College cadets on parade

The College was honoured to welcome Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt, as the Reviewing Officer at the Combined Cadet Force’s Annual General Inspection (AGI) day on 12th March.

Accompanied by the Band of the Welsh Guards, the day commenced with the Guard of Honour, made up of 5th form cadets and led by Sgt Thomas Morrison. Nearly 400 cadets then formed the Parade, commanded by RSMs Alex Fox and Jamie Gillespie. General Dannatt took the Salute and inspected the Contingent. The ceremonial included an advanced Drill Team display, led by Sgt Holly Brook.

The morning’s events concluded with the official opening of the College’s new CCF Headquarters by General Dannatt, before 300 guests, including 180 parents, CCF staff, Old Epsomians and invited Cadets enjoyed a buffet lunch in Big School. The afternoon saw Cadets take part in Inter-House Competitions in a variety of disciplines designed to demonstrate the training achievements of the CCF Contingent. Visitors and Cadets also had the opportunity to view displays by the Royal Navy and Army Recruiting Teams, a Royal Marines stand, undertake some abseiling and try out a climbing wall erected by the Royal Navy.

In the evening, CCF Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Michael Hampshire, hosted a formal Mess Dinner to dine-out the current U6th NCOs and to welcome the new senior NCOs. He thanked many from the Common Room and a number from the services for their continued support and commitment to the CCF. AGI day this year also saw the launch of appeals for two very worthwhile charities – Help for Heroes and Thank the Forces.

Help for Heroes is a fundraising initiative aimed at helping wounded servicemen and their families. A major aim of the charity is to raise £5m to help build a new swimming pool and gym complex at Headley Court, the tri-service rehabilitation centre in Headley, Surrey. The Commanding Officer of the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre and some of his team were guests at the Inspection.

Thank the Forces is directed at students, staff and parents at the College, who are invited to donate items of non-perishable food and toiletries for distribution to servicemen active in operational theatres around the world. A bin has been provided in main reception for the collection of these products.

Epsom gains Olympic recognition

Epsom College could be playing host to top Olympic athletes in the run up to London 2012 after being accepted for inclusion in the London 2012 Pre-Games Training Camp Guide.

The London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (LOGOC) is developing the Guide in partnership with VisitBritain, the national tourism agency, as an on-line facility to allow National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and National Paralympic Committees (NPCs) to search for training camps on a sporting and geographical basis.

After meeting LOGOC’s exacting criteria, the College has been approved as a training venue for the Olympic sports of archery and fencing. It is one of 130 venues in London and the South East to be included in the Guide, which will be presented to NOCs and NPCs at a series of invitational events during the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games later this year.

As well as the necessary training facilities, the College offers athletes and support teams accommodation, catering facilities, a medical centre, a high level of security and good road and rail connections to London.

Pre-games Training Camp venues could be used for up to two years before the London Olympics are held.

Liam Anderson as the eponymous hero and Georgia Wilson as Mrs Lovett in a scene from the College’s sell-out musical Sweeney Todd performed over three nights in Big School in March (full story on page 2)
Talent cast of 14-18 year olds gave a highly polished performance of Sweeney Todd to packed houses in Big School over three nights this term.

Directed by Director of Drama, Kim Chandley, Epsom's production was spectacular and drew favourable comparisons with the current film version of the Sondheim musical, which stars Johnny Depp and Helena Bonham Carter.

The production was musically spot on. The singers and actors delivered power in the ensemble numbers and had the talent to do justice to the solo pieces.

“The idea of producing Sweeney Todd at the College sprang to mind around four years ago with the arrival of a group of pupils with significant, rare vocal talent. When faced with such ability, it is our duty to provide challenging and purposeful opportunities for them to develop,” commented Head of Music, Graeme Lodge, the production’s Musical Director.

The dark and brooding musical thriller saw the cast work hard to develop characters driven to horrific extremes by often uncontrollable emotions. Liam Anderson, as Sweeney Todd, the Demon Barber of Fleet Street, was fiercely convincing as a cold-hearted killer bent on revenge.

“T o have been given the opportunity to play Sweeney Todd has been an honour. I have come to adore the character, the emotional and physical challenges and the fact that Sweeney is the first dark character I have ever played,” said Liam.

Equally impressive was Georgia Wilson, who threw herself into the role of Mrs Lovett with utter conviction, balancing a similarly murderous inclination with moments of heartbreaking devotion. “It was a big challenge playing Mrs Lovett, both musically and dramatically. Her twisted innocence and warped morality were interesting to develop,” said Georgia.

Although the show does not easily lend itself to dance, the routines in Sweeney Todd worked well, with fine performances by the two leads, the company ensemble and four specialist dancers, Sophie Sweetman, Leah Chowdhry, Claire Horn and Emily Newey, all under the choreographic direction of Libby Johnstone.

Chapel Choir sings at Canterbury Cathedral

Following a superb performance at Westminster Abbey in October last year, the Chapel Choir enthralled the congregation once again when they sang Evensong in Canterbury Cathedral this term.

Supported by a large group of parents, staff and students, together with OEs and other members of the College Community, the Choir, led by Choir Prefect Henri Trépant performed anthems by Stanford and Wesley.

Prior to the Evensong service, OEs and choristers’ parents gathered in the Undercroft Dining Room at Kings School, Canterbury, for High Tea.

Mixing with the medics

President of the OE Medical Society, Dr Hywel Bowen-Perkins (Crawfurd 1966-70), welcomed a dozen current students, who are considering a medical career, to this year’s Medical Society dinner held at the College in March.

During the dinner, which was attended by over 40 OE medics and their guests, as well as several members of the Common Room, the students changed places between courses to make the most of the wealth of experience and advice on offer.

Since the Society was founded in 2001 by Dr Paul Knapman (Wilson 1958-60), the annual dinner has been held at various London venues including Apothecaries’ Hall, The Royal Society of Medicine and The Athenaeum.

As the home of the Royal Medical Foundation and the catalyst for hundreds of medical careers, it was fitting that Epsom College should play host to this year’s event.
A weekend visit to Biarritz at the end of January gave seven modern language students the opportunity to practice their French and to meet French rugby legend Serge Betsen.

After an early night on the Friday, the 6th form students – Tim Faccini, Daniel D’Souza, Natalie Thomas, Emma Diggins, Katharina Peters, Uta Demel and Esther Kwon – accompanied by language teacher Céline Winmill and her husband Ian, made full use of their time on Saturday to explore the Basque city.

They combined a cultural visit to the Basque museum in Bayonne and some “retail therapy” in Biarritz itself with a relaxing evening at a restaurant and karaoke bar, speaking French the entire time.

The highlight of the weekend was a meeting with French rugby star Serge Betsen. The students quizzed the Biarritz flanker on his playing career and presented him with an Epsom College sports top in which he posed for pictures.

Prior to the return journey, the party entered into the Basque spirit by playing the traditional game of pelota. The final saw Tim Faccini beat Mme Winmill to take the official winner’s T shirt.

Such was the success of the trip, that the students are keen to visit Biarritz again, hopefully after their exams in the summer term.

Towards sustainable living

Ben Keene, founder of the Tribewanted Internet site and star of BBC 2’s Paradise or Bust, gave an excellent illustrated talk to an audience of students and staff at Epsom College in February. A Friend of College English teacher Mark Zacharias, Ben spoke to the students about the unique community tourism experiment he is undertaking, which involves the setting up of a “virtual” tribe online, members of which fly out to Vorovoro Island, Fiji, and stay for a few weeks at a time, working on a variety of community building and sustainable living projects.

He also signed copies of his book on the subject, Tribe Wanted – My Adventure on Paradise or Bust, which charts the ups and downs of the global online network of travellers and the indigenous Fijian community as they attempt to build a new life on the 200 acre island in the South Pacific.

Excited students quizzed Ben about his travels and he was interested to hear about their own plans for gap year projects abroad and this year’s World Challenge Expedition, which will be journeying to Uganda in July.

IN BRIEF

* OEs Nick Candy (Robinson 1986-91) and his brother Christian (Robinson 1988-93), who have created a multi-million pound property empire in a series of high profile deals since leaving the College, have pulled off what is believed to be Britain’s biggest ever real estate purchase. In partnership with Qatari Diar, the property arm of the Qatar Government, the property entrepreneurs have bought the 12.8 acre Chelsea Barracks site in London for £959 million, a British record for a residential plot. Subject to planning approval by Westminster City Council, they plan to replace the concrete parade grounds and army buildings with 1,500 luxury apartments and other more affordable units designed by Lord Rogers of Riverside.

* Over 100 parents attended a drugs talk this term given by Bob Tait, a former member of the Royal Navy, who has worked for over 20 years with both the Navy and in schools in the area of drugs education. His presentation gave useful guidance about alcohol, cannabis, caffeine, pro-plus, energy drinks and other legal and non-legal drugs, their effects and current drug laws. Parents felt the talk was informative and useful and hope to to discuss the issues raised further at a Parents Forum next term.

* U6th former Robert Wolstenholme from Fayrer House gained a gold award in the British Physics Olympiad in January. This is a highly prestigious award, being limited to a total of only 50 students nationally, and is the first time that an Epsom student has gained this level of distinction for many years. As a result of his success, Robert has been invited to sit an additional paper; the results of which will form the basis for the selection of a 5-man British Physics Olympiad team.
Dr Bob Chappell, one of the College’s sports coaches, has just been appointed manager of the England U18 men’s basketball team. The FIBA appointment is for a two year period and will see Bob coaching the U18 England squad, which will compete in the men’s 2008 European Championships to be held in Hungary in July.

The England job comes hard on the heels of an announcement that Bob has been awarded an Honorary Fellowship by Brunel University in recognition of his academic and sporting contribution to the university over a period of 30 years.

Helen Hynd, the College’s new Head of Theology and Philosophy, is a far cry from the stereotypical teacher of these subjects. Her approach is modern and her enthusiasm is infectious.

Helen, who will also be working alongside Fr. Paul Thompson as Lay Chaplain, joined the College this term from the Royal Grammar School, Guildford, where she spent five years, most recently as Head of Religious Education. Earlier, she taught at Bradfield College.

Together with her husband, Maurice, and two young children, Callum and Madelaine, Helen lives on the College campus. She is no stranger to Epsom as her father, Rodney Fox, was a maths teacher and a tutor in Forest House in the late 1960s.

Building on the foundations laid by her predecessor, Fr. Clive Case, Helen is keen to introduce more 6th formers to philosophy. “I would like to see more students taking the subject and perhaps increasing their knowledge by attending conferences and seminars,” she said.

On a personal note, Helen has worked alongside diplomats in central and Eastern Europe as a member of the Hansard Society, an independent political research and education charity. She is a keen yachtswoman and has taken part in Cowes Week and the Times Round the World Yacht Race.

She is currently completing a Farmington Institute Fellowship, looking at how schools can support the individual faith of pupils.

Maurice Hynd will be joining the Common Room this September, when he takes up a post in the Modern Languages Department to teach Spanish. He was previously a modern language teacher at Wellington College.

Robyn King has just finished her studies at the Smithfield Convent School in Cape Town. She particularly enjoys playing hockey (indoor and outdoor), swimming, tennis and cross-country. On returning to South Africa, her ambition is to read for a Business degree at the University of Cape Town, prior to studying Events Co-ordination.

Tom Horne is also from Cape Town, where he attended Bishop’s College for ten years. He enjoys a wide range of sports and specialises in rugby and athletics. He, too, plans to study Business at the University of Cape Town.

Vanessa Reid-Terrey hails from Sydney, where she attended the prestigious Pymble Ladies’ College. Her favourite sports are netball, tennis and hockey. Vanessa has just learnt that on returning home, she will have a place to read Architecture at the University of New South Wales.

Sean Moores, who completes the quartet of “Gappies,” comes from Zimbabwe, where he attended St John’s College in Harare. He favours rugby and cricket, but he is able to help out in many other sports. On completing his year here, he plans to read for a Bachelor of Commerce degree in Marketing, at the University of Cape Town.
More and more students are opting for creative subjects as part of their extra curricular activities. This term, for example, has seen even more pupils taking up textiles and the recently introduced pottery activity.

After just two terms’ work, the girls and boys, who have chosen to take textiles, are producing some amazing finished products. Taking their inspiration from the catwalk and international fashion shows, they are making beautifully-designed dresses, tunics, bags, cushions and other accessories.

Using their imagination, and skills acquired from textiles teacher, Beth Day, the students are adapting commercial patterns and putting their personal ideas into their creations.

The popularity of the fashion and textiles activity is, perhaps, not surprising. Not only does it give useful life skills, such as the ability to make and repair clothes as well as to use a sewing machine, but it also provides those students who are applying for design and related fashion degree courses with vital knowledge and skills.

Meanwhile, pottery students under the watchful eye of visiting lecturer Derek Nashfield, are creating beautiful vases, jugs and trinket boxes. Launched as a new activity this year, more and more students are taking advantage of the updated facilities in the pottery room, which is equipped with four wheels and a superb kiln.

Both textiles and pottery are open to students of any ability across all year groups.

Shrove Tuesday pancake races may be dying out around the country, but the tradition is alive and well at the College.

Students, teachers and support staff braved the rain outside St Luke’s Chapel this term to await the ringing of the bells at 4pm to mark the start of the annual pancake day race.

Teams of four from the 12 College Houses took part in an inter-house competition, which was staged in relays around the Chapel triangle. As tradition dictates, each runner had to toss or flip the pancake before passing the frying pan on to the next runner.

The pancakes were prepared the night before by Catering Manager Bev Spencer and her team.

“It has been rewarding to see so many students taking part in this traditional Shrove Tuesday event. Pancake races have been an intrinsic part of our culture for hundreds of years and we are determined to keep the tradition alive,” said Head of Theology and Philosophy and Lay Chaplain, Helen Hynd.

The inter-house competition saw Fayrer and Holman Houses tie for first place, while a fiercely contested staff race was won for the second year running by the Maths Department with a winning time of 61 seconds.

A large gathering of students, staff and guests attended an evening presentation by author and historian Alison Weir in the 6th Form Centre this term.

Alison, who writes popular history books and is about to publish her second book of historical fiction, gave an entertaining and lively talk about research and writing in general. The author signed copies of her latest book, Katherine Swynford, which was read on Radio 4 recently. This and other Alison Weir books are available to borrow from the College library.

Students set off around the Chapel triangle in the annual pancake day race

Maintaining a flipping marvellous tradition!

Up close with a famous author

Alison Weir with students (left to right) Will Harrop, Caroline Lloyd and Emma Diggins
As if looking after 73 day boys and boarders and two children of their own were not enough, Carr Housemaster Mike Day and his wife Beth also have two dogs and two cats to keep them on their toes.

Webster is an 11 year old English setter and Kasey is a seven year old Irish setter, rescued at the age of six months from the Irish Setter Rescue Group (ISRG). The cats are Boddington, an 11 year old tabby, and Murphy, a seven year old black and white “moggy,” rescued from the Cats’ Protection League.

Creating a happy environment in the House is essential and the pets certainly seem to help. “The boarders, in particular, like the company of pets and really enjoy Kasey’s presence in the evening….it just feels a little more homely to have a slightly mad Irish Setter bouncing about, desperate for their attention,” Mike said.

As staff and students can testify, the Days’ cats are something of a fixture at the entrance to the House. Both cats sit on the walls of the Carr courtyard at break, lunch and teatime, knowing the boys will be on their way back and that this is prime time for some attention.

The family, including all four pets, regularly travel to Norfolk for their holidays and Murphy enjoys going for a walk with the dogs, much to the amusement of those who see her as she joins the daily outings.

“Far from fighting like cats and dogs, they all get on very well,” Mike said.

But, he added, it isn’t long before they miss the company of the boys and they can’t wait to get back to the College.

“Kasey particularly loves being ‘on duty’ in the house and looks forward to the boys coming back after the holidays.”

Unusual names for dogs and cats?

“Webster, Boddington and Murphy are named after well know brands of beer, but Kasey was already named by the ISRG and we weren’t allowed to change it,” said Mike. “Perhaps I should invent a new beer and call it Kasey!”

Soirée season

The soirée season got into full swing in February with parents and guests welcomed to the College to enjoy evening entertainment and dining.

Students from Crawfurd, Raven and Robinson Houses delighted their audiences with polished drama, singing and dance routines.

Soirées provide individual Houses with the opportunity to showcase the talents of their members whilst giving parents the chance to socialise with and meet House tutors.

This term saw Crawfurd host its second soirée since becoming a girls’ House. The girls performed a number of sketches in Big School, ranging from humorous caricatures of the Crawfurd tutors by the L6th to remakes of fairytales by the 5th form. The finale saw all the girls take to the stage to sing the Crawfurd unison, “It’s raining men.”

Such was the success of the evening that the soirée will become a regular feature in the Crawfurd calendar.

Readathon for charity

Over £830 has been raised for charity by M4 students, who took part in a Readathon recently.

The sponsored read was a significant event in the school calendar for the M4s, as it is one of the initiatives that the English Department is taking to promote reading.

Monies raised by the M4 students benefitted two children’s cancer charities – the Sargent Cancer Care and The Roald Dahl Foundation.

“The students were pleased to be able to take part in the Readathon and especially delighted that, by reading a book of their choice, they could benefit others,” said English teacher Katie Cloonan, who organised the event.
Record entry for Hendelah Waley Cup

Some 25 L6th form girls – the largest field ever – competed for the coveted Hendelah Waley Cup this term.

The annual event, which is open to all 16th form girls, sees competitors test their sporting abilities in a number of disciplines, including netball, hockey, rowing, gym tests, swimming and agility.

With some notable individual performances, the top five scores were separated by just a few points.

Headmaster Stephen Borthwick presented the winner’s cup to a delighted Holly Brook, who scored a total of 127 points. In second place with 125.5 was Helena Mortimer and a very close third was taken by Danielle Rice with a score of 124.5. Meghann Murdock and Anna Dick were split by a half a point for fourth and fifth position with scores of 122.5 and 122 respectively.

“The event was a huge success this year with so many girls entering into the spirit of the competition. All the competitors performed well but most importantly, they all enjoyed themselves,” said Natasha Wilson, head of girls’ games.

The competition is held every year in memory of Hendelah Waley, a talented, all-round sportswoman, who sadly died whilst in the 6th form at Epsom College.

Probyn questions!

Former England and Wasps prop forward Jeff Probyn was the guest speaker at the Epsom College RFC Lads & Dads Dinner in January.

Over 150 players, their fathers and College rugby coaches attended the function, which is held annually to raise funds for rugby tours and charities. This year the College is undertaking a tour to Chile, Paraguay and Argentina with a party of 40 players.

Probyn’s mixture of amusing anecdotes, controversial views and sound advice went down well with both young and old. Tales of his experiences when touring with England were an inspiration to all those going on the South America tour and others, who will take part in similar tours in the future.

Capped 37 times by England, Probyn played in two World Cups and was a member of the Grand Slam winning teams of 1991 and 1992.

Sun shines on NSRT finals

A total of 72 teams from 43 prep schools around the country gathered at the College in March for the finals of the 13th National Schools Rugby Tournament (NSRT).

This was the seventh year running that Epsom has hosted the finals of this prestigious national tournament, which this year saw a record 170 teams from 80 schools play in regional qualifying rounds in February at Bryanston School in Dorset, St Faith’s in Cambridge and Epsom College.

For the second year running, Chinthurst School from Tadworth won the U18 tag rugby competition, seeing off strong competition in the 16-team tournament to win the final 55-35 against St Columba’s School from St Albans.

Winner of the U19 competition was Gayhurst School from Gerrard’s Cross, while the U10 trophy went to Warwick Juniors. Junior King’s School, Canterbury, won the U11 tournament and Bishop’s Stortford College emerged victorious in the U13 competition.

Trophies and medals were presented by Andrew Scoular, community rugby director at the Rugby Football Union.

This term, the College has also hosted the U19 and U14 Surrey County Netball finals, the Preparatory Schools Netball Tournament and the Surrey Preparatory Schools Squash Tournament.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Fifth former Joe Toomey ran brilliantly at the Surrey Schools Cross Country Championships at Reigate Priory this term to take second place in the Intermediate Boys race with a time of 23 minutes 18 seconds.

He beat his fellow district runner Stefan Richards, to whom he had been runner-up the last time they raced, by 17 seconds to qualify for the National Cross Country Championships to be held in Liverpool.

The U15 boys’ squash V has reached the semi-finals of the National Squash Tournament, having defeated Christ’s Hospital in the quarter finals in March and specialist sports college Plymstock School in the previous round. This is a huge achievement for the team, comprising Jonathan Malynn, Chris Parkinson, Rory Chisholm, Oliver Ramage and Josh Allen.

Three Epsom students have been selected to be members of the British Cadet Rifle Team – The Athelings – on a tour to Canada this August. The College is once again the only school to have three members selected to represent their country in the same team. Congratulations go to Will Stewart, Sam Harley and Sam Hunter.
Hat trick in Sussex 7s

In their first outing of the season in early March, the 1st VII rugby squad won the Sussex Schools U18 (Open) 7s Tournament at Christ’s Hospital School for the third year running.

After seeing off Eastbourne, Bridgend College and Sutton Valence at the group stage, Epsom beat old rivals St John’s after extra time in the quarter final and Whitgift in the semi-final.

With international referee Wayne Barnes in charge, the final against Cranleigh was a tense affair that provided more than a few heart-stopping moments. Epsom raced to a 19-0 lead at half time, but Cranleigh came back strongly in the second period and were winning 24-19 with less than a minute to go, before a score in the last play took the game into extra time. Epsom captain George Lowe, who was named player of the tournament, scored the vital try in overtime to give Epsom victory.

Just three days after their Sussex 7s success, the 1st VII came very close to repeating the feat at the Daily Mail-sponsored Surrey Schools 7s held at the Richmond Athletic Ground.

After convincing victories in the group stages against Campion, St Olave’s and Queen Elizabeth Barnet, Epsom went on to beat Truro School, Cranleigh and Millfield by an impressive 33-7 scoreline to reach the final of this prestigious tournament.

Unfortunately, a serious injury, sustained in the semi-final, put Max Page out of the final, which unsettled Epsom and they lost 14-24 to a very strong team from Bristol school Colston’s.

Netball on a high

With just one match to play, the 1st VII netball squad is on course to emulate the success of the girls’ 1st XI hockey team by achieving an unbeaten season.

Having worked hard on fitness and technique, the 1st VII have swept all opposition before them this term in what has proved to be the best ever season for College netball, with the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, U15D, U14A and U14D VIIs also unbeaten to date.

During the past three months, the 1st VII have chalked up impressive wins over some strong netball-playing schools, including Cranleigh, King’s Canterbury, Charterhouse, Sevenoaks, Haileybury, St John’s, Brighton College, Downe House and Caterham.

For the second year running, the girls also won the prestigious Bradfield Tournament and beat a strong touring side from Parel Vallei High School in Cape Town.