

**T. Baker, A. Bendall, W. Groves, R. Page, H. Piper, H. Whitehouse...**

**Written by Alastair Winning**

These are all names that we should all recognise as we pass them by almost every single day of our school lives. These are names of just some of the *Old Wulfrunians* who gave their lives in the devastating conflict that was the First World War. Their names can be found on the walls in Big School among the other *OWs* who gave their lives in the two world wars of the twentieth century. However, these six men were all killed at one of the most famous and catastrophic battles in British military history - the Battle of the Somme.

The 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 will mark the centenary of this savage battle and more than ever, it seems very appropriate that we should take a moment to reflect and consider what the students of our school, as well as the thousands of other soldiers, experienced in this horrific conflict; a conflict in which they fought for the honour of the British Empire and for the future which we enjoy today.

In late 1915, The British Expeditionary Force (BEF) came under the command of General Douglas Haig, the military commander with a notorious association with the bloodshed that took place in this battle. Haig was famous for his 'war of attrition'. This term refers to Haig's military tactic of consistently ordering his soldiers to climb out of the trenches and into the abyss of 'No Man's Land', towards the German defences. This tactic, though it ground down the German army, cost hundreds of thousands of lives.

The six Old Wulfrunians that can be found in Big School were part of the larger total of one million casualties taken during the Battle of the Somme. To this day, the first day of the

Battle of the Somme remains statistically the worst day in British military history for fatalities and casualties.

The Battle of the Somme took place between 1<sup>st</sup> July and 18<sup>th</sup> November 1916 near the Somme River in Northern France. The Battle of the Somme had always been intended by the British and the French to be a large offensive intended to wipe out a significant proportion of the German defences.



The prelude to the battle on 24<sup>th</sup> June, the British began the bombardment of the German trenches, firing nearly two million shells; however, many failed to explode, leaving much of the German defences intact. The British, however, believed that their bombardment had been successful and rose out of the trenches in broad daylight and began their march across the barren plains towards the Germans. The rifles and bayonets which the British soldiers had been equipped with, were no match for the German machine guns that fired at them from the trenches. The machine gun was a relatively new form of modern weaponry in 1916. What the British had anticipated to be a great victory, turned out to be a costly offensive with little territorial reward.

As we approach the 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 it is important for us to remember and reflect on the bravery of those men who gave their lives in the Battle of the Somme, one hundred years ago. In particular, the *Old Wulfrunians*, who not only fought in the name of their country, but in the name of Wolverhampton Grammar School.

## ***How WGS is Tackling the Teen Health Crisis***

During adolescence, our body and mind are both developing. We start to encounter mood swings as a result of our dreaded hormones where we feel the extremities of emotion and a diverse range of pressures that sometimes seem to consume us. But more or less, we know how to deal with these sudden changes of behaviour and foreign feelings.

However, it might not be that easy, an issue that is still surrounded by stigma and taboo is one regarding mental health. Even though 1 in 4 people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year, it is still a topic of discussion that is met with prejudice, avoidance and ignorance. This is obviously a cause for concern for everyone, however, we also need to address how this affects young people in the UK.

Half of mental illness in adult life starts before the age of fifteen and 75% by the age of eighteen. As well as this, the numbers for children going to A&E with mental health issues have doubled in the last four years.

## ***Another One Bites the Dust***

Have you noticed how many stars have passed away this year? David Bowie, Lemmy, Terry Wogan, Ronny Corbett, Paul Daniels, Alan Rickman, Victoria Wood and now Prince. It seems so strange to be living through the period when these great artists are dying.

Take Bowie, for instance. I only discovered him a few years ago when I watched a live cover of *The Jean Genie* being played by a band performing outside my bedroom window during a street party. It was such a hypnotic, crunching beat that you could not fail to be drawn in.

BOOM BOOM BOOM DA DEEDA BOOM BOOM BOOM! I went straight onto YouTube to download the original and discovered David Bowie.

I wouldn't claim to have an exhaustive knowledge of his back catalogue. Life on Mars, Space Oddity, Rebel Rebel, and Heroes, of course, from the 2012 Olympics. I only saw him once on TV – a gaunt, weirdly painted figure in a shiny leotard, rocking awkwardly on an old Top of the Pops.

However, for these children and young people aged 5 - 16 who suffer from a diagnosable mental health disorder, they are not just simply a statistic, but a real person who is sat in a classroom trying to learn. It seems as though there is a crisis in our hands with young people's mental health, that needs to be tackled as soon as possible.

So what are we doing to try and tackle this crisis in our school? As you may know, we have trained Peer Supporters who work hard to tackle as many problems as they can and are available every break and lunchtime in the Gerald Mander Room for anyone to chat to. However, Peer Support isn't the only help available, did you know we have our own school counsellor? She is available to come in at any time to see anyone and is a valuable resource for our mental health. On top of this, coming soon we have some valuable workshops on resilience, stress and anxiety from Base 25, our local youth worker service, alongside new resources about mental health available on Firefly.

Now is the time talk about mental health, let's stand up against prejudice, avoidance and ignorance and tackle this crisis together.

**Written by Holly Pleydell and Charlotte Forrester**

Bowie is always described as a chameleon, shifting from one persona to another, and inhabiting the worlds he invented for himself. Yet that image of him, shown so many times after he died, with a zig zag flash across his Ziggy Stardust face has become so iconic that he is one of the only "pop stars" that my grandma could put a name to.

I grew up with Alan Rickman. His portrayal of the sneering Snape in the Harry Potter films followed me through my childhood. Ronny Corbett I knew from re-runs of The Two Ronnies – I can quote the Four Candles and F-U-N-E-X sketches off by heart. Lemmy was one of my favourite heavy metal musicians. I never got to see Motorhead but I've been to London to see ACDC and Alice Cooper.

But now these artists have been suddenly snatched away, like a magician whipping a tablecloth from a well stacked table. I am rather envious of my parents who could watch them develop and bloom, and for whom they formed part of the backdrop of their youth. I wonder who will fill that role for me now?

**Written by James Cox**

## The unseen cast of Great Expectations

Something especially striking about our school is the fact that we have a theatre. A proper, genuine, fairly big theatre, in a fancy building with a foyer for drinks, proper lighting and set designs and all. For the want of avoiding cliché patriotism, it truly is a credit to the school.

With everything from an 80s style, Kate Bush soundtracked Jekyll and Hyde, to the full on, fabulously costumed musical Guys and Dolls, it's no lie to say our school's reputation for drama is well deserved. The years 7 to 10 play troupe even took on Shakespeare, in the brilliant Midsummer Night's Dream a few years back. Even the posters and programmes look all glossy and fancy.

It is a genuine, professionally run theatre, and the dedicated teachers behind it – Mr Tyler, of course, being the most renowned director and thespian in the school – must have their praises sung.

The most recent production in school was the senior play *Great Expectations*, that had a talented, dedicated cast (whoever played Mrs Joe, I've been told, was notably the best actor in the entire thing); but we all know that actors are an arrogant bunch, so in avoiding the inflammation of ego, I feel that it's necessary to write a short testimonial for the unseen people *behind* the stage, who commit such an insane amount of time into the theatre every year.

Mr Wood and Mr Tyler were of course the dedicated Messrs of *Great Expectations*, though it must be noted that Mr Benfield and Mr Payne, a thespian himself, have been involved in the directing of various school plays over the years.

Brilliant pianist Ray Curran took the part of musical director, and even wrote his own song, 'God Bless and Forgive You', as a bittersweet ending to the production, and he was joined by the energetic Owen Tyler on the drums.

The sinister and evocative choreography was devised by Ruth Seager, (the Havisham death scene, between Freya Cunningham and Jay Godden, was particularly unnerving), and the lighting was mastered by Robert Hodges. The wonderful period costumes were provided by Mary Mullock; she also directed the agonising task of makeup, hair, more makeup and hair, and pinning the actors' clothes together to avoid on-stage wardrobe malfunctions.

Our very own Lewis Batho was on AV design, with Lauren Vasey on Graphic Design, and Gary Williams, Photography. Kevin Petford (Kev) slaved away on the vital actual construction of the stage and set itself. Finally, the job of backstage management, that seems to me more frightening than acting in front of the audience itself, was ably dealt with by Hal Wilson-Bett, Max Diment, Lydia Bridgewood and Jay Hayer. It's a real credit to them that none of the multiple sets of crockery were smashed.

Written by Josephine Dowswell



## EU referendum – all you need to know

Everyone's witnessed the fuss over whether or not Britain ought to remain in the EU, but many of us seem to be clueless about our opinion on what should happen and, with phrases such as 'Brexit', the question appears all the more daunting. But do we actually know what the EU does for us?

The European Union officially was established in 1992, involving 28 nations by 2013. It promotes the general interests of the EU through enforcing legislation and implementing policies on issues that can't be dealt with effectively on a national scale, and it has developed a series of treaties and agreements which were put in place following the Second World War to prevent any one European nation gaining too much power. However, if the EU is such an important platform, why are some of the nations' leading politicians so keen for a 'Brexit' (British exit) from the EU?

Leaving the EU would result in

an immediate cost saving, as the country would no longer contribute to the EU budget. Last year, Britain paid in £13bn, but it also received £4.5bn worth of spending, making the UK's net contribution £8.5bn. While the benefits of leaving are predictable, it's uncertain whether they outweigh the financial benefits of free trade with EU members and the inward investments that boost British industry. Car-makers are particularly fearful that production could scale-down significantly if goods couldn't be transported tax-free into Europe, considering over 50% of British trade is with EU members, as well as fears that large companies who do a lot of business with Europe may move their headquarters to remain in the EU. Eurosceptics, on the other hand, argue that medium and small businesses can't trade with the EU and are instead restricted by the level of imports from EU countries.

UKIP leader Nigel Farage believes Britain could follow the lead of Norway, which has access to the single market but is not bound by EU laws on areas such as agriculture, justice and home affairs. However, many others believe that such a clean

and friendly break from the EU is not possible, considering Norway is still part of the Schengen zone of free movement, while the UK isn't, giving the EU few reasons to cooperate. France has already warned that there would be consequences if Britain left the EU, particularly in regards to the migrant 'jungle' in Calais which could move to British soil if Britain votes for a Brexit. There are further fears through Europe that a Brexit could trigger other members wanting to leave the EU as well, with Germany already calling for a referendum of their own after the migrant crisis, meaning that the EU will not be keen on making their terms for a Brexit very lenient to prevent other countries following suit.

All in all, it's hard to say whether or not Britain would benefit from a Brexit considering no other country has done so before. Pro-Europeans label Brexit as a 'leap in the dark' while Eurosceptics see it as a huge opportunity for Britain to expand its horizons. Either way, all will be decided at the referendum on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.

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Written by Anamika Tura

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## Reflections on Education

By the time I leave school this year I will have completed 14 years of education, which is about 18500 hours' worth. But are the skills that I have gained and knowledge that I have been taught been the most valuable for both me and society?

I can analyse a poem. I am able to determine the 3<sup>rd</sup> term in a mathematical sequence. And I know very well that 'mitochondria are the powerhouse of the cell'. But I still feel rather unprepared for what we call the "real world", as if we are aware that the education system exists as an extraneous microcosm, in a bubble and out of touch with the professional world.

In a system where students are examined according to guidelines and specification set by large examining institutions, schools and universities - if they desire to remain competitive and appear successful - must produce, I dare say manufacture, students that can pass these exams well. I ask what detriment this may incur to both students and society, if examinations are seen as everything?

There should be more to learning than this, and I am sure many teachers would like to teach subject-relevant content, perhaps from current affairs in the arts or new discoveries in the sciences, but are unable to do so, for doing so would be deemed a waste of time, as the rigid exam curriculum *must* be adhered to.

Thus it is not the issue of any particular school - many are probably willing to break away from the rigidity of the syllabus - but an issue of a larger philosophy and approach to education from policymakers.

Schools are able to innovate in *how* they teach, but are at the mercy of *what* they teach, and this is arguably the area which demands the most attention. Some institutions could be daring enough to teach a new curriculum, but soon the hand of the state regulator will chastise them when their students fail conventional examinations, which simply survey how well the broader syllabuses are taught.

Once schools are granted the ability to innovate the curriculum and are not penalised for doing so, there remains conflict between educating to develop general skills and educating to develop certain knowledge to fulfil a specific occupation.

At the moment, many schools find themselves in a state of limbo, incapable of both of these: the knowledge schools teach isn't applicable to anything in particular, or is too limited in scope, and nor is the knowledge general enough to take into multiple areas, or sometimes for use in later life. It is debatable which path is best and similarly, is university the best time to specialise absolutely in an area? Or should it be done sooner? At the moment, sixth form offers an appropriate bridge between the two, although some people could be better served by forgoing certain subjects at an earlier time during their education.

During my 14 years of school, I have come to understand that the schooling philosophy in this country doesn't quite meet the needs of students, teachers or society, although I have enjoyed the experience. Schools need to become more sophisticated, bold, innovative and creative to develop the individual student better. WGS is trying to do this but needs to do this more, and meanwhile, attempt to break any shackles that prevent a more sophisticated approach to education.

In comparison to other schools, WGS has done this to a large extent, but is there still room for improvement? The newly introduced ASPIRE lessons in Year 7 and 8 go some way to try and equip students with skills that they need to develop beyond pure knowledge: debating, discussion, presenting, high level reading skills and so on. The school could endeavour to be bold and make decisions about education that are not just based on exam results, but a whole range of skills to develop the whole student. I am sure many teachers would support this endeavour and perhaps even a wider reimagining of the education system.

**Written by Michael Carleton**

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**If you wish to be involved in the next edition of The Wulf, please e-mail:  
Verity Stark, [09StarkV@wgs-sch.net](mailto:09StarkV@wgs-sch.net), or Charlotte Cocker, [10CockerC@wgs-sch.net](mailto:10CockerC@wgs-sch.net)**

Congratulations to Pardeep Japper for winning the 'Who's Knees are These' quiz from the last edition

Thank you for reading the second edition of The Wulf, and good luck to all of Upper Sixth leaving this term!