



## Dear parents, carers and students



Welcome to this edition of the 6th Form Fortnightly Focus.

Despite the fact that it may feel like we have only just started the year, the pace of A level learning doesn't let up as we already have mock exams (PPEs) scheduled for early January.

Indeed, the Sixth Form continues to be a hive of activity, UCAS applications are already being sent and students receiving

offers. If your son or daughter has not completed their part of the application, please encourage them to do so as soon as possible. Our tutor team are very experienced in the UCAS process and are on hand to support them. We will be organising trips to university open days in Bristol, Cardiff, Falmouth and Bath. It is never too early for year 12 students to start looking ahead and considering if higher education is for them. We strongly recommend starting to look at university courses now and visiting as many open days as possible. It is vital to see the campus, feel and experience the place where they will spend the next chapter of their lives. On this note, Assistant Principal Mr Ruse took a group of student's on an excellent 'Future Teachers' conference at Buckland Abbey, highlighting the skills and attributes required to become a teacher. It is a real

pleasure to see our students grasping the opportunities we can offer, these are usually advertised in assemblies.

Students continue to be actively involved in the local community, two sixth formers, Mike Coomber and Pete Alexander are wonderful examples. For the last seven months they have been running a popular Code Club at Tavistock Library for primary school children, teaching them the basics of computer coding: valuable skills for the technological world in which we live. We received a wonderful letter from the Library commending them on their efforts; we are very proud to have such committed and generous individuals in our Sixth Form.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the prefects and the myriad of students who supported faculties at the recent 6th form open evening. They are the real face of the sixth form, and their dedication and enthusiasm was fantastic for prospective parents and students to see. Similarly, we would like to thank the parents and carers for the practical and emotional support they provide, enabling students to take part in all the extra-curricular activities which make our College the vibrant and successful place that it is. *Mr Galli & Mr Jacob.*



## Remembrance Service



On Friday, November 11, I had the privilege of attending the Tavistock College Remembrance service, held in St Eustachius' Church.

I have attended this service on several occasions and never fail to come away full of admiration for the ability, confidence and respect shown by all students who attend.

I know how difficult it can be to stand in front of a packed house and read, sing or play a musical instrument,

all these things were done with skill and clarity.

My thanks go to the students and staff involved - you should all be very proud of yourselves and your school. Well done to you all. *Cllr David Cloke, Past Mayor of West Devon.*

Speaking at the annual Year 9 and Year 13 Remembrance service was an emotional yet enjoyable experience for me. Emotional because as some people know my Dad is currently in the forces serving in the Royal Navy as a Lieutenant. He is, at present, fighting for our country on a 9 month deployment around the world. This made remembrance that much harder for me as the dangers the soldiers faced in the two Great Wars is a dangerous reality for my Dad, me and my family. Enjoyable because in spite of the dangers faced I am immensely proud of what he does and to represent him on the alter at St. Eustachius was incredible.



*Lawrence Dobson, Tavistock College Head Boy.*

## Baroness Jolly Visit

Tavistock College hosted a talk from a member of the House of Lords on 25th November to encourage students to become more engaged with the political and parliamentary process. Baroness Jolly met with sixth form Law and Business Studies students, and the House council students elected from all years, for an hour to talk about the work and role of the House of Lords. This was followed by a question and answer session on various aspects of the parliamentary process and life at Westminster generally.

Helen Harris teacher of Law at Tavistock College said, "This was a really special event for Tavistock college as Baroness Jolly used to teach maths and computing here – she was delighted to meet up with former students Jo Neill, now a teacher of computing at Tavistock herself, following in her teacher's footsteps, and also James Bird, photographer!!"

The visit was arranged through the Lord Speaker's "Peers in Schools" programme, which has been running across the UK since 2007 and has so far involved around 75,000 young people. This continuing outreach programme sends members of the House of Lords into schools/academies and colleges across the country to give talks in support of the citizenship curriculum. For further information, see the Lord Speaker's web page at [www.parliament.uk/lordspeaker](http://www.parliament.uk/lordspeaker).



# Student Perspective

## An Exposition of Democracy

by Molly Bolding

*"The best argument against democracy is a five-minute conversation with the average voter"* Winston Churchill

In the clichéd spirit of every press outlet so far, it's fair to say that the US Election of 2016 was one of the most tumultuous events in the country's 240 year history. The election of the most unpopular presidential candidate ever over the second most unpopular candidate ever has sent shockwaves through all branches of American government and society. However, it isn't even President-Elect Donald J. Trump himself and his proposed policy action, or lack thereof, that presents the greatest danger - it's the supporters and enthusiasts he has inspired to action through his win. He listened to the voices of apathy and anger and tapped into the mass of disillusioned, middle-aged, white voters in the central states of America: normalising prejudice, appropriating 'Americana' and promising everything to a generation who have nothing left to lose.

Rather than a policy-by-policy breakdown of every potential catastrophe of the next 4 years, it is far easier to analyse the already apparent influence The Donald is having. There has been a notable increase in the number of race, gender and sexuality based hate crimes reported in schools across America, often with Donald Trump mentioned in relation to the dialogue – five times more often than all other candidates combined ([www.rollingstone.com](http://www.rollingstone.com)). Reports are being compiled of Muslim children being called terrorists; Mexican teenagers being harassed and having their lockers graffitied with Trump's campaign slogans; young gay men and women have been targeted and treated with derision. It should hardly come as a surprise though, given Trump's support base: the KKK's Grand Wizard David Duke has actively endorsed him; he has threatened to sue every woman who has claimed he sexually assaulted them; his vice-president and other top Republican officials openly hold homophobic views and want to reverse the equal marriage laws. What is rapidly becoming apparent is that Trump won't need to implement a single policy for us to see major changes to the American way of life – the "Trump Effect", a term coined by the Southern Poverty Law Centre, is already having a widespread impact.

The most troubling part of this phenomenon is that the behaviours and issues slowly surfacing are not unprecedented or indeed even being created by Trump's rhetoric – these are ideas that are deep-rooted in American culture but are being uncovered and set free by the anachronistic views and policies of the President-Elect. Whilst this is alarming, the ultimate irony is that Trump may be the leader America wants, but not the one it needs right now. He used negative cohesion throughout his divisive campaign to champion to his people things they could hate and fear, and is left now with a population who have no desire or idea how to reunite with each other. He represents the antithesis of the Obama's promised "Hope" and "Change" and now has hit the insurmountable brick wall of discrimination and prejudice that he himself built over the last two years. Remember, he doesn't have a chance of getting through it though, because "nobody builds walls better" than The Donald.

As many people have been reminding the American populous and indeed the world, President-Elect Donald J. Trump may only be around for the next four years – potentially less if any of the 75 open lawsuits against him are successful and provide sufficient grounds for impeachment – and we just need to manage the fallout from this by continuing to fight.

## Fidel Castro Revolutionary Hero or Brutal Dictator? by Oscar Agnew

Fidel Castro, the infamous communist leader of Cuba, the survivor of over 600 assassination attempts, has died at the age of 90. He was, and still is, the subject of much controversy. Justin Trudeau called him a "remarkable leader" - Cuban exiles flocked to the streets of Miami to celebrate his demise, how could one man create such incredible division?

Castro took power in 1959, marching into Havana and seizing control from Fulgencio Batista to the sound of 10,000 cheering admirers during the age of the so-called "Banana Republics". His Marxist-communist ideals made him an enemy of the US, and the CIA attempted to assassinate him a rumoured 638 times. He was a pro-Soviet whose leadership led Cuba through the 1962 Missile Crisis and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Cuba remains a Marxist state to this day.

He adopted a staunchly anti-globalization stance and is often hailed for his defiance towards the "imperialist" United States. However, he also garnered infamy due to his alleged human rights abuses. Between 1959 and 1993, over a million Cubans fled the country in makeshift rafts and other boats in a manner reminiscent of the current situation in Syria. In 1986

a number of testimonies were presented to a Paris tribunal regarding Cuban labour camps, and their cruelty towards prisoners. These camps were allegedly involved in everything from beatings to biological experiments on prisoners. There was also a very large number of public executions, though these had declined by the late 70s and 80s.

Castro was a powerful figure who totally immersed himself in his country, sporting a luscious beard and a striking uniform, he conducted everything from sugar harvests to Cuba's defence at the Bay of Pigs. Defiant to the end, and ever an enemy of the US, he remained staunchly independent even during President Obama's visit earlier this year, refusing all of his offers. His defiance, his figure and his oft-visible Cuban cigar have made him a symbol to Marxists and other Communists the world over. His mastery of images and words allowed him to indoctrinate his whole nation with his views, using television to blame the Americans for all of Cuba's ills and keeping the whole country on alert.

Over the years, Castro gave hundreds of interviews and showed a remarkable ability to twist all manner of questions to

his favour. In a 1985 Playboy interview, he was asked how he would respond to President Reagan's description of him as a being a ruthless military dictator. "Let's think about your question," Castro said. "If being a dictator means governing by decree, then you might use that argument to accuse the pope of being a dictator." He then turned the question on its head, and said this: "If his power includes something as monstrously undemocratic as the ability to order a thermonuclear war, I ask you, who then is more of a dictator, the president of the United States or I?"

Even after the demise of the Soviet Union, he dragged Cuba through an economic crisis and came out on top, once more defying expectations and proving his canniness as a leader. He successfully implemented the hated US dollar, only to ban it once more when the economy levelled out again.

No matter which way you put it, and no matter what political persuasion you may have, a truly remarkable man passed away on the 25th of November. It is a sad irony that such a lauded Marxist would perish on arguably the most capitalist day of the year.

# A Talk by Harry Parker on his Book - Anatomy of a Soldier

by Samuel William McGoldrick Beard

Recently, I attended a talk by Harry Parker, on the subject of his book, *Anatomy of a Soldier*. He wrote it after he returned from Afghanistan, and is written from the perspective of everyday objects involved in the conflict taking place. Whilst the main character suffers the same injuries as Mr. Parker himself, he is adamant this book is not an autobiography; rather, the similarities are so he can convey the emotions felt by the characters on a more personal level. He also never refers to the conflict by name, but looking at the conflicts in which he himself served, it is clear that it is Afghanistan; clarified by Parker himself.

Whilst a few critics have commented on the incredibly anti-war message the book conveys, Parker himself holds that it was not intended; rather, he wanted to take the neutral approach of the objects he wrote as, not condoning or dissuading conflict, so as to give the reader an unbiased and cleaner view of the story.

The talk itself was fascinating. Parker carries with him the air of a man who has seen combat, but plays it off very well; he comes across calm, chilled out and very friendly, and has a very human side to him that most people of notable name lack. He also possessed that one flaw that no successful writer can, in my opinion, truly work without; an intense fear of reading ones work back, especially in front of an audience. He was clearly apprehensive to read the suggested passages, but did so with such precise intonations and emotional liveliness that only the creator can bring to their work.

A subject brought up by a member of the audience was pain, and the writing thereof. Parker explained, as I did earlier, that pain was something he felt he could convey at a very personal level. Whilst they are some of the most visceral sections of the book, taking place from the viewpoint of a zygote infection and a sore to name a few, they seem to be some of the best written, and Parker reflected this by changing the pronouns used to describe his main character by the objects; not a "you" but a

"we" to make them feel more connected, as they very much were to him, both physically and mentally. It was fascinating to hear him talk about pain, and the way in which he wanted to convey that in his book. He gave a fascinating description of the feeling itself, and spoke very matter-of-factly about it and the effects it could have. It is clear to see why these chapters are considered some of the best in the entire book.

What surprised me was his incredible eloquence; for a man who, as Parker himself put it, was not well-read before his injuries, the way in which he writes is, quite simply, gorgeous. Whether it was the way in which he read it or the writing alone, I am very glad my first experience of this book was from the author himself, and I very much look forward to reading the rest of it for myself when I find the time. The quality of the book is made even more surprising when Parker admitted the only creative writing experience he had was a week's long course upon his return from overseas; a fact that I imagine many aspiring writers, myself included, find almost galling, in the best possible way.

To conclude my thoughts on the hour or so question and answer session, I feel it helped greatly in many aspects of writing; from how to draw from personal experiences to create a more believable story, to insights about minutia in each chapter, it was a worthwhile trip. Parker himself was great also; adding a human element to the talk that made it seem more relaxed and friendly, less formal than others I have attended, and created an atmosphere in the room which, despite the sombre nature of the book we were discussing, felt light and calm. I feel I can draw a great many things from this talk, and hope to improve my writing in doing so. Should you ever get a chance to meet Harry Parker, I highly recommend you take it; a fascinating man with an amazing story and talent for well-written works of real life-inspired fiction.

## "Learn 2 Live"

by Oscar Agnew

On Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November the whole of Year 12 attended the Learn 2 Live conference at Plymouth Pavilions. Learn 2 Live is a scheme designed to educate young drivers-to-be, such as myself and no doubt many students reading this. Generally speaking, the content of the conference was nothing overly special, don't drink drive, wear a seat belt, etc. But what set Learn 2 Live apart were the harrowing accounts from guest speakers. There was something in the way they presented their true stories that truly hammered home; A mother who lost her young daughter to a drunken lout racing his girlfriend, a paramedic who had to make a call that could lead to an innocent death, these accounts moved many to tears and even managed to move a stoic like myself. A good friend of mine (Who was attending from another school) even went as far as to faint, when a paramedic described the horrific injuries sustained by a teenage girl. What I found particularly interesting, was the concept of the "sacrificial seat", this is the passenger seat to the left of the driver – where most casualties occur. It was a stark warning to the realities and dangers that driving brings. It was emotional and challenging, but an important and worthwhile experience that hopes to avoid tragedy on our roads.

## Gallery Space



Edith Lipscombe



Kiah Tetley

## Year 12 Photographs on the theme 'Natural Forms'



Sam Beard

## Meet the Tutor

### Mr S Hunter



Teaching Media here at Tavistock College is the best job I have ever had. Now, to give you some context as to the gravity of that statement; I have previously worked as video producer for PlayStation Access, run my own corporate video production company, maintained the stockroom in Mothercare – oh, and I even tried door-to-door window sales for one whole week whilst dying from man-flu. Some really good times, and a few not-so-good times – I'll let you figure out which jobs fit into which category.

So how did I end up teaching at the same school I attended 20 years ago? Well, I suppose the first seeds of the idea actually sown back when I was a student here at Tavistock College: Media Studies was my favourite subject, and my teachers – Mrs. Richardson and Mr. Hooper – were an inspiration to me. I remember talking to Mrs. Richardson after my first year in the sixth form, and expressing how she had completely ruined the experience of watching films for me because I was no longer able to watch anything without switching to 'analysis mode'. I now revel in satisfaction whenever I have the same conversation with one of my own students.

I didn't really think about teaching again until years later when I was running my own production company, MindMaker Productions. We had found a niche in the market and had some success producing DVD prospectuses for secondary schools all along the south coast. This was my first exposure to education from the teacher's perspective rather than the student's, and I was really struck by how much satisfaction the teachers got from working with young people, helping them succeed, and sharing their passion for their subjects. I found myself both envious of these teachers and inspired to do something equally worthwhile and rewarding. So as much as I loved film making, and still do (shameless plug: search for 'The Media Wizards' on YouTube!), I started putting plans in place to begin teacher training, and haven't looked back since.

So is there something to learn from my experience other than some quality Mr. Hunter trivia? I suppose I'd say not to get too stressed about the future when you're deciding on which uni course to take, or employment opportunities beyond education: 20 years ago, I had no idea I would be a teacher at Tavistock College, and I couldn't be happier about it.

## Media Workshop

Have you ever considered the sheer power of the magazine industry? They might persuade or dissuade you to watch a film. Or what to wear or not to wear. Or even how to vote in an election. What would we do without them?!

Year 13 Media Studies students returned from their half term break to a workshop with Marjon's subject leader for sports journalism, Mike Baker, to look at this concept in more detail. The topic for the day was 'how magazine producers communicate to their audience' – a fairly simple concept that students are exposed to early on, even in GCSE media studies. Now, the way we often approach this topic in media studies is to look at two very obvious examples, such as the differences between the writing in The Sun and The Independent, for example. The angle that Mr Baker took, however, was truly unique and exposed our students to a very precise form of communication in print. So, we looked at magazines not just aimed at large segments of society, but very specific, niche audience. For example, did you know there is a magazine called Drift that offers quarterly news about the art of drinking coffee? Or how about a magazine – I kid you not – about toilets and their practicality/design? There are magazines about blogging, graffiti, even sock design.

So why are each of these magazines all written so differently (you'll have to take my word for it if you've never read a copy of Toilet Design magazine)? The simple answer is because they need to appeal to their audience. Imagine an issue of The Sun that used big words, or a graffiti magazine featuring renaissance art - it just wouldn't sell. Media producers make it their business to know their audience as well as your friends know you to ensure you buy their publication.

And that's the whole point really - it's not really the media that has the power, it's you, the audience – they need you more than you need them

## Tuck Shop & Skydiving

Year 13 students have received a grant from the Sixth Form team to resurrect the Tuck Shop as an entrepreneurial venture. The money raised through sales is split between funding celebrations at the end of the academic year, and sponsoring the current Sixth Form charity "Keep me close". Keep me close seeks to provide additional accommodation for parents with infants who are being treated at the Plymouth NICU (National Intensive Care Unit). One of our students, Tom Halton, has registered to complete a 15,000ft skydive to raise additional funds for the charity on May the 28th next year. We wish both Tom, and the Tuck Shop team, immense success in their future ventures.



*The Tuck Shop team hard at work preparing goodie bags for the Christmas Fair.*

## Diary Dates

- **29th Nov** - Sports Personality of the Year
- **30th Nov** - Year 12 & 13 law trip
- **7th Dec** - Year 13 Parent Evening
- **14th Dec** - Year 12 Carol Concert
- **16th Dec** - Christmas Jumper Day
- **4th Jan** - College opens for students

# Tavistock

## COLLEGE