

"It has been interesting to reflect on how much we covered this term.

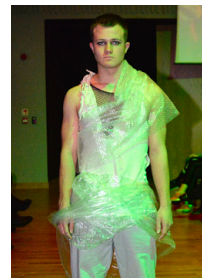
**HOW DID WE FIT IT ALL IN?"**



**THEO: SIGNED, SEALED, AWAITING DELIVERY**



**A STAG FOR HENRY**



**MODEL PUPILS IN THE HOUSE**

# PENNELL NEWS



Dear Pennell Parents and Guardians,

Happy New Year!

In a slight change of timing this year I write at the end of the festive season rather than before. With such a long and gruelling term and so little time between finally finishing reports and the close-down of the departments that are required to get the newsletter formatted for dissemination only now has it made sense to put finger to keyboard. In fact, it has been very interesting reflecting from a bit more distance than usual on quite how much we got covered last term. Throughout production I have kept thinking, "Gosh was all that last term?" or "was the weather that good in October when we ran the steeplechase?" or just "how did we fit all this in?" But then I am much fresher now than I was in December so it is all less of a blur.

Lydia and I were yet again humbled by the generosity of your gifts at the end of term. We opened them gradually over the course of the holidays and have so much to be thankful for. You are so very kind. Thank you.

## Academic achievements

In spite of the compressed weekday, the boys have acquitted themselves well academically over the course of the term. Isaac Chu is to be congratulated on gaining both an interview at Cambridge and a merit in the Physics Olympiad (with Henry Turnbull and Petr Volkonskiy also participating). Three boys have won Headmaster's Commendations: Leo Fu, Zain Radwan and Henry Turnbull. Sam Huang in Year 9 achieved the remarkable feat of coming 6th out of 60 in the Maths Olympiad populated by Y11-13s. It is good to see many boys making good use of the extra support sessions on Saturday mornings. Our Year 12s in particular seem to be valuing the CISI lessons (Chartered Institute of Securities and Investment) run by the Economics department.



Justin, Vikrant, Victor, Petr, Isaac, Alex and Ernest at the house dinner

The following academic league tables also demonstrate excellence this term:

### Lent term's show hsm league

Year	First	Second	Third
9	Zain Radwan	Alexander Ralli	Bassel Abdul-Azeez
10	Rolland Lau	Freddie Ferro	Theo Marsh
11	Chorus Yuen	Jake Lawson Johnston	James Kan
12	Leo Fu	Sung Tangwatanawongsa	
13	Isaac Chu	Vikrant Gurung	Petr Volkonskiy

### Most improved eRC effort score (across the two eRCs this term)

Place	Name	Improvement
1st	Bede Rowlands (Y13)	0.7
2nd	Tim Birkmullin (Y12)	0.6
3rd	Guillaume Najbor (Y12)	0.57
4th	Stan Hughes (Y12)	0.56
5th	Dylan Yang (Y9)	0.46
6th	Josh Heal (Y12)	0.45

## Cultural and Social

There were a number of key cultural moments this term ranging from the Year 9 drama, the whole school production of *The Crucible* which James Kan got stuck into, and the House Singing competition. Of the former, Lydia writes, "12 pages of script, 11 different parts, 10 speedy scene changes, 9 questionable costumes, 8 random props, 7 bemused Year 9s, 6 worryingly short rehearsals, 5 lighting changes, 4 hundred emails, 3 assistant directors, 2 tired tutors and a play to beat all plays: *Oedipus Rex* - the comedy. And so Year 9 Drama began again and they did it with great good cheer! Zain Radwan took the stage as our ill-fated hero and threw his energy into the role, honouring every joke (I told you it was a comedy) and leading his peers to a hugely successful performance. Bassel Abdul-Azeez made the tricky transfer between Tiresias, the blind prophet, to the Oracle, giving each one its unique character and humour. Alexander Ralli also jumped from character to character, being a citizen of Thebes one minute, to Creon the next, and finally to the unfortunate Jocasta, mother/wife to Oedipus; he bravely wore the dress, toe nail varnish (yes) and the wig,



Tiresias and his boy, the citizens of Thebes and Oedipus the king.



Y12s at the house dinner

out the props, costumes and lighting cues so that parents could enjoy this before their first parents' evening. Tim and I enjoyed working with all of them and seeing the play take shape even when many of the jokes were not easily understood by the actors themselves! A sigh of relief was breathed when the performance was done; no lines were lost, no jokes forgotten and the audience had had their first taste of properly tragic comedy.....well done Year 9!"

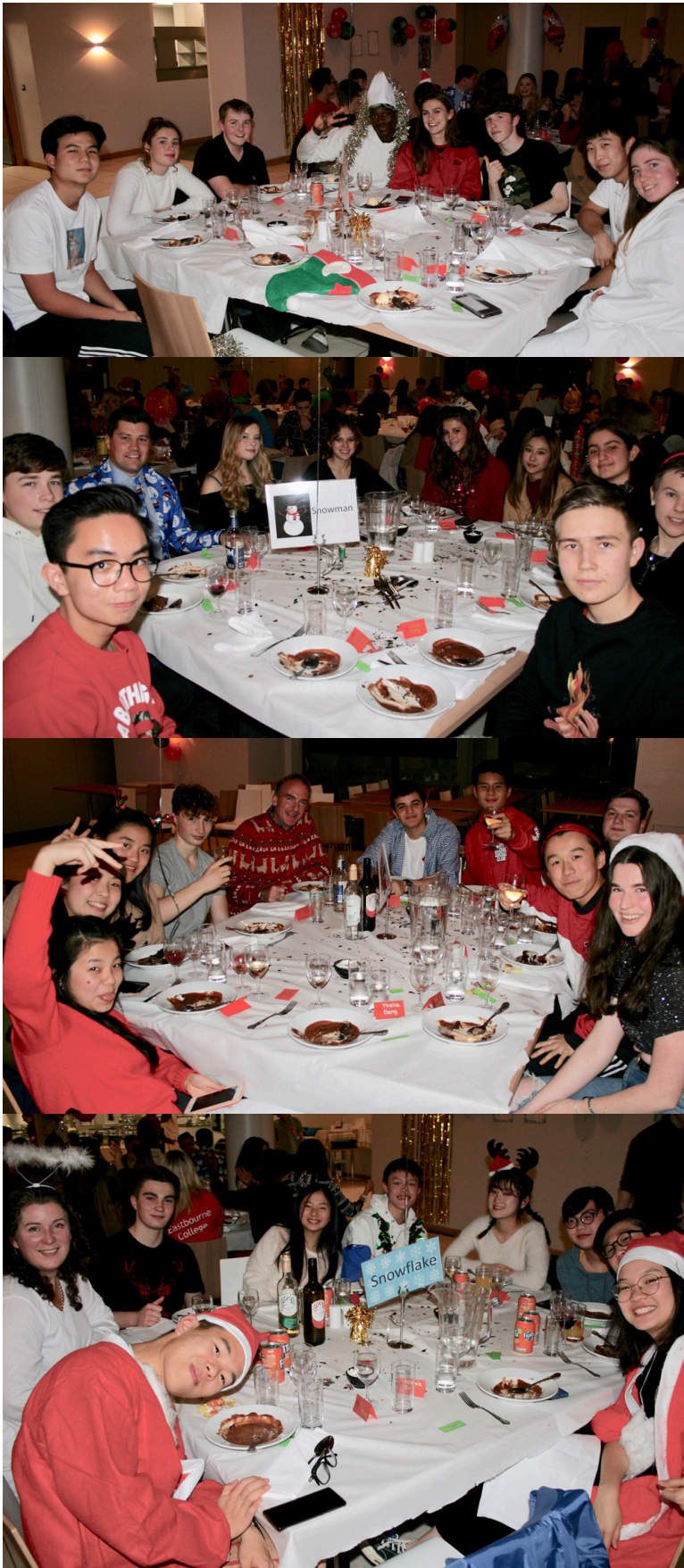
This year we shared our house dinner with School House and though there were some initial misgivings mainly over the fact that we would not have our legendary year group speeches and prizes we all returned to the house having had a really very enjoyable evening. The tutors in particular commented on what great company their hosts were.

Tim Spiers writes, "Twas the Saturday before Christmas (hols) and all through Pennell House, panicked tinselling/glittering/adorning was churning whilst listening to...erm..Strauss....?!"

Y13s at the house dinner



## Y12s and 13s at the house dinner



Right, I think I should leave the rhyming to Clement Clarke Moore. In a break from our usual Buffet Time tradition, Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December saw the Pennell boys and tutor team link up with the girls and staff of School House for a slap up festive meal in the College dining hall. Encouraging teenage boys to willingly involve themselves in a dress-up theme is always a bit of a tall order, but they graciously and dutifully heeded the many roll call reminders and trundled off into Eastbourne town centre that week. I have a feeling that PoundLand's festive shelves were considerably barer by the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> December than they were earlier in the day. With a mixture of sickeningly cheesy Christmas jumpers, gaudy tinsel and the odd turkey hat (Vikrant), the boys made for a very jolly crowd as they assembled in the games room before the meal. The boys impressed with their gentlemanly qualities throughout the evening and, if my table was anything to go by, mixed in comfortably and convivially with the ladies in their respective year groups. The College catering team whipped up an excellent menu of gargantuan proportions (it is rare that I struggle to finish everything on my plate) including a sharing starter, carvery and chocolate and orange brownie – cue start of the calorific intake of the season of excess! The entire evening had a really warm buzz to it and the boys treated the occasion with the appropriate mix of formality and good humour that it deserved. Our thanks must go to Miss Simmons for her very thorough organisation of the decorations, music and menu. Special mention must go to Gus Toomer who beat over 100 contenders in the room to win Miss Gordon's 'Epic Christmas Quiz' which was played in knock-out head or tails format, pipping Henry Turnbull to claim victory in the final round.

Y10s at the house dinner



A little festive music and Christmassy/nativity themed 'photo-boothing' brought a most enjoyable evening to a close. As ever, the boys were very relaxed and gracious company and it was lovely to link more sociably with another boarding house. I do know however that they are looking forward to a bit more of the traditional speeches, reflections and jokey prizes that come with a solo house event, so roll on the mountains of fried dumplings in the Lent Term!"

It was pleasing to see a number of Y13s involved in the Fashion Show at the end of term. The House Singing competition was its usual blend of undeniable passion, total commitment and questionable judging! Housemaster got it in the neck for song choice based mainly on the fact that at 2 minutes 21s (damage limitation) a 45 second instrumental needed probably some sort of choreography but I have to say that it's a cracking tune and the boys filled the house with it for weeks. It is quite something to hear such an earworm passed around the house on the way to prep from boy to boy. Follow this link for what it should sound like: [Dreaming of You](#). The boys did a great job of it and did themselves proud.



Bede in the fashion show



## Sporting



Theo receives his colours

After winning the Simon Green award last year - and being nominated again this year - the big news for Theo Bevacqua is his signing to the Cardiff Blues. Their Facebook page says of him: "He really impressed us across the two [U20] games he played. What was impressive was his ability to problem solve in the scrum, and he gave a good account of himself against more experienced players."

He's a bright boy and a good character who brings a lot of energy into the group, and we're confident he'll be a good addition to the academy squad. The challenge for us as coaches is to bring him through to the next level of his game. We've built a good relationship with him over the last couple of months, and are really pleased that we've signed him up. He's a young player with a lot of potential, and we're delighted to link up with the Welsh Exiles programme to bring him into the Welsh pathway, despite having good offers to continue his rugby career in England." Having won his Stag he was joined this term by Henry Turnbull, and Max Faulkner-Bryant was also awarded his half-colours. Other rugby As players this term include Jamie Pascall, Gabriel Barlow, Brandon and Louis Bullen, Gus Toomer and Sam Sanders. Our Year 10s were the favourites in the House rugby competition this year and having played brilliantly to get through to the final then took an alarmingly long time to get to grips with the rather odd indoor netball/ rugby hybrid that became the format of the final (necessitated by the relentless rain at the end of term).



Max in the fashion show



The victorious Y10s



Sam and Zain pace it for the finish line

George Pool, after the disappointment of being misdirected by a member of staff into a disqualification in the school steeplechase, was awarded his half-colours for Squash this term. Other notable performances in the school steeplechase include: Bede Rowlands (11th), Sam Sanders (15th) Will Elkington and Zain Radwan (16th), Stan Hughes (19th), Leo Fu (21st).



A decent house effort

Exit Stan, pursued by bear.

Year 9s in action.



We have a good number of basketball fixtures now and Adekola Aderogba and Sam Tsang have both represented the school in the senior squad this term. I hope that the new basketball hoop in

## Dates for the diary

Saturday 1st February 7.00pm is the Pennell House concert. Do please join us!

Please note that all boys will be expected at this and there is a dress rehearsal the Friday night before.

Thursday 23 January (note day): EXEAT plus Y10 Parents' meeting from 3.15pm. Return between 6.00pm - 9.00pm Sunday.

Friday 14 February HALF TERM plus Y11 Parents' meeting from 3.15pm.

the cage will inspire more. Congratulations are also due to Murray Smith who joins Freddie Ferro in being selected for Sussex Cricket.

## Final thought for the term...

I have been reading the biography of the guitarist Nick Drake over the holidays which has been compiled by his sister Gabrielle to mark the 40th anniversary of his death. He died tragically young from an overdose of antidepressants at the age of 26. He recorded just three albums in the years following dropping out of his Cambridge English literature course and though he found public performance excruciating he remains one of the most influential folk guitarists ever. He was a commercially difficult proposition for Island Records in an era that preferred the somewhat anodyne renderings of Peter, Paul and Mary (Puff the Magic Dragon, anyone?) and he sank. Many discovered his work in the 90s when the internet was born, however, and he has become a legend and a touchstone of vocal and technical purity beyond his lifetime. If you are interested, start [here](#). We are connected through the fact that his housemaster at Marlborough was Dennis Silk who went on to become my Headmaster at Radley and in fact retired in my final year. I was privileged to have worked with him closely that year as a School Prefect and Head of House.

Though it felt rather prurient, I was intrigued to read a letter sent to Nick at school (aged 15) from his father Rodney. "Afraid it sounds as though Music is a bit of a casualty this term - but it's all in a good cause. No doubt you find Latin in particular a tiresome distraction from the proper pursuit of living. Whilst I don't subscribe to the old-fashioned belief that the effectiveness of a medicine is directly proportional to the nastiness of its taste, nevertheless I do think that it is essential when one is young to learn to discipline one's mind and body to do things they don't want to. One of the several important benefits derived from the process is an increase in the powers of concentration - (an important matter in the case of N.R.D? [Nick Rodney Drake]) - and you'll need that whatever you go in for just as the sun requires the assistance of a magnifying glass before it can start a fire. End of lecture". Aside from the pejorative comments about Latin with which I cannot possibly agree (!) I am struck by the warmth of the correspondence between father and son but also the matter-of-fact observation that sticking at things we find challenging and boring can have a fundamentally important, positive, disciplining effect. Although this is an opinion of its time I am guilty of admiring physical and intellectual discipline and of recognising that it must be learned. The modern world with its myriad distractions makes this harder than ever but Y11s and 13s in particular need encouragement this term to discipline themselves to use the spaces between mocks, their study periods, the extra sessions, the two hours of prep, to settle to extended, deep thought and to use games time to clear one's thoughts for the next round. I may even pinch Rodney's magnifying glass simile.

With very best wishes, as ever. Have a lovely 2020,

