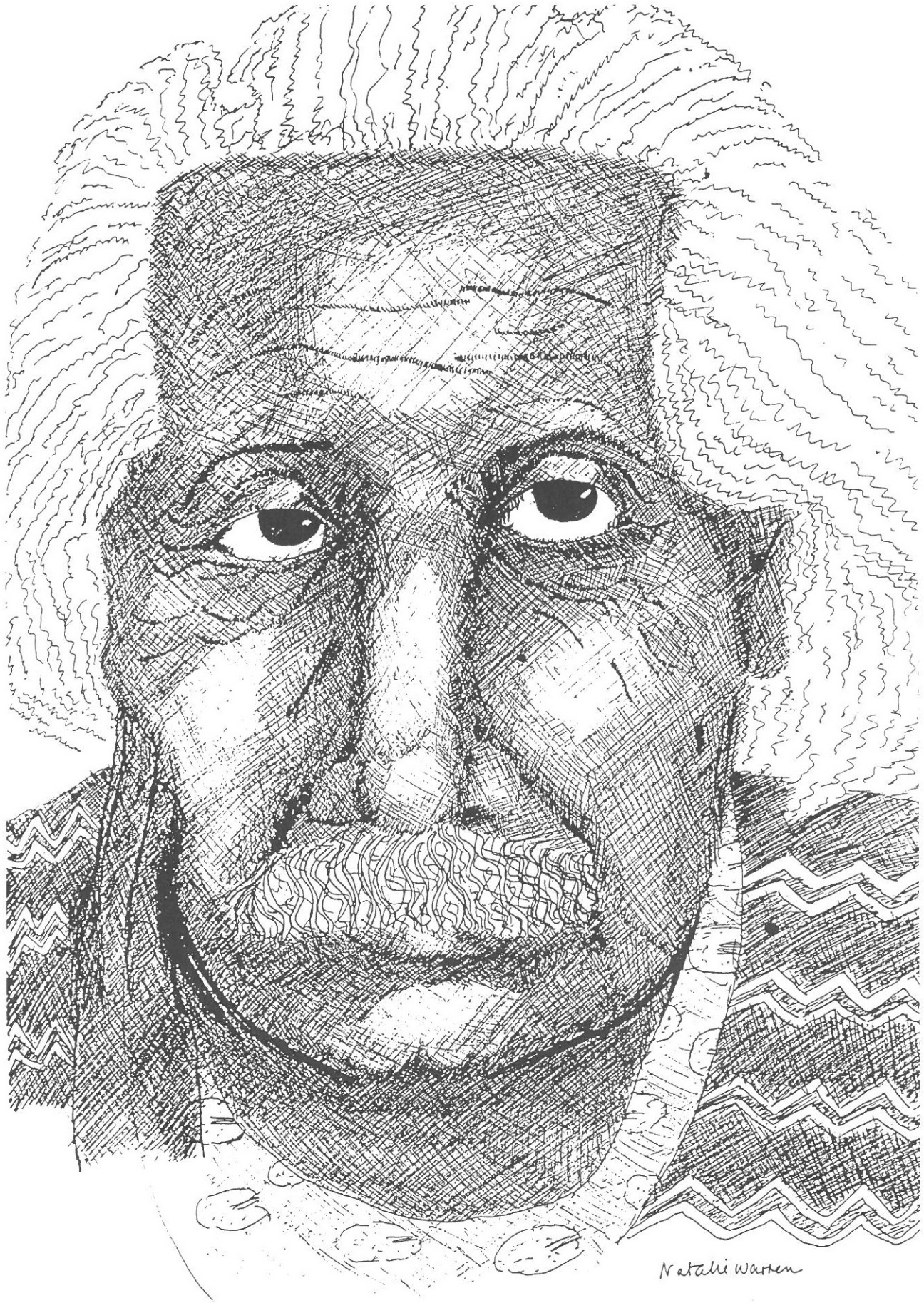
We called our 'eggcraft' 'Bluebird 2' because my grandfather had helped to design the original Bluebird speedcar. We spent ages on our craft. It went only 15 cms. We had thought that with two balloons it would go further than that. But ours must have been too heavy.

It was a really fun evening, with lots of things to do, and I would recommend it to anyone who likes making things and making a lot of noise, like my brother..

Fiona Barley

Concentration!





Albert Einsten, by Natalie Warren, 4th year