

FUNDRAISING

On the 15th of March 2013 the school council, along with the help of volunteers, ran a comical themed bake sale/bake off to help raise money for Comic Relief. The bake sale was a resounding success showing off the creative flair of students in the academy. As well as a general bake sale we also ran a charity bake off, where students created and brought in phenomenal and artistic cakes. The sheer range of cakes on offer was simply mind blowing; we want to thank all of the students who used their own time to make cakes.

First place was awarded to Nia Preston (Cheshire) who had made an amazing hot dog and chips inspired cake with the help of her Grandma who also really enjoys baking with her. This was an incredible entry seeing as she is only in Year Seven, so we would like to thank both of them for their dedication and hard work. Second place was achieved by Kirsty Soanes (Ellis) who created a Pac Man themed cake that was both colourful and delicious. Finally, third place went to Jack Bates (Macmillan) whose comical face cake left smiles on everyone's faces. All of the entries that we received were amazing and the bake sale would not have been as successful without them.

Students also came in non-uniform on Comic Relief Day and the Sixth Form also held a Cake Sale. Thank you to everyone who helped us raise money for Comic Relief that will be used to aid many people less fortunate than ourselves.

The School Council agreed that half the proceeds from the non-uniform day should go to the Anthony Nolan Trust. Thank you for your support here too. See page 2 for fundraising update.

By Sarah Nichols (Head of Pupil Teaching and Learning) and Rose Mason (Head of Pupil Media and Communications)



It is a real pleasure to work with the student voice team as they are so motivated to succeed. I'd like to thank the School Council and volunteers for all of their hard work with the Comic Relief event. A special mention must go to George Haythorpe (Head of Pupil Fundraising and Events) and Tom Ferguson who did a lot of the planning and organisation for the Inter-House Bake Off. Also, I'd like to thank Mrs Bouchard for judging the competition with such enthusiasm.

J.Macpherson (Student Voice Co-ordinator)



IN SHORT

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Cross Country Success

I just wanted to pass on to you some details of recent achievements from some of our students in sporting activities for the newsletter!

A group of students took part in the Norfolk and Suffolk Wing Cross Country competition at RAF Barnham (3 miles).

Congratulations are in order for the junior girls who came 3rd as a team overall – **Sarah Nichols, Jasmine Roberts, Kate Lancaster** and **Caitlin Moore**. In the junior boys section, **Richard Bate Weldon** also competed.

Furthermore, **Catlin Moore** (a member of our Wymondham High running club) finished second overall and will now go on to the regional finals on March 10th at RAF Cranwell.

Bowled over by success

Kyle Crummit has been Tenpin bowling since the age of 7; he practices 4 days each week for hours at a time. It is this dedication that, and his undoubted talent, that has brought him 3 gold medals in the last month.

Kyle took part, with 27 teams, in the Inter Counties Tour at Coventry where he and his team mates won gold in three events: the 4-men team, with a score of 2331; the doubles event, with a score of 1207; and they they won gold for the overall highest score in the championship.

Well done to Kyle and team

Governor News

Dear Parents, as you are all aware, we have had a vacancy for a Vice Principal since Dr Fox left at the end of last term. We have been keen to fill this vacancy at our earliest opportunity so the vacancy was advertised in the Autumn term. Following response from a large number of applicants, we shortlisted and interviews took place in January of this term.

I am pleased to tell you that we have appointed **Jonathan Rockey** who is currently a deputy Head at a High School in Suffolk. He will start in April after the Easter holidays.

Other news - to make you aware, the governors are planning on setting up a questionnaire for parents regarding ways we can communicate with parents more effectively.

We are also working on a consultation to see what the demand is for after school childcare provision and more details of both of these activities will follow next term.

Best wishes, Alex Hunter, Chair of Governors

Jordan Cheeseman

On Saturday 2nd March I attended CNS school in Norwich for a charity Zumbathon for a little girl called Grace Matthews, who has Meningitis. I danced for 3 hours non-stop, which was incredible to do since it was my first time attempting to do so. But this event turned out so well that people even came to watch us and people wanted to join in. Overall there were about 300 people there! (Not exaggerating!) Anyway on the day I met Grace's mum (Vicky Matthews) and I had a conversation with her after about how I raised my money, I raised overall £159.50 which she said was incredible with just 2 weeks' notice. Everyone together raised £1200; which is incredible. This money will go towards Grace getting prosthetic legs and everything she had dreamed of. Vicky was very emotional afterwards how seeing how much we had all raised for her daughter, she couldn't be more happy.

Picture right:
 Ben Palmer's new school lectern
 more in the next edition of WyHigh



FUNDRAISING UPDATE

The total collected so far from non-uniform day & other events are as follows:

Interhouse cake sale and competition £94.50 - all proceeds to go to Comic Relief.

Non Uniform Day £1029.04: 50:50 split to Comic Relief & Anthony Nolan Trust (currently £514.52 each but still coming in).

Sixth Form cake sale £47.68 – all proceeds to comic relief.

We want to hear from you...

If your child has done something that you think we should know about, then do let us know. You can write to us at head@wymondhamhigh.norfolk.sch.uk, giving us details about whatever it is your child has done. It doesn't have to be a great academic or sporting achievement, it can be about anything that says something positive about your son or daughter.



From the Principal,
Russell Boulton

Dear Parents/Carers and Families

Firstly, I would like to say what a pleasure it has been to meet so many of you over the last term, which has flown by. I am always heartened by the support of the school that so many parents show, through the events that we run, Parents' Evenings and other informal events.

There have been many recent pieces of data about schools and we have received our Data Dashboard from the government. This document shows that compared to all schools nationally we are in the 20% of schools in terms of our success, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the students, families and the terrific teachers that we have for their hard work and dedication to achieve such strong results.

Listening to parent feedback, we are trying to improve communications between families and the school. To this end we use Parentmail, email, text and now have started a twitter feed for news and information, along with the traditional paper copies of things. Many of these strategies rely on us having the correct mobile phone number or email address that is checked regularly. If you do not receive any of these communications please inform Reception of the correct details and we will add you to our mailing lists. If you would like to follow us on twitter we can be found @WyHighAcademy and I would recommend checking our website regularly.

There has been much progress on the new buildings for our Academy and you may have seen this in the local press. The new Art and History block is proceeding well and will take most of this year to complete, with even more progress on the new Science block that may be ready for September. We are looking forward to occupying these new facilities to enhance the learning experience of all our young people.

The theme for the term has been about everyone trying their absolute best in every thing that they do, be it in their appearance, work with others, homework, classwork or behavior. The students have responded terrifically and as result nearly every student is maximizing their chances of achieving the highest possible grades.



On a lighter note I would like to reassure parents that there have been no changes to the behaviour policy or the uniform policy, including hair length. However students who are not in the correct uniform will be sent to Student Services to adjust their uniform or home to rectify the situation and return as quickly as possible.

Finally, I would like to wish you a happy and restful Easter and wish all students preparing for examinations, the very best of luck with their revision.

Early Closure

The Academy will close at 1.20pm on the last day of term, Wednesday 27th March. Free School Meals students will need to collect a packed lunch during morning break.

School buses will be on site at 1.20 to collect all bus children. There will, of course, be no late buses.



Principal's Council 2013



Written by Njeri Chege

[Click for picture, right.](#)

The trip was a great chance to spend an evening with friends and the lecture was an inspiring insight into the frontiers of physics.

So why study astronomy? Galactic Archaeology has allowed us to deepen our understanding of the cosmos and our place in it. On a smaller scale, it has enabled us to study a range of neighbouring stars of differing sizes, ages and composition and therefore build up a picture of how our galaxy looks, despite not being able to leave it and take a bird's-eye photograph. Since records began, the human race has been driven by curiosity to uncover the mysteries and inner workings of the universe.

If you too share this burning curiosity to find out more about how nature works, why not attend the upcoming lectures at the CPC? Information about them can be found on the notice board outside S07, and from Dr Thistlewood and Mrs Oakes.

Did you know that whenever you gaze into the night sky, you are seeing it as it was in the past? The reason for this is that, typically, the distances between Earth and other objects in space are huge and that light travels at a finite speed (about 3.0×10^8 m/s), so takes a noticeable amount of time to reach us. For example, if you point a telescope at the Andromeda galaxy which is 2.5 million light years away (a light year is the distance that light travels in a year), then you are seeing it as it was 2.5 million years ago!

On 7th February, we had the exciting opportunity to attend an evening lecture at the Cambridge Physics Centre by Apoorva Jayaraman entitled

'Galactic Archaeology – uncovering lost populations in the Milky Way'. We learned that, just as archaeologists use ancient remains to study life in the past, astronomers use telescopes to study different galaxies at varying distances from Earth, and can then build up a theory of how they form over time. Throughout the lecture we explored Galactic Archaeology in the past, present and future: from Ptolemy to Copernicus' models of the observable universe; to the current uses of the Hubble Space telescope among others to detect the presence of dark matter; and finally getting a taste of the potential of the planned launch of the GAIA telescope to improve our understanding of the structure and formation of the Milky Way.



This is the main fundraising event of the year for the House and an opportunity to meet as a House family to review the year's activities. Planned competitions will be a Purple Cocktail Drink, Sweet Summer Biscuit Competition, Best Dressed Cocktail Outfit. We will have a Raffle, Form Stalls, Live Music, Barbecue and Local Craft Demonstrations. Money raised will support Cancer Research UK, Wymondham Abbey and a local charity. More information will follow in WyHigh News and all who are entitled to attend will receive a letter early in the summer term. If you can help with a special Raffle Prize (last year, for example, our top prize was a glider flight) please contact Mr Fehners, Head of Abbey House.

THE WOMAN IN BLACK



On Wednesday 13th February 2013, Wymondham High Academy English students went to see the production of *The Woman in Black* at Norwich Theatre Royal.

Once we had all settled into our seats and the show began, we experienced a thrilling and scary tale of how the woman in black came to be and why the children disappeared. At the interval the lights went on to find many students rather scared! After we had settled down with our ice-creams, the show began again, answering our questions and revealing mysteries. The tensions rose and the screams got louder every time the woman in black appeared! It was an excellent production that everyone enjoyed very much, despite being scared. Very scared!

Thank you to the English staff for arranging and taking us on this trip, we had a really good time and it helped to improve our understanding of *The Woman in Black*. Zara Bradley

Les Filles

a play by the very popular Onatti Theatre Company

Wymondham High Academy were proud to present *Les Filles*, a play by the very popular Onatti Theatre Company aimed at KS3/4 students of French which took place on 15th February in the Drama Studio.

The play was about Nicolas who is going out with Emily, but really wants to finish with her and go out with Céline, but she is not so keen, and then there is Mélanie who he likes, and she is very keen on him, but Nicholas prefers Céline - tricky.

Annoyed about reports of his bad behaviour in school his mum has grounded Nicolas and given him housework to do while she goes out for the evening.

So, he can't go out, but that still doesn't stop him inviting Céline round. She is not his girlfriend, yet, but if he can impress her enough he is convinced she will go out with him.

But then Emily, his actual girlfriend, turns up as well. Nicolas panics and tries to keep them apart - not easy in a small house. Then to make matters worse Mélanie arrives and insists on staying!

It turns into an extremely stressful night as Nicolas struggles to keep the three girls from seeing each other, and he must finish the household chores before his mum gets back.

The play was superbly performed by two native French speakers and thoroughly enjoyed by all who attended.



YOU NEVER FORGET AN ACTIVE CHILDHOOD

The PE Department are collecting Sainsbury's vouchers to use for extra sports equipment. There's a box in Reception for the vouchers.

ART DEPARTMENT

The end of the spring term is a really crucial time for GCSE and A-level art students who are working on their externally set exam projects and in some cases – still completing their coursework.

For the GCSE and A-Level students their exam dates are only a few weeks away. Department staff and students are currently staying late after school to support students with their personal portfolio of work.

Student work selected for John Lewis, Oxford Street

In the December newsletter the Art Department was thrilled to announce some exciting news; On the 10th December, the President of the Royal Society of British Artists informed us that the portrait of 'Jess' by Hannah Ellis (ex-Y13) had been selected for the prestigious RBA's annual show from the 6–17th March 2013 in the Mall Galleries, London. Hannah's achievement was also featured in the EDP on 7th January 2013.

Further to this fantastic achievement, the Art Department received notification on the 6th March that Mel Rands, the Head of Community Liaison at John Lewis, Oxford Street has selected Hannah's portrait to be displayed in the Brasserie at the Oxford Street, John Lewis store. Hannah's portrait will be exhibited from 26 March to 29 April.

Congratulations to Hannah on this fantastic recognition and for the opportunity to hang the painting of 'Jess' in John Lewis to be seen by the wider public.

Edexcel Art and Design Standardisation meeting

All of last summer's GCSE Fine Art, Art Textiles and Photography work (which comprised of over 250 A3 sketchbooks, plus larger pieces) was viewed over the week of the 11th February and the weekend of the 16th February by all of the UK Art and Design moderation team. The GCSE work was couriered to Warwick University where it was used by all of the UK Art and Design moderators as examples of good practice and to set the national standard for 2013. As a Team Leader/Moderator myself, I can inform you that the Art and Design team at Edexcel were extremely impressed with the high standard of work achieved by our students.

Year 8 Trip to the Sainsbury Centre

On Thursday February 7th 2013, 60 Year 8 students embarked upon the third enrichment trip to the Sainsbury Centre of Visual Arts at the UEA. The trip was organised to tie in with the current 3D African mask project. It allowed students to view the Sainsbury Centre's collection of masks, sculptures and treasured artefacts which are drawn from areas within Western, Central and Eastern Africa such as Benin, Yoruba, Ghana and Zaire, and span the 15th to the 20th century. The benefit of the trip is now being seen in the classroom with students using their visual influences and creative imagination in the designing of their own African inspired masks. I am pleased to report that all students were impeccably behaved and represented Wymondham High Academy with distinction.

London enrichment trips

On February 26th (A Level) and March 8th (GCSE) the Art department embarked upon 2 enrichment trips to London museums for Year 11 Fine Art students and Year 10 Art Fast Track Photography students (GCSE), Year 12 (Fine Art, Art Multimedia and Art Textiles students) and Year 13 (Fine Art, Art Multimedia and Art Textiles students). Department staff accompanied GCSE students to museums such as the V & A, Natural History Museum and Science Museum. Due to the nature of the exam themes, AS and A2 students also visited the same museums to inspire and motivate preparations for the externally set assignment. Students have really benefited from the trips. For some it was their inaugural trip to London and first time in an art gallery.

Year 10 Exhibition

Since September, year 10 Fine Art and Art Textiles students have been embarking upon their first coursework project entitled the 'Environment and Natural Form.' Since February half term students have been working hard on their final pieces. After Easter the department will be beginning to 'show case' final pieces in an exhibition in and around the north reception area early in the summer term. Keep your eyes peeled for a plethora of paintings, textile garments and photographs inspired by Wells-next-the-Sea and Holkham beach. All exhibiting students and parents will be invited to a private view to celebrate students' successes. The date will be announced soon!

Mr. N. Moulton (Head of Art)





Exam Support Days in the Easter holidays

Over the Easter holidays, GCSE, AS and A2 students will be given the opportunity to come in to school to access the department's resources, materials and equipment in the lead up to the exams in early May. More details will be discussed during lesson time and with individual teachers before the last day of term on Wednesday 27th March.

2013 Art Exam Dates

GCSE exam: Tuesday 7th and Wednesday 8th May (Wk 2)

AS exam: Thursday 2nd and Friday 3rd May (Wk 1)

A2 exam: Monday 29th April, Tuesday 30th April and Wednesday 1st May (Wk 1)

End of year Exhibition at Wymondham Arts Centre

A note for all students' and parents' diaries is the end of year 'SHOWCASE #4' exhibition and private view. This year, the Art department is pleased and delighted to announce that once again we have acquired Wymondham Arts Centre from Monday 8th July until Monday 15th July 2013. The exhibition in July 2012 was another huge success and proved to be extremely popular with the general public – just over 500 people viewed the exhibition between Tuesday 10th July and Sunday 15th July 2012. More details will follow in future newsletters.



Website updated

Over the last few weeks, the Art Department web pages have been updated with new imagery from selected GCSE and A Level courses. Please take a look! Many thanks to Mr Swords for all his efforts in spending time updating the various web pages.

Thanks

May I also take this opportunity to thank all Art department colleagues (Mrs Francis, Mrs Pinnington, Mrs Elkins, Mr McFadyen, Mrs Robbie and Mrs Dalmay) for their efforts this term and I wish all students, parents and staff a very happy and relaxing Easter break.



London Marathon

In 2009 I was diagnosed with a rare bone marrow disorder called Aplastic Anemia. After a long period of treatment without a cure, I was finally offered a chance to get better with a bone marrow transplant, arranged and organised by the Anthony Nolan Trust. I am now well enough to run in the Virgin London Marathon 2013 in order to raise money for the Anthony Nolan Trust. I aim to raise £2000 for the charity and I hope to complete the marathon in under four hours.



If it wasn't for the work of the Anthony Nolan Trust in finding me a bone marrow donor whose DNA was a close enough match to mine, I would not have had the chance to live, to be a father to my three young children (including twin girls born during my illness) or to be a teacher (I was just beginning a job as a Teacher of Art at Wyndham High when I was diagnosed). I am not only grateful, I am also determined to do what I can to recruit more bone marrow donors, as well as to raise money to fund breakthrough research and life-saving treatment for people with blood cancer who are in urgent need of a bone marrow transplant.

The Anthony Nolan Trust manages an extensive database of potential bone marrow donors. It works to find a suitable DNA match for every patient in need of a bone marrow transplant. The money I raise will go towards this process, which includes the recruitment of potential bone marrow donors and the matching up of donors with patients to provide life saving bone marrow transplants.

My marathon challenge is more than a chance to raise money, it is also an opportunity to recruit more potential bone marrow donors. Joining the Anthony Nolan Trust's database is simple. Healthy people aged between 16 and 40 years old are asked to provide a spit sample to be added to a DNA database. Giving a bone marrow donation is also simple, relatively pain free and a similar experience to giving blood. A blood donation is collected from the arm of the donor. Stem cells are then harvested from this blood to be transfused into the body of the patient. Here they will grow new bone marrow, providing healthy blood cells and a vital chance for recovery.

The Anthony Nolan Trust helped save my life; without their intervention a suitable bone marrow donor would not have been found for me. No one in the UK was considered to be a close enough DNA match, so in the end, my bone marrow transplant came from a donor living in Canada! The Anthony Nolan Trust urgently needs to recruit more potential donors. At present it is not possible to find a match for everyone in need, meaning that many patients each year are not lucky enough to have the chance that I have had.

Please help me to save lives...

Three years ago I received a life-saving bone marrow transplant. It worked! This year I am going to run the Virgin London Marathon 2013 to fundraise for The Anthony Nolan Trust – an organisation that arranges bone marrow transplants on behalf of people like me.

Please sponsor me at:
www.virginmoneygiving.com/AndrewMcFadyen

Thank you for your support.



Be a match - save a life!

I want to run the London Marathon to help the Anthony Nolan Trust recruit more potential bone marrow donors. I hope that if you are eligible, you will consider joining up too. If your DNA is a match then you will be a life saver too! You can find out more, and request an application pack by visiting www.anthonynolan.org.

Please sponsor me online at:
www.virginmoneygiving.com/AndrewMcFadyen
<http://www.justgiving.com/Andrew-McFadyen1>

I am happy to accept cash donations but prefer cheques. Cheques should be made out to the Anthony Nolan Trust. Thank you.



Sensory Garden Fundraising Project

A big thank you to the Wyndham Co-Op store and to Manager Amy Watson for their very kind donation of £500 towards our sensory garden. This exciting project involves our Year 7 Foundation students who are helping raise the necessary funds to build an outdoor learning and relaxation space which includes a walkway, archway, decking, some benching and of course a wide selection of plants to stimulate the senses of smell, sound, taste, touch and sight. The sensory garden will be at the back of the Gateway bungalow at the school. We are looking for further donations to support this wonderful student led project - please contact Justin Smith on smithj@wyndhamhigh.co.uk to find out how you can help.

My love affair with Russia started in 1988, Mrs Dixon

Ya lyublu vas Russia!

We arrived at Domodedovo Airport in Moscow and we join the long queue at passport control where each passport and face is examined with inexorable slowness. I am reassured that at least some things haven't changed over the years. We drive to our hotel juggling lanes and cars. In the past a family might wait 7 years to own a car it now seems to me that every one of Moscow's estimated 15 million are on the road and there are bill boards advertising TOP GEAR and petrol is 32 Roubles a litre.

Our stay will be for two nights at the Cosmos Hotel. The faces of the staff are dour and unsmiling, perhaps reflecting that for all the obvious materialistic revolution in Moscow, life for some is still hard. Russian girls are alluring in the foyer but we find that some food in the restaurant isn't available or alluring. It used to be a problem eating at all in Russia.

Next morning the onion domes of St Basil's rush to greet us but alas Lenin is 'unwell' and the Mausoleum is enclosed in canvas much the same as Lenin's torso. Gum, the onetime state department store, selling pre perestroika, very little else but badges, is now full of Designer boutiques.

There must be a lot of 'new Russians' with the cash to shop here. We walk around the Kremlin and I feel in the 'shadow' of Ivan the Terrible and Stalin for whom the death of others became an addiction. Dinner is in a 14th century crypt with 70's leopard skin print decor. It is Russian style, reflecting a Soviet past rather than a gastronomic experience. Next, it is off to the Water Circus where Russian children queue to be photographed with a cat or a rabbit and the show is staged in front of spectacular rainbow coloured fountains. Ludmilla, then suggest a Metro Tour on the way back to the Hotel and we head off to see Bronze statues, coloured mosaics and gold chandeliers. By midnight it had been an eighteen hour day.

After what seems too little sleep we are up and on the bus for a 10 mile ride which takes over an hour and a half to Gorky Leninskye, the home of a millionaire Industrialist acquired by Lenin as a family home in 1921. Lenin was truly a regal Bolshevik with a silver Rolls Royce in the garage. Our guides now refer to the October Revolution as a Political Coup.

continued on page 10...



Hannah Mcnicol

'Russia was amazing. We were busy all the time. We visited some of the most decorative and impressive palaces I have ever seen. Moscow was fascinating and a mixture of the beautiful and ugly, rich and poor, colour and grey. St Petersburg was stunning, awe inspiring and wonderful. The weather was just a few degrees below freezing. The food was at times challenging and the entertainment entertaining... thanks for the laughs guys!! The train journey was an experience and overall a trip which will stay with me for many years to come'

Alice Barnett

'Red Square was amazing both in the day and at night. The lights were really beautiful and then to go to the train was really exciting. My favourite building was the Winter Palace which was just breathtaking. It was a great and memorable trip'





In other respects they continue to promote the cult of Lenin... his ability to speak 7 languages and read 30 but they deny he spoke English with an Irish accent or that the children who watched the film shows were the children of Inessa Armand, for whom Lenin had a life-long passion and who had died in 1920. There must be no hint of an impropriety. Lenin's wife was Nadezhda Krupskaya and she was his secretary and companion and we see her typewriter and her clothes hanging in the wardrobe. We return to the city for lunch which today is rather more impressive. We begin with Olivier salad (the creation of a French chef who lived in Moscow in the 18th Century) Chicken Kiev (invented in a Moscow Merchants Club in the early 20th Century) and Russian ice cream which is more creamy than in the west and called Morozhenoe. The first ice cream was made in the USSR in 1937 on the orders of the Head of Food Anastas Mikoyan. Alas there's a different kind of ice for sale today in Gorky Park. It is home to the largest ice skating rink in the world but our attention is taken by a giant ice sculpture shoe. We cross the road to see the Fallen Idols, the cemetery for the statues of disgraced Soviet Leaders like Stalin and Yakov (the man responsible for the assassination of Tsar Nicholas). We go to School 1207 which has a Lend /Lease Museum of Second World War artefacts and finally the day ends with a walk in Red Square before we board the Red Arrow which pulls out at midnight for St Petersburg, built by Peter the Great as his 'window on the West'.

It is colder than Moscow but the Hotel Pribaltiyskaya is welcoming and western. There is bacon for breakfast. We have just an hour before we start our tour to the Tsar's Summer Palaces of Pavlovsk and Pushkin. Pavlovsk or Paul's Palace was designed by a Scotsman, Charles Cameron, and was the gift of Catherine the Great to her son Paul 1st and his wife Maria Feodorovna to celebrate the birth of their son, the future Alexander I. The Palace was confiscated after the Revolution but preserved as a museum. It was the German attack in 1944 which was the greater threat but 30 curators worked by candlelight to pack and save 13000 objects. The Greek and Roman antiquities were too heavy to move so they were placed in the basement and then hidden by a brick wall and the statue of the Three Graces was buried 3 meters under the ground. The Germans occupied the Palace for two and a half years but when it was liberated it been burning for three days. Pushkin was so named in 1935 to commemorate the 100 anniversary of the death of the poet Alexander Pushkin and is home to the Catherine Palace, built for Catherine, the wife of Peter the Great but it owes its awesome grandeur to their daughter Elizabeth. We have lunch in small palace confiscated after the Revolution and in Soviet times used as a retreat for Teachers. The Catherine Palace designed by Rastrelli is most famous for the Amber Room, a room which took years to assemble using 450kg of amber but was dismantled and crated up in just 36 hours. Their eventual fate is unknown. The room was restored over 20 years at a cost of \$12 million and opened in 2003 by President Putin.

The Mariinsky Theatre is our destination this evening to see the Ballet La Bayadere. The Theatre in Soviet Times was known as the Kirov Theatre but reverted to its original name in 1992. It was first named after Empress Maria Alexandrovna wife of Tsar Alexander II but later renamed in honour of Sergei Kirov. He was a Bolshevik, assassinated on Stalin's orders at his office in the Smolny Institute. His death marked the start of the Purges. The theatre was destroyed during the 900 day Siege of Leningrad but rebuilt almost immediately. In Soviet times culture was an important part of Russian propaganda. The Ballet is in three Acts, for some, the storyline in the English synopsis appears to be too simple to be spun out for three hours but the set designs and costumes are as spectacular as the theatre and even the sceptical can be heard applauding and shouting 'Bravo'. Friday dawns snowy and temperatures are minus 7 as we head for the Peter and Paul Fortress to see the final resting place of all the Russian Tsars from Peter the Great to Nicholas II who with the rest of his family was laid to rest here in July 1998. In September 2006 Maria Feodorovna (mother of Nicholas II and a sister of Queen Alexandra) was interred in the Cathedral next to her husband, Alexander III. She with other members of the Romanov family had been rescued by a British ship from the Crimea during the Bolshevik revolution and taken to her native Denmark where she died in 1928. We are reminded by Victor our guide, that George V had not been sympathetic to his first cousin Nicholas and had refused asylum to the Russian Imperial Family but he warms as he tells us that yesterday, Thursday February 21st Prince Michael of Kent had attended a service in the Cathedral and how much he resembles the Romanovs.

Evie Calaby

'My highlight was to see St Basil's. No picture can prepare you for seeing it in reality The Metro tour was simply incredible and the overnight train was much more comfortable than I imagined. The architecture in St Petersburg was beautiful and seeing the wealth in the Royal Palaces of Catherine and Paul stunned me. It was lovely to experience history and culture whilst having lots of fun at the same time.'



In the Prison, we see the cell where Alexander Ulyanov (Lenin's brother) is held before his execution in 1887 for his part in the plot to assassinate the Tsar Alexander III. Victor tells us that Lenin's part in the execution of Nicholas II was to avenge the impact of what the Tsar had done to his family. Somehow the pieces of the jigsaw are coming together.

Then it is time to go to Nevsky Prospect and to School 207. The Head Teacher, Valentina Mironova is justifiably proud of her new school. It is a specialist English Speaking School, free, although students have to pay for 'extras' like cleaning and a caretaker. The classrooms are small but classes are small. Each room has a computer and interactive white board. Students complain that they don't like the new beige walls, blinds or pine desks... 'we liked the old patterned wallpaper and flowered curtains because it was more homely' but there are cloakrooms, the tiles are not cracked or the floors uneven and teachers do not have to clean the school themselves. Our guides are Stephanie, Victoria and Ann. Their spoken English is faultless. They have been learning since age 7 and with a timetable identical to ours manage to have one lesson of English each day. All the students are keen to practice their English and I am taken with three boys Pasha, Astomur and Misha who demonstrate not just their English competency but also their IT skills.



The school, like most Russian schools it seems to me, has an affinity for Scotland and Robert Burns and they write about John Logie Baird, Scottish Flags, The Highland Games, Mary Queen of Scots and Arthur Conan Doyle. I met Natalia Petrova who has developed a website <http://like2teach.tmweb.ru> and she also gives me a copy of her book for Home Reading... 56 pages with extracts from various writers including Lewis Carroll, TS Elliot and instructions about irony, alliteration, simile, metaphor and inference. We have lunch in the School canteen where ladies in tall blue hats sell us drinks and snacks for cash. In Soviet times every teacher had a samovar for making tea but today there is an espresso coffee machine in the canteen and sachets of Nescafe. In Soviet restaurants coffee was only ever served after dinner and any request otherwise received a very firm 'NYET'.

It is such a privilege to go to the Hermitage. For me the joy never diminishes seeing the early Renaissance works of Filippo Lippi, Leonardo and Raphael. I have an annual pilgrimage to see Caravaggio's the Lute Player, El Greco's Peter and Paul, Rembrandt's Flora and Reuben's Bacchus and then it is upstairs to the French Impressionists for Rodin, Degas, Renoir, Cezanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin, Matisse and Picasso. What a collection and not just for 'me and the mice to enjoy'! One of the most recent exhibitions to come out of the conflict with Germany in the Second World War are a collection of 74 paintings that almost no one has seen before.



Van Gogh's 'Morning' after the style of Millet is indeed a 'Hidden Treasure' but without the recent dramatic changes which have transformed Russia, to see it would have remained a dream.

The day ends with a visit to the Nikolayev Palace for a Folk Concert where we see a brilliant combination of traditional dance, music and song which unexpectedly is more popular than the Ballet. Then it is back to the Hotel for a late dinner and to celebrate an 18th Birthday.

Our final day dawns early and February 23rd is Father's Day in Russia. In Soviet times it was Fatherland Day or Red Army Day and a Public Holiday. We go first to the Yusupov Palace where Prince Felix Yusupov conspired to kill the one man felt to threaten the stability of the war torn Russian Empire. Grigori Rasputin was enticed to this house and served cakes and red wine laced with cyanide... enough to kill 5 men. Then he was shot 4 times, clubbed with an iron bar several times, wrapped in a blanket and tossed into the Moika River where he died of hypothermia! In Soviet times it was the Palace of Culture. From here we go to the Aurora, the ship which signalled the start of the October Revolution. We are shown every detail of the ship down to the engine room by a woman who declares it is 'my duty my past'. Just one blank shot from this ship was to transform the country for 75 years.

I love you Wymondham! YA LYUBLU VAS! (Say 'Yellow Blue Bus!')



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