



News Update



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Principal's Letter



Dear Parents, Guardians and Friends

My first term as Principal of Erskine Stewart's Melville Schools has passed and we welcome the New Year and the spring term with excitement and gusto. The autumn term was productive and busy for children and staff alike.

TRIPS

In the October half-term a variety of residential trips took place. There was a Home Economics trip to Naples and Sorrento, a trip to the German Aeronautics Centre in Cologne organised by the SMC Physics department, a walking tour for girls and boys in the Sierra Nevada in Southern Spain, a Business Management trip to New York and the Chamber Choir tour to Venice. The biennial MES trip to the Edinburgh Girls' High School in Malawi was the culmination of a year-long preparation period for 12 MES girls. It was also an emotional reunion for them with their Malawian sisters who were in Edinburgh in the summer performing with them at The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo. Just prior to half term, the Modern Languages departments at MES and SMC organised the first leg of the Marseille French Exchange for S4 girls and boys and the French Work Experience Exchange for S5 and S6 students.

AUTUMN TERM EVENTS

The autumn term calendar was filled with special events and occasions, including Remembrance, The Pipe Band and Dancers' Ceilidh and excellent performances of Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* over three nights in The Mar Hall. The inter-house ESM challenge began in earnest with The House Music Competition. 700 pupils from S3-S5 took part in the six House Choirs which were masterfully prepared and conducted by S5 pupils. The soloists, chamber groups and choirs performed to a very high standard and rightly impressed our external adjudicator. The House Rock competition followed on a few weeks later, it was a rousing evening full of energy and spirit. Other musical events included two Award Holders' Concerts held in our wonderful new venue, The Dean and the Junior School and Senior School Chamber Concerts as well as the ESMO Concert held on the eve of St Andrew's Day in the TFC and The MES Art department held a well-attended and successful Creative Career Event to which they invited pupils from other schools. The annual Grandparents' Tea Party hosted by S6 students was greatly appreciated by all attendees. We rounded off the term in our traditional way with our two Carol Parties followed by both the Junior School and Senior School Carol Services held on consecutive nights in St Mary's cathedral.

REVIEW OF THE THREE SCHOOLS' DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2018/2019

1. To review Nursery provision and e-Plus services at ESMS

The Headmaster of the Junior School has chaired a working party composed of the Head of Nursery, Deputy Head (Early Years), the e-Plus Manager and the Bursar. They have considered ways in which we could better meet parental demand for e-Plus places both at the Queensferry Road site and at New Ravelston. The number of spaces we have available is defined by floor space requirements from the Care Inspectorate. Demand for places also fluctuates across the week and the staffing profile has to reflect these fluctuations.

The working party looked at all the impacting factors and have put forward short term, medium term and long term considerations. One short term action is to make after school clubs' information available to parents sooner so that parents know their e-Plus requirements earlier and this should even out demand more at the start of session. With the construction of the new extension to Easter Ravelston, it is also hoped that this will provide some break-out space for e-Plus.

Construction of our new dining facility at Easter Ravelston is progressing well and we are delighted to be able to offer hot lunches to Nursery and Primary 1 children from August 2019. Given changes to Early Learning and Childcare provision throughout Scotland, we will also be reviewing the timing and structure of our nursery provision from August 2020 when these national changes come into effect. It is highly likely that we will be withdrawing from Partnership with the Local Authority from this date. We will continue to offer first class Early Learning and Childcare for parents and that this will include an extension to nursery hours.

Construction of our new dining facility at Easter Ravelston is progressing well and we are delighted to be able to offer hot lunches to Nursery and Primary 1 children from August 2019.



2. To review and assess Support for Learning Provision at ESMS

The Principal led a working party consisting of representatives from all three schools. The areas of focus were transition from Junior School to the Senior Schools, timetabling and staffing of support provision, the utilisation of assisted technologies for pupils with identified learning support needs and ongoing training for staff. With regards to staff training, the Heads of Support for Learning in the Junior and Senior Schools led an in-service training session for staff in January 2019 and this training slot will be a regular feature of the three schools' staff INSET programme. Other recommendations based on the listed items will be formalised and taken forward in the summer term.

3. To evaluate the current uses, capacity and potential of Firefly as the ICT platform at ESMS

The Director of ICT chaired a group consisting of interested parties and representatives from all three schools. Some of the team visited a 'Firefly Roadshow' to see and share good practice with other schools. They then issued questionnaires to pupils (from P7-S6) and staff to survey their usage and views of Firefly. The headline usage statistics were impressive; 90% staff and 60% of pupils use Firefly daily and everyone uses it weekly.

Firefly is used for information, setting homework, teaching resources, planning and administration. The surveys have furnished us with several recommendations to improve the user experience will be taken forward by the ICT department.

These include adding links to SOCs (the sports App) and the lunch menu. On the question of where homework should be set (Firefly or homework diary), the surveys showed a referendum split. Older pupils liked the hybrid of Firefly and the homework diary as mediums for receiving their homework tasks. Staff will be encouraged to add their homework instructions to Firefly; pupils may also choose to write the detail of the instructions in their homework diary.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Staff

Erskine Stewart's Melville Schools

Peter Kostal – Estates Building Surveyor

Stewart's Melville College

Gregor Innes – AHT (Regent/Staff Development Co-ordinator)

Emily Flanagan – Teacher of Music (temporary, part-time)

Iain McKenna – Teacher of Physics (temporary)

Naomi Campbell – Teacher of Art (part-time)

The Mary Erskine School

Jonathon Freeman – Teacher of Drama (maternity cover)

Stephen Simpson – Teacher of Mathematics (maternity cover)

Catherine Barclay – Teacher of Biology (maternity cover)

Colin McCay – Teacher of Classics (part-time, maternity cover)

John Lowrie – Teacher of Classics (part-time, maternity cover)

Sarah MacGregor-Norrie – Art Technician (maternity cover)

Sam Roger – Former Pupils' Guild Co-ordinator

ESMS Junior School

Alison Marshall – Head of Dance and Drama (maternity cover)

Jennifer Littlejohn – Specialist Art Teacher (part-time)

Claire Leadbetter – Class Teacher (maternity cover)

Máire Halsall – Class Teacher (maternity cover)

Joanne Gaffney – ICT Teacher Assistant

Aisling McNulty – Administrator/Receptionist in e-Plus

Sarah Jackson – GAP Assistant

Darcy Morgan – GAP Assistant

Liam Ottley – GAP Assistant

Erin Willock – GAP Assistant

NEW ARRIVALS

We wish the following staff, who have recently had children, well for the future:

Sarah and Richard Jack: a son, Nathan Matthew

Ewan and Julia Stark: a son, Theo Emerson

Lee Burley and Eyrun: a son, Joel Leesson

Duncan and Emma Macdonald: a daughter, Anna Mairi

Jo and Manny Ly: a son, Arun Rain

OTHER STAFF NEWS

Marriages

We wish to congratulate the following staff, who have recently married:

Jo Burgess, Teacher of Biology and Chemistry, MES to Manny Ly, on 8 December

Aoife Buckley, Junior School Admissions Manager, to Adam Mackenzie on 27 December



Linda A Moule

Principal



Erskine Stewart's Melville Schools' Governing Council



**Ken
Pritchard**
Chairman

Ken Pritchard, BSc, FRICS, ACI Arb, is the principal of Pritchard Property Consultants LLP, founded in 2011 to provide a high-level, personal service to key clients looking for quality, honest advice delivered with clarity and speed. Schooled at Dundee High School and Daniel Stewart's and Melville College, Ken went on to qualify as a Chartered Surveyor in 1986. He is a member of The Merchant Company, a former Assistant of the Court and sits on the Property Committee. Ken is married to Mags, has two children who both attended ESMS and has completed a circumnavigation of our planet in the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race.



**Barbara
Leckstein**

Barbara Leckstein is a former pupil of The Mary Erskine School and a graduate of Edinburgh College of Domestic Science and of Moray House College of Education. She went on to teach Domestic Science. Whereafter, she was a Director of three companies in retail and contract furnishing. Later she was sole proprietor of The Designer Curtain Studio from which she retired in 2015. Barbara is currently involved with Queen Margaret University's Department of Costume and Design. Additionally, she is a Business Adviser with Young Enterprise Scotland. Barbara is an active member of The Royal Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh and is a former Assistant on the Master's Court.



**Dame
Sue Bruce**

Dame Sue Bruce, DBE DL, is a non-executive director with SSE PLC; Chair of Royal Scottish National Orchestra (RSNO); Convener of Court at the University of Strathclyde; Prince's Foundation Trustee and Electoral Commissioner for Scotland. She is also a Deputy Lieutenant of the City of Edinburgh. Sue is a member of the Merchant Company of Edinburgh. Sue served in Local Government for almost forty years. Her most recent post was Chief Executive of the City of Edinburgh Council and she previously served as Chief Executive at Aberdeen City Council and Chief Executive at East Dunbartonshire Council.



**David
Bradley-Bird**

David Bradley-Bird is the co-founder and Director of Multiply, an award-winning Marketing Agency with offices in Edinburgh and London. As an experienced marketer he works with many blue-chip companies specialising in digital communication and delivery of learning strategies. Educated at Midfield School in Somerset, he grew up in Hertfordshire before moving to Edinburgh in 1997 to further his career. He is member of the Merchant Company along with several industry related bodies. David is an SFA qualified football coach and coaches 2005 year group at Curries Star Football Club. He is married with two teenage children and keeps active through running, gym and participating in running events and triathlons.



**David
Girdwood**

David Girdwood has a long association with the schools having joined Stewart's Melville College in 1987 as Head of Chemistry, later becoming Head of Upper School. In 2002 he was appointed as Rector of St Columba's School, Kilmacollm, serving for 15 years until his retirement in 2017. David is a Deputy Lieutenant of Renfrewshire and also serves as a governor of Lomond School. His interests include rugby and walking.



**Hester
Innes**

Hester Innes is a specialist doctor in Public Health Medicine, working in the areas of national healthcare planning, health and social care information/data and intelligence. She is an expert in Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease and has interests in research and ethics. She enjoys cycling, walking and reading.



Judy Phillips

Judy Phillips is Recruitment Director of CHASE Search & Selection Ltd, a leading Pharmaceutical Recruitment Agency and Contract Sales provider in the UK. With over 30 years' experience in the Pharmaceutical Industry including five years' experience as 1st Line Manager, Judy is responsible for CHASE's strategic operation and managing the consultancy team. Judy also brings a wealth of HR experience having started her career as an HR Manager at BHS. Her son Lewis is a former pupil having attended nursery/primary and senior school.



Alasdair Seale

Alasdair Seale is the owner and Managing Director of Trinity Factors, the Bruntsfield-based property factoring and letting agency, and is a past President of the Property Managers Association of Scotland. He is a former pupil of Stewart's Melville College and was a Governor from 2008 until 2011, having been appointed while an Assistant on the Master's Court of the Merchant Company. Alasdair is semi-retired and now spends more time volunteering: both hands-on, for example in Tanzania, and as a trustee of several local charities and voluntary organisations. His interests are family, Rotary International and, in his leisure time, wild swimming.



Malcolm Rust

Malcolm Rust, MA (Hons), LLB Dip, LP, NP, is a partner and Head of the Private Client and Charities teams at Shepherd and Wedderburn LLP. He started his legal career with S&W in 1992, and acts for charities, trusts and individual clients. He is an accredited specialist in charity law by the Law Society of Scotland. Malcolm is a member of The Royal Merchant Company, Assistant of the Court and sits on the Audit & Risk Committee. He is married to Gill (herself a FP of George Watson's College). Malcolm went to school at Robert Gordon's College in Aberdeen, and thereafter went to St Andrews, Aberdeen and Edinburgh Universities, undertaking a History degree before turning his sights on Law. He currently has one child at ESMS (it was three but two have since left). Malcolm enjoys the hills, running, cooking and music. Next to Gill, the love of his life is Dougall, their Cockapoo.



Pamela Grant

Pamela Grant, BSC (Hons), RICS, is the owner and Director of Pamela Grant Developments Limited set up in 2015, offering professional property advice from initial feasibility to project delivery. She also works part time at Scottish Futures Trust, an infrastructure delivery company owned by the Scottish Government. Pamela was previously a Director at Miller Developments for over 22 years and a former Chair of the British Council of Offices in Scotland After attending Friends' Grammar School in Northern Ireland, she went on to study Estate Management at Heriot Watt University. Pamela is married to David and they have two boys currently at ESMS. Her interests include travelling, skiing and horse riding.



Pamela Smyth

Pamela Smyth is the General Counsel and Company Secretary at Forth Ports Limited, the statutory harbour authority responsible for navigation and marine activity in the Forth and Tay. Forth Ports Limited is also the owner and operator of eight ports in the UK offering cargo handling and storage facilities. In this role Pamela is responsible for all governance and legal matters affecting the company. Before joining Forth Ports, Pamela was the Group Legal Director and Company Secretary of the Miller Group Limited. Pamela is a law graduate from the University of Edinburgh. Pamela has been a governor since September 2009 and is currently the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and a Trustee of the Merchant Company Retirement Benefit Scheme.



Ralph Campbell

Ralph Campbell, CA, is currently Finance Director of Martin Currie Investment Management. Previously, he held senior finance roles at GE Capital and Prudential Fund Management, both in the UK and Australia. Ralph is a Trustee of charity for injured servicemen & women, Horseback UK. His interests include rugby, cricket and golf.

FENCING CHAMPIONSHIPS



The Scottish Schools' Individual Fencing Championships were held in Linlithgow in November. Two ESMS fencers took part in this highlight of the fencing calendar, which brings together Scotland's best young fencers. After a competitive set of poules, ESMS Fencing Captain Salma Ahmad (5G) finished the competition in 2nd place in the O16 sabre category and was awarded a silver medal. Anna Conlin of S2 also did superbly, winning a bronze medal in the U14 age group foil event. It was a competitive division and after two rounds of poules, Anna won a close quarterfinal before losing narrowly in the semi-final.

EQUESTRIAN SUCCESS

Congratulations to Danielle MacDonald who competed at Howe Equestrian Centre in the Cullions Girl Friday Show Jumping competition. In the Discovery class (1m) she jumped a double clear, winning out of a strong class of over 40 competitors.

TENNIS AT MES



Congratulations to the MES Tennis team of Laurie, Emily, Lucy and Kristen who defeated Inverkeithing High School convincingly in their Scottish Schools' Cup tie on 6th November. They are now due to play Earlston High School in the next round.



U14 BADMINTON

U14 Badminton players at The Mary Erskine School enjoyed a successful festival with their peers from St George's School recently. Great sportsmanship, everyone!

THE MARY ERSKINE SCHOOL GYMNASTICS



The MES Level 4 A teams competed at the recent Scottish Schools' Level 4 Qualifiers in December at Musselburgh Leisure Centre. The girls competed against teams from around the country on both floor and vault. The A team of Emma Clarkson, Emma Cunliffe, Yasmin Ali and Sophie Widdowson were delighted to finish in second place and qualify for the Scottish Finals at the Bell Centre in Perth! The Level 3 teams competed at

the Edinburgh and Lothian Schools Championships at Lasswade High School in January. They competed against gymnasts from Broughton High School, Dalkeith and Lasswade. The A team of Heather Maclean, Libby Stops and Ella Swanson finished with bronze medals. Thanks go to Charlie Bryce and Amy O'Fee who have helped to prepare the gymnasts this year.

SMC U16 RUGBY TEAM WIN SCOTTISH SCHOOLS' SHIELD



Congratulations to the Stewart's Melville College Rugby U16A team, who won the Schools' U16 Shield at BT Murrayfield after defeating Earlston High School 41-0.

The boys showed a great deal of resilience throughout the tournament, after exiting the Scottish Schools' Cup earlier in the season.

Despite challenging conditions, co-captains Lachlan McGrigor and Matthew Russell led their team to victory and the team were a fantastic advert for running rugby, aligned with Scottish Rugby's technical blueprint. Without singling out a single player's efforts, it was fantastic to see co-captain Lachlan McGrigor named Man of the Match by SRU officials.

The squad are now excited for the remainder of the season and look forward to continuing their success against their rivals up until April.

SCOTTISH BADMINTON OPEN AT THE EMIRATES ARENA



Once again ESMS pupils from the Junior and Senior schools were inspired by a fabulous day of world-class competition and badminton-related activities when attending the Scottish Open at the Emirates Arena, Glasgow on 23rd November.

GIRLS' SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION SWIMMING AND NETBALL COMPETITION

On Thursday 20th September, The Mary Erskine School hosted three visiting schools from around Scotland to take part in a Netball Festival and Swimming Gala. The MES Netball team played with determination and effort, enjoying the strong challenges from the opposing Schools.

A great competitive afternoon of swimming took place in the pool with the following results obtained:

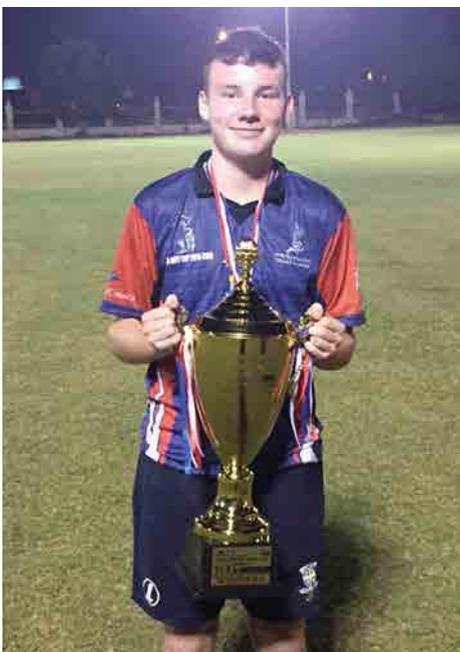
The Mary Erskine School: 118

St George's: 78

St Margaret's, Aberdeen: 73

Kilgraston: 55

CRICKET NEWS



Bahauddin Ali (S6) and Charlie Peet (4A) have been selected for the UI9 Scotland training squad: a fantastic achievement for both boys in what will prove to be a busy couple of years leading up to the 2020 U19 World Cup in South Africa!

Elsewhere, eight SMC boys have been selected for the UI4 & UI6 Eastern Knights training squads. Both squads have been training hard throughout the off-season ahead of a busy summer where they aim to defend their 'Regional Champions' status. Congratulations to: Harry Johnstone (5K), Charlie Phipps (5T), Charlie Peet (4A), Achyut Aniruddhan (4K), Joe Newman (4A), Dylan Davidson (4T), James Gordon (3L) for their UI6 call ups and to Harry Hawthorn (2A) on his UI4 call up.

As well as his national selection, Charlie Peet (4A) travelled to the UAE at the end of December to take part in the UI7 Gulf Cup. Charlie was playing for the Durham County

Cricket Club Academy team. Durham faced opposition from the UAE, Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, playing 10 games across an 11-day trip before emerging as UI7 Champions! Charlie is pictured here holding the trophy. The trip benefited from significant fund raising and sponsorship including a major donation from Ben Stokes, the Durham and England all-rounder; who played in the same competition a few years ago.



SMC SKI TEAM SUCCESS

Congratulations to the SMC Ski Team, who took Bronze at the British Schools' Dry Slope Championships at Hillend in November. Competing against the fastest qualifying skiers from across Scotland, England and Wales, this was a fantastic result for Cameron G, Lewis R, Peter S and Harry S who have been skiing together for many years.



SWIMMING REPORT

Congratulations to Katie Goodburn (S4) who represented Scotland at the Challenge International swimming meet in Geneva, Switzerland, where she won Silver in the 100m Breaststroke Junior final and Bronze in the 50m Breaststroke Open final!



MES 1ST XI HOCKEY UPDATE

The MES 1st XI Hockey team are enjoying a competitive and successful season. MES hosted the East District 1st XI tournament which consisted of 13 local teams. The girls played some excellent hockey throughout the day and narrowly lost out to George Watsons College in the final. In the East District Knock-Out Cup the 1st XI won matches against Loretto and George Heriots (both 5-0 victories) and they have progressed to the final which will be played in March. The team have a busy schedule with the Scottish Bowl Competition, 7's tournaments and Coach Logic league matches to contest in the coming weeks. Good luck, girls!

BALLINLUIG TO DUNKELD CANOE TRIP



Not long after the start of the Autumn term, Sarah McCormack, Thea Tjolle, Ollie Chan, Ciaran Stewart and Rachael Andrews, all S5 pupils from MES and SMC, accompanied by Mr Thomson, Mr Willis and Mr Neill canoed eight miles from Ballinluig to Dunkeld. We had a full day out, leaving school at 8am and getting back at 7pm. We started paddling on the river Tummel not far from the confluence with the River Tay. We spent a bit of time in the turbulent waters around the confluence practicing our ferry gliding skills in the strong flow, causing some of us to take on a little water! The river then winds its way along beside the A9 and the railway line. Soon after the river turns left

and runs under the railway bridge, we were able to enjoy our first significant sets of standing waves, taking even more water on in the process. It was then time to stop for lunch. Further along the route, we passed under the A9 and the Jubilee Bridge and arrived in Dunkeld under the historic Old Bridge. Our end point was on the right-hand side of the river in Birnam where the rapid which runs under the Dunkeld bridge washes out. To round off this fun packed day we enjoyed a water fight and swim. We would all like to thank Mr Thomson, Mr Willis and Mr Neill for organising and running this fantastic trip.

CANOEING AT PORT EDGAR by Jessica Donaldson (4A)

During the first term of this school year, a group of S3 girls went down to Port Edgar water sports centre where we took part in canoeing lessons each week. These lessons were in preparation for our Silver Duke of Edinburgh expedition in May where we will be canoeing down the Caledonian Canal. Many of us had not tried canoeing for extended periods of time before and the sessions were initially quite challenging. But working as a team and encouraging each other helped us to develop important skills that will be essential for our expedition. Mr Thomson and the staff at Port Edgar were very patient and helpful when describing our tasks and activities which made each session very enjoyable and informative.

Though a lot of our time was spent mastering basic canoeing skills, we also tried other things such as trying to move one boat over the other while still in the water and attempting to get back into our boats when everyone had capsized. Being submerged in the Firth of Forth is a freezing but hilarious experience and we spent most of our time laughing as we found ourselves in some ridiculous situations. We also got to jump off the pier which made for some brilliant photos. Overall, the whole group has really enjoyed our term of canoeing and I think we would all recommend giving canoeing a chance if you get the opportunity. We are all looking forward to both our three day Duke of Edinburgh expeditions in June!



EDINBURGH SCHOOLS' SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2018

ESMS had a fantastic day of competitive swimming at the Edinburgh and Lothian Schools' Swimming Championships in November, with a grand total of over 25 medals won by our swimmers!

Our Junior School team placed third in the boys' Relay event, whilst at Senior level the MES team secured first place in the Open Relay and the SMC boys took both Gold and Silver in their Open Relay. The boys' 14/15 team then won Silver in the Free Relay and the 12/13 team won Gold.

In the 14-15 age group, Katie Goodburn achieved a gold medal in both the 100m Breaststroke and 200m Individual Medley, Adele McDaid achieved a gold medal in the 200m Butterfly and a silver medal in 100m Butterfly and Yasmin Ali achieved a silver medal in the 100m Breaststroke. In the 16-18 age group, Francesca Kane achieved a bronze medal in the 100m Backstroke and Rebecca Ivens achieved a gold medal in the 200m Breaststroke. Finally, in the Open Relay, Francesca, Rebecca Ivens, Adele McDaid and Katie Goodburn all achieved gold medals.

Archie Goodburn won a gold medal in the 100m Breaststroke and 200m IM, Sonny Kennedy achieved a gold medal in both the 100m and 200m Freestyle races, Jamie MacDonald won Gold in the 400m IM and 200m Fly, whilst Brodie Gordon-Gibson also won a gold medal in the 200m Freestyle and 100m Fly. Joshua Mitchell took Gold in the 200m Breaststroke and Silver in the 100m, Cameron Alexander won Gold in the 200m Fly and bronze in the 100m Freestyle, Iain Rose took silver in the 200m IM and bronze in the 100m Fly, Joe Ewing achieved a silver medal in the 100m Freestyle while Neil Hepburn took bronze in the 100m Freestyle. Fionn McGuie also took bronze in the 200m Freestyle.

A huge well done to all of our swimmers and their coaches.



MES DANCE COMPETITION



The annual MES dance competition took place on the 5th of November 2018 and wow... what talent! This year the participants were challenged to choreograph a dance around the theme of "Values" which seemed to spark some brilliant ideas and outstanding dances. In the S1/2 category Summer Manson and Saachi Sharma came out on top with their amazing dance 'Hope'. They clearly worked very hard and thought about the music and choreography carefully to combine their theme with the dance. The winners of the senior category were Sarah Caw, Stefani

Oldcorn and Emily Ward with their breath-taking dance on the important topic of "Self-Value and Body Confidence." The dance itself and the lyrics of the music created a moving piece which showed that they were deserving winners. All in all, it was a fantastic evening and a massive congratulations goes to all those involved as well as our winners. Thank you to everyone who participated, to Miss Henderson for organising the event and to our wonderful external judges who took the time to be attend.

SSFA SELECTION

Sam Walker (S6) has been selected for the second year running, for the final Scottish Schools' FA squad this season. Well done, Sam.



CROSS COUNTRY NEWS

Well done Joe Ewing, who was part of the Scottish Athletics U20 Mixed Relay team that competed at the Great Run Stirling Cross Country against some of the best runners from UK, Europe and the USA.

Development News

ESMS DINNER FOR DODDIE

On Friday 1st February, ESMS welcomed over 700 guests to a glittering charity dinner in the National Museum of Scotland for what was probably the most ambitious event ever organised by the schools.

The ESMS Dinner for Doddie was planned, organised and run by Bryan Lewis, Suzi Squires and Oana Bucsa of the ESMS Development Office, who originally set themselves a target of raising £50,000 to be shared by the My Name's Doddie Foundation and Access to Excellence. Although at the time of writing (the morning after the event!) the final total is not yet known, it will certainly be considerably above the target.

The generosity of the wider ESMS community was remarkable – over 50 valuable items were donated completely free of charge for the online and live auctions, some services were provided at no cost and the guests who were able to buy tickets for an event which sold out in less than an hour, proved to be extraordinarily generous with their support on the evening. We were particularly grateful for the financial commitment of our headline sponsors, Carbon Financial and Craneware, whose immediate response to a request for sponsorship at the start of the planning stages proved a real boost to the Development Office.

One of the highlights of the evening was a surprise performance of The Proclaimers '500 Miles', the lyrics completely rewritten as a tribute to Doddie, by soloists, over 100 members of our senior choirs and most of the audience. A framed copy of the words, inscribed with a personal message by Craig and Charlie (The Proclaimers!) was presented to Doddie, and two further copies then raised several thousand pounds through a special raffle.

The ESMS Pipe Band and the ESMS Big Band also played central roles but equally important was the help provided by our school janitors and the tireless support of several members of staff and over 60 senior pupils who smiled, chatted and helped to ensure the guests were having a great time as well as donating regularly throughout the evening.

Bryan was joined by BBC Scotland's David Henderson, a contemporary of Doddie at SMC, as the joint hosts and auctioneers and the BBC's Jill Douglas spoke movingly about the vital work of the Foundation. Of course the undoubted star of the evening was the amazing Doddie Weir OBE himself, whose courage in the face of adversity and unquenchable spirit and good humour left an indelible mark on everyone who was privileged to spend the evening with him.



Proud to support ESMS Dinner for Doddie



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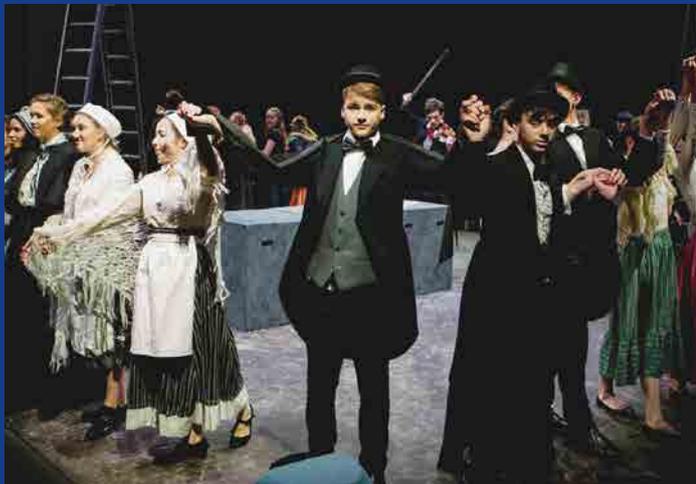
Image © Colourport



Images by East and West Events Photography.

Music, Drama and Dance

'A CHRISTMAS CAROL'



In November the family and friends of a very talented cast of ESMS students were treated to a two-hour long version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. With a full house on both Thursday and Friday evening, boys and girls from S3-S6 performed a stylistically reimagined version of a classic tale. It was a wonderful experience, thoroughly enjoyed by all.

PRIMARY 4 CHOIR SING AT THE MERCHANT'S HALL

The Primary 4 Choir and Mrs Syme enjoyed singing to a special audience of pensioners during their tea party at the Merchant's Hall on Thursday 6th of December.

The choir had been rehearsing festive songs for a number of weeks with Mrs Syme in preparation. Excitement was in the air when the children boarded the bus to travel to the hall which is located in Hanover Street in the centre of Edinburgh. The children arrived at the beautiful location and were met by the Master of the Merchant Company, Don Young, and immediately climbed the stairs to wait in the Court Room before the performance.

The children sang beautifully to an audience of around 70 guests and were accompanied on the piano by Mrs Syme. The audience joined in with the several of the carols, before the children circulated around the tables to chat.

A lovely morning was had by all and the choir returned to school full of the spirit of Christmas.



A VERY MUSICAL CHRISTMAS



December was an extremely busy time for our ESMS musicians with many performing opportunities for children throughout all three Schools, and in a diverse array of venues. Every child from our Nursery rooms through to Primary 3 sang in either a Christmas Carol event or a Christmas Service on the Ravelston site, much to the delight of their proud parents. The full Primary 4 Choir sang to pensioners in the Merchants' Hall, before a smaller number sang to a Dementia singing group in Drylaw Parish Church.

There was a 'Christmas Celebration' in the Dean, with seasonal songs and poems from the Primary 6 and Primary 7 Choir, while the Junior School Carol Service took place at St Mary's Cathedral with choral contributions from the Primary 5 and the Junior School Choir, and instrumental carol accompaniment from the Junior School String Orchestra and Wind Band.

Two nights of Carol Parties were held featuring the ESMS Wind Band, Chamber Choir, Madrigals Group, Close Harmony and the Junior School Choir (and FCI!). The Senior School Carol Service also took place at St Mary's Cathedral featuring carols sung by the SMC Trebles Choir, the MES S1/S2 Choir, the MES Upper School Choir and the SMC Upper School Choir with an orchestral item provided by the ESMS Chamber Orchestra. Our Brass Group added to the Service with their strong carol accompaniments and descants.

The ESMS music staff wish to thank the children involved for their focus and efforts at a tiring stage of the term. A number of charities (Finlay's Friends and Lothian Autistic) have benefitted from collections taken at the Carol Services and the Carol Party to the tune (excuse the pun!) of over £2,000.



CAROL PARTIES AT THE MAR HALL

As December began, the Mar Hall again played host to two festive Carol Parties, showcasing some of the finest musical talent ESMS has to offer. The Concert Band took centre stage with a spirited performance of *It's Beginning to Look A Lot Like Christmas*, before providing professional accompaniment to a variety of other acts, including the vocal and dancing talents of this year's SMC 1st XV Rugby and MES 1st XI Hockey teams. Indeed, huge thanks must go to members of the ESMS Chamber Choir,

Pipe Band, Funktion Band, SMC Close Harmony, MES Madrigal Group and JS Choir, who all produced entertainment of such a high standard. Santa Claus paid a visit to the youngest members of the ESMS community, who stole the show yet again with their singing on stage. Most importantly, the events raised just over £4,000 for the Lothian Autistic Society, a charity which provides services, information and practical support to individuals on the autistic spectrum, their families and carers in Edinburgh and the Lothians.

HOME ECONOMICS FOOD AND FASHION TRIP TO ITALY

by Susannah Touhill and Naiha Irfan (S6)

COLOGNE PHYSICS TRIP



On Sunday 14th October, 33 SMC boys headed off to Cologne for a Physics Trip. After arriving at our accommodation, very near the Rhine River, we were up bright and early the next day for a visit to the Deutsches Luft und Raumfahrtzentrum (German Aeronautics Centre). Here, we were treated to a series of experiments on everything from microgravity to electroplating. This was followed by a visit to the European Astronaut Centre and a fascinating tour of where ISS astronauts are trained. In the afternoon we experienced a captivating virtual reality tour of 1920s Köln. After an eventful trip to the local costume shop, we ended the day with a meal at the Hard Rock Café.

Tuesday was spent at a Planetarium in Erkrath where we witnessed a superb European Space Agency production about galaxies. Later on, we headed to the Deutsches Museum of science and technology in the old capital of Bonn where we yet again got hands on with a variety of activities. The day was rounded off with a trip to a local bowling alley level where Mr. Johnston and Arpith Srikanth (4T) displayed some impressive skills! Our last full day was spent finding out about 'g' forces at Phantasialand before witnessing a magnificent sunset from the top of the 100m high Köln Triangle. On the journey home all agreed it was an excellent trip. The group would like to thank Mr Balfour, Dr. Liddle, Mr. Johnston and Miss Macdonald for what was a very enjoyable trip.



During the October break, 15 girls and three teachers went on a Food and Fashion Trip to Italy. During our week we stayed in Naples and Sorrento, which was great as it allowed us to see two different sides of Italy.

We spent our first morning at the Antignano market – a popular food and clothes market used by local citizens. We then visited The Dietro Antigano Factory; where we witnessed the process of hand painting leather bags and purses. Our second morning saw us shopping and exploring the city of Naples. After being shopped out, we visited a luxury clothing company; The Kiton Factory. We learnt about how the tailors perfected each of the luxury hand sewn suits and ties and it was really interesting to see each individual stage of production. Our third day was spent visiting the E. Marinella and Limoncello factories before checking into our hotel in Sorrento. We were fortunate enough to have a swimming pool where we spent some time relaxing in the sun!

Sorrento highlights included a trip to Pompeii and Herculaneum plus a visit to a mozzarella and olive oil farm where we learnt about how the farm operated. We were even lucky enough to taste some of the delicious farm products. We then had an exciting afternoon helping to make ice cream and lemon sorbet at a famous Gelateria. Our second last day was spent shopping in Sorrento before a very entertaining evening making pizzas. Going back to Naples on the last day was extremely sad for everyone as we did not want to leave such a beautiful city.

All the girls had a fantastic time in Italy and created so many happy memories. We know all 15 girls thoroughly enjoyed the trip and would like to thank Mrs Campbell, Mrs Murray, and Mrs McGregor for organising such a fantastic trip.



ESMS CHAMBER CHOIR IN VENICE

The ESMS Chamber Choir had a very successful concert trip to Venice in the October mid-term break. The choir gave concerts in the Anglican Church in Venice, Verona Cathedral and they sang for a Mass in St Mark's Basilica. They were also fortunate enough to be invited to perform in the Scottish entry into this year's Venice Architecture Biennale which had turned the garden of one of Venice Palazzos into a community space. The choir performed a variety of sacred and secular unaccompanied choral music ranging from the 16th – 21st Centuries. They also took day trips to the islands of Murano and Burano, toured the Doge's Palace in Venice and the Roman Amphitheatre in Verona, famous for its open-air opera productions.



MALAWI ADVENTURE by Mary Horne (S5)

In October 2018, 11 S5 and S6 girls embarked on the journey of a lifetime. We spent two weeks in the heart of Malawi visiting our sister school, The Edinburgh Girls High School, travelling to Lake Malawi and experiencing a safari. We began our long journey, starting at Edinburgh airport and going through Amsterdam and Nairobi before we landed at our destination, Lilongwe.

Staying the night at a local hotel we began to adjust to the contrast of cultures before we woke up for the seven-hour car ride to the high school. The welcome we received upon arriving showed us that the seven days we had to look forward to, were going to be extremely enjoyable. It was during these seven days that we immersed ourselves in life at the school and took part in a range of activities. We stayed on the grounds and took part in the girls' lessons or helped out in the nursery, playing with the little girls and boys who had travelled from the local village.

Some days we took a bus ride to the surrounding areas. These trips included shopping at the market and a trip to the local primary school to learn about their method of teaching. Our free time was filled with chatting to the girls and forming bonds that we knew were going to last. Once those seven days came to an end, we said a reluctant goodbye to the school and drove to Lake Malawi to enjoy some relaxing days by the pool and then on to the safari. Being at the Safari park enabled us to see, up close, a wide range of animals indigenous to Africa whilst at the same time generating income for the all-important tourist industry and support the local communities.

After what seemed both the longest and shortest two weeks, we were sad to get back on the plane to go home. Following the same travel route each mile took us further away from the place we had become so comfortable in and whilst returning home was comforting it was also filled with great sadness. Reflecting on the trip all of us are so grateful we had this amazing opportunity and we will remember the experience with the fondest memories.

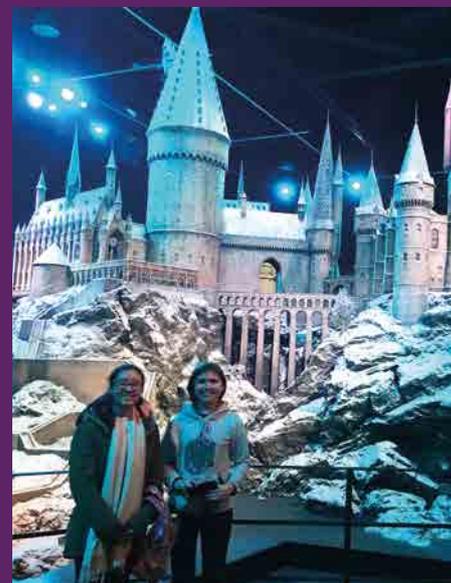


MES S2 HISTORY WEEKEND IN LONDON by Amy Millar & Lulu Renton (S2)



Waking up in London, our first stop was a fascinating talk from Holocaust survivor Rudi Oppenheimer, at the Jewish Museum. Rudi shared his incredible story, and told us about his brother's book, From Belsen to Buckingham Palace. Next, we went to the Imperial War Museum where we spent time learning about WWI and WWII from the vast exhibition halls. The most compelling exhibition was the Holocaust one. This exhibition is something that

everyone should see in their lifetime. Deeply upsetting but incredibly informative, it built upon our knowledge about the rise of Hitler and the Nazis. A particularly poignant exhibit was a cabinet full of shoes that had been worn by Jewish people on their arrival into Auschwitz Birkenau. This hit us all particularly hard and brought home the true magnitude of everything that had happened in WWII. I hope more people can go and see the exhibition so that something so inhumane can never happen again. To lift our spirits, we went to Covent Garden, then to Pizza Express and on to the theatre to watch *Les Misérables*. Our last day started with a walking tour around Parliament Square and a visit to the Cabinet War Rooms. We spent an hour wandering the twisting corridors from which Churchill and his government conducted WWII, which was slightly claustrophobic but also hugely interesting. Our final stop was a tour of Harry Potter Warner Studios, which was magical to say the least. We then flew home, completely exhausted but certainly more knowledgeable than before.



Trips continued

HISTORY TRIP TO LONDON

The weekend before Christmas saw 45 S2 boys journey down to London for a wonderful weekend of sight-seeing.

The boys toured the Imperial War Museum and British Army Museum, in addition to taking a flight on the London Eye and doing some shopping at Covent Garden.

The highlight for many was a walking tour around Whitehall and a stroll down the Mall under clear blue December skies.

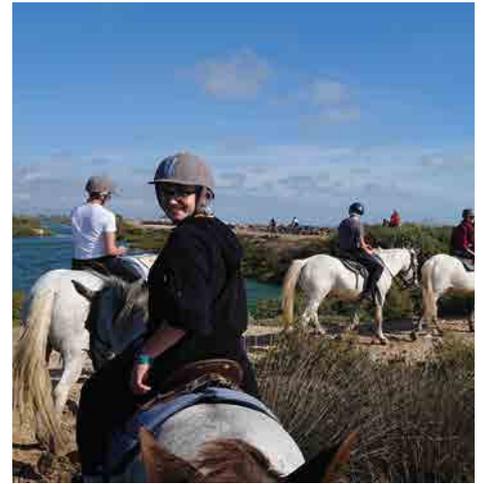


ESMS FRENCH EXCHANGE



A group of 25 boys and girls from ESMS spent a week in Marseille with their exchange partners. On top of the usual attendance of French classes at the Ecole de Provence, they enjoyed an exciting programme of activities that took them to the most iconic sights of the city.

The group was joined by their French exchange partners on a day excursion to the Camargue, where they visited the Camargue flamingo reserve, before enjoying the typical landscape of Camargue during an excursion to the beach on horseback. Pupils created many bonds with the French pupils and are already looking forward to welcoming them to Edinburgh!



News

'HONEY BISCUITS' AT THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

At the Junior School Ravelston site, we are always looking for ways to involve the wider ESMS community. Therefore, we were delighted when some of our amazing catering staff agreed to not only attend our Primary 2 Harvest Assembly but also to bake the delicious 'Honey' biscuits which the assembly was based on. One lunchtime during Book Week was extra special as everyone enjoyed the delicious treats baked for the occasion.



FINLAY'S FRIENDS FUNDRAISER

SMC History hosted a charity fundraiser for Finlay's Friends at the Dean. Some 600 students, parents and friends attended a wonderful evening of high calibre story-telling, from internationally renowned story-teller Rob Caskie, on the 1879 defence of Rorke's Drift during the Zulu War.



CASH FOR KIDS MISSION CHRISTMAS APPEAL

A huge thank you to all of the girls, parents and staff who contributed to the main MES charity initiative this Christmas. Overall, we managed to donate three overflowing boxes of gifts (like the one in this picture) to the Cash for Kids Mission Christmas appeal. These will be carefully distributed to children in Edinburgh who otherwise would not be receiving any gifts this Christmas. We have been delighted by everybody's generosity. Thank you.



'OWL MAGIC' IN PRIMARY I

As part of their 'Night and Day' topic, Primary 1 had a special visit from 'Owl Magic.' They got to see a variety of different owls from Barn Owls to Tawny Owls and everyone had the chance to hold the owls. The children asked lots of interesting questions and were interested to learn that some owls are nocturnal, some diurnal and some crepuscular!



LITTER PICKING

A small group of staff, with some family members and friends, have now met three times along various cycle routes in Edinburgh to do a litter pick, a surprisingly fulfilling and satisfying way to spend a Sunday morning. Sustrans are currently setting up a Duke of Edinburgh Volunteering programme involving litter picking along the cycle network. This programme should be in place soon so if any Duke of Edinburgh participants are still looking for a Volunteering activity you could possibly consider joining the group in their quest. A letter with further information will be sent home to Duke of Edinburgh parents soon.



SAFETY WEEK AT NURSERY

During Safety Week at the Nursery, the children learned how to keep themselves safe and what to do in an emergency. 'Ziggy', a friendly alien from outer space, left everyone a letter each day asking about how to stay safe on Planet Earth. The children were delighted when some special visitors came to visit to help the children answer Ziggy's questions! White Watch from Crewe Road Fire Station brought their fire appliance, and everyone enjoyed using the hoses to spray water at various targets around the school car park. The Fire Officers also showed the children all of the equipment that they use.

Police Constable Sam, from Police Scotland, talked about how the Police can help everyone too and when to dial 999. Some of the children had the opportunity to try on his uniform and lots of interesting questions were answered! To finish the week, Pollock (Scotrans) Ltd brought their TCab into school to help remind the children how to stay safe when crossing the road. The children relished the opportunity to sit in the driver's seat and could see how difficult it was for the driver to see small children. We are very grateful to the emergency services and Pollock (Scotrans) for helping to reinforce important safety messages to our youngest children.



CAREERS LUNCH: SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

On Thursday 15th November, over 80 S5 boys and girls attended a careers lunch, with the theme of 'Science and Engineering'. There were 13 guests from a range of careers, including ethical hacking, engineering, medicine, research, aviation and more.

All guests spoke briefly about their career path and their current job, before the pupils could circulate and ask questions. It was an opportunity to broaden their horizons and find out more detail about certain careers. All in all, this was an extremely successful event. Thank you to everyone who volunteered their time and shared their experiences with the pupils.



THRIFT SHOP

The ESMS Thrift Shop offers parents the opportunity to buy and sell good quality, second hand school uniform and sporting equipment.

Run by Rosh Caw and Paddy Foster and assisted by a cohort of brilliant volunteers there are currently 700 families selling items in the shop to meet the demand of the many others who use the shop to purchase items at less than 50% of the cost of new. The monthly Saturday shops are themed according to the season and school posts will provide information on these.

The shop now has an annual turnover in excess of £50,000 and so managing all of the administrative tasks that take place behind the scenes on their evenings and weekends is an impressive feat and one that is highly appreciated by those who use the shop and ESMS as a whole.

There has been great excitement as the shop has recently entered the 21st Century with the arrival of a card machine for payment. The shop benefits both parents and the schools with 80% of the selling price of items returned to parents. The remaining 20% of Thrift Shop proceeds are shared across all three schools special projects; this amounted to £18,000 last year.

For instance, the Duke of Edinburgh expedition programme has been expanded for girls and boys after the purchase of new canoes and paddles and funds from the Thrift Shop also contributed towards a new Harpsichord. In addition, a broad range of playground resources were purchased for P1-P3 children and basketball equipment is to be purchased for the girls at The Mary Erskine School.

ESMS would like to thank Rosh, Paddy and all the volunteers who give up their time to assist with the Thrift Shop, subsequently playing a vital role in adding to the fantastic opportunities and resources that enhance the experience of ESMS pupils.

Plans are now being actively considered to relocate the Thrift Shop to a more spacious and suitable location.

More information on the Thrift Shop can be found on the parents' portal under Uniform & Equipment and if you are interested in becoming a volunteer please email esms Thrift@esms.org.uk

HABITAT BUILDING IN DISCOVERY ZONE



In the Autumn, Primary 2 enjoyed Discovery Zone. Their task was to create a habitat suitable for a minibeast of their choice. This was a timed task and the children worked in small groups, discussing and planning ideas together then using a variety of materials to create their model habitat. Well done P2!

HARVEST TIME AT NURSERY



At the beginning of October, the Nursery children learned about Harvest time and the significance of this special time of year. As well as learning about how farmers harvest their crops, the children enjoyed making their own bread and listening to the traditional tale, The Little Red Hen. The children also enjoyed singing 'Big Red Combine Harvester' at Music with Mrs McArthur and Mrs Syme.

The department collected items for Edinburgh's Food Project and helped to smash Edinburgh North West's Foodbank target of collecting 5,000kgs of items for people and families in crisis within our local community. A Foodbank representative came along to thank the children (and parents) for their kindness, teamwork and overwhelming generosity and left needing a little extra help to collect all of the wonderful donations!

KIDS LIT QUIZ



Over 7,000 young people take part in the international Kids Lit Quiz each year. This year two senior school teams took part in the East of Scotland Heat at Liberton High School. It was a challenging quiz with rounds including Harry Potter, Beards, Christmas and Archery. The winner of the heat would be invited to London for the National Final and then Singapore for the World Final, so the stakes were high. Our B team, were awarded prizes for the top marks in the archery round. But it was the A team who really proved their knowledge, coming second overall, narrowly missing out on top spot to Edinburgh Academy.

TEAM TORRIDON 10K

A huge well done to the Heads and Assistant Heads of Torridon House, past and present, who took part in the Scottish 10k at East Lothian. The team, who were running in aid of Doddie Weir's My Name's 5 Doddie Foundation, raised £800 and would like to thank all who sponsored them.



2018 BETJEMAN POETRY PRIZE



Congratulations to Charlotte Harris in S3 who joined six other finalists to compete for the national 2018 Betjeman Poetry Prize. This is an amazing achievement. She attended the prize giving ceremony down in London with the Scottish Makar Jackie Kay. Her poem in Scots was entitled "Noo jist haud on."

CHESS SUCCESS

Checkmate! James Hartman represented Scotland at Chess in the U14 Liverpool Quadrangular Tournament against Wales, the North of England and Ireland, winning two out of three games. Scotland were the overall winners. James has since become the top rated U14 chess player in Scotland.

THE MARY ERSKINE SCHOOL CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISING

On Thursday 13th December, girls at The Mary Erskine School organised a Christmas Jumper Day and a lunchtime Christmas Fair to raise money for charities OpenBook, Children's Hospices Across Scotland (CHAS) and Save the Children (Scotland). Stalls included Christmas baking, a Candy Cane Tombola, a festive photo booth, icing gingerbread men and even a Teacher Forfeit. Everyone had great fun and an impressive £930 was raised for the charities.

CHRISTMAS TRUCE

On Thursday 20th December, students and teachers gathered around the War Memorial at Stewart's Melville College for the History Café's annual Christmas Truce Experience, in honour of the unofficial, widespread ceasefires that took place during WWI in 1914. The Stewart's Melville College and The Mary Erskine School choirs sang British and German songs respectively, Mr Allan gave an impassioned reading of Wilfred Owen's 'Dulce et Decorum est' and the SMC Rugby 1st XV entertained everyone with their hotly anticipated, annual performance of a festive tune. The Christmas Truce experience came to an end with a fantastic, audience-participation rendition of 'Auld Lang Syne'.



SAFER ROUTES TO SCHOOL BIKE SALE

The Safer Routes To School annual bike sale takes place on Saturday 27 April from 10 – 11am on the terrace in front of Old College. An ideal opportunity to buy a bike ahead of summer or to give an unloved bike a new home!



MARTIN STEWART AUTHOR VISIT

In November S2 students at SMC attended a talk by author Martin Stewart. Martin, a former English teacher, spoke about his two books; Riverkeep and The Sacrifice Box. He also spoke about how he finds inspiration for stories from everyday life and gave students advice on improving their creative writing. It was an enjoyable afternoon for all!



NICK HENNESSEY STORYTELLER EVENT

In November S1 students attended a lively storytelling session with storyteller extraordinaire Nick Hennessey.

Nick entertained us with a range of folk tales, and it was an enjoyable session all round.



JEFF KINNEY AT THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS

On Saturday 17th November a group of S1 students, accompanied by Miss Thow, Mrs Garlick and Mrs Shields, attended a hugely entertaining event with bestselling author Jeff Kinney at the Assembly Rooms. This was an author event like no other and started with Jeff inviting audience members up to the stage to 'Stump Jeff' by asking him questions about Diary of a Wimpy Kid. Other entertainment included a dance off with adults in the audience, a live snowball fight and a book signing.



CADET SKILLS AT ARMS MEET

In September, a team of 11 CCF Army and RAF Cadets traveled to Inverness for the 51st Infantry Brigade Cadet Skills at Arms Meet at Fort George.

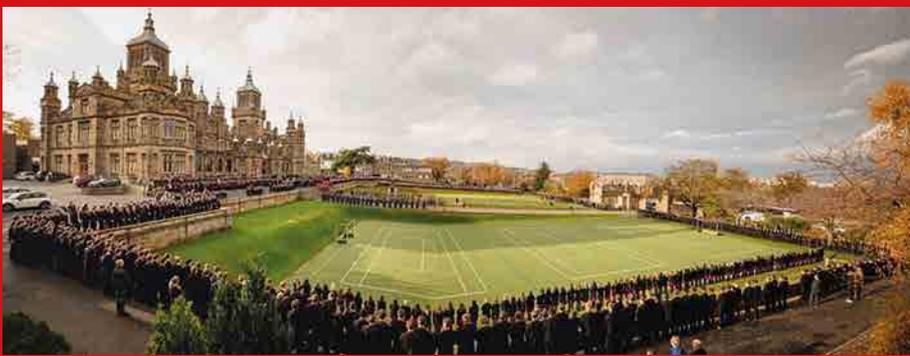
Our top team consisting of Ciaran Stewart, Oliver Woodside and Sarah McCormack won medals as winners of Match One and Match Two. They received runners up medals in Match Three and then won the cup as overall winners of the weekend. With the addition of Callum Smith, they also won the falling plates trophy and received individual medals for this too. Our 'B' team of Anna Scott, Katie Scott, Zain Shafiq and Callum Smith won medals for winning Match Three. Our final team of William Howie, Erin O'Sullivan, Alex Bethune and Ishbel Grieve also enjoyed a fantastic weekend of shooting.



REMEMBRANCE DAY 2018

2018 marked the centenary anniversary of the Armistice which brought an end to fighting in the First World War. On the morning of Friday 9th November, to honour this historic occasion, over 2,300 children from the Upper Junior School, Stewart's Melville College and The Mary Erskine School, gathered around the school's War Memorial to lay wreaths and observe a two-minute silence in Remembrance.

Beside the War Memorial, a Garden of Remembrance, featuring 440 crosses was created in memory of the 440 Former Pupils who sadly lost their lives during the World Wars. Readings and prayers were then shared at The Dean at a commemoration for John Watson's pupils who fell in both World Wars, before wreaths were laid by Former Pupils and parishioners.



WRITING MANIA IN PRIMARY 2

During the first week back after the Christmas holidays, Primary 2 got back into the swing of things with a day of Writing Mania. They spent the day in character as Punctuation Police Officers, Sentence Surgeons, Imagination Explorers, Sentence Builders and even Song Writing Pop Stars!



CHRISTINE JARDINE MP TALK TO HIGHER MODERN STUDIES PUPILS by Sadie Hart (SS)

In October, Christine Jardine MP came to speak to Higher Modern Studies pupils. She was elected to represent Edinburgh West in 2017 and has been thoroughly enjoying her time in Parliament, despite describing it as being very hectic. She began her talk by discussing what inspired her to be a politician. She told a story about a young man who was trying to get his new born baby's passport approved so that his family could live together safely in Britain, rather than in the war zone where the baby was born. She worked on this case for many months and after lots of form signing and negotiating the baby was finally able to come home. This experience inspired her to be a politician as it helped her to realise the power that she had to change lives. Her story showed that there is more to politics than laws and Parliamentary debates. Christine Jardine went on to discuss what she does in Parliament today and what being a Liberal Democrat means to her. After her talk, she answered a range of interesting questions. Jardine was an excellent, inspiring speaker and we are very thankful to her for giving up her time to come and speak to us.



FESTIVAL OF POLITICS

A Festival of Politics may not have the same immediate appeal to young people as other festivals such as Glastonbury or Transmit, but amongst Modern Studies pupils, there was plenty of enthusiasm for attending the events on offer. The Festival took place in October, in the appropriate venue of the Scottish Parliament. We chose to see two speakers from different ends of the political spectrum: Lord Michael Heseltine, and later in the week, Darren McGarvey, aka Loki. Lord Heseltine's event was sold out and the audience enjoyed hearing his humorous insights into working for Mrs Thatcher (they didn't see eye to eye, but were able to work together as colleagues), his thoughts on the EU referendum (he is firmly in the Remain camp), and on his passion for urban regeneration, which began in Liverpool after the Toxteth riots of 1981.

Undiminished by age, he easily held the attention of the packed debating chamber and even school pupils – a tough audience to crack – found him to be 'funny', 'fascinating' and 'refreshingly honest'. Darren McGarvey promised to be something totally different, and we were not disappointed! Described as a writer, rapper, community activist and columnist, his book *Poverty Safari* recently won the 2018 Orwell Prize. Darren spoke with an intensity and eloquence which left little doubt about his desire to improve the political representation of the working class, and to challenge the dominance of individualism in our society. The Festival certainly achieved its aims of inspiring us to listen and engage.



SCIENCE BOOK CLUB

In December 2018, a group of S1 and S2 students visited Blackwell's Bookshop to purchase books for the SMC Science Book Club. The club is run by Miss Thow and Dr Liddle and we meet once a week to discuss science books and conduct experiments based on our reading. Our purchases were made possible after receiving a generous donation from the Melville College Trust. Although we loved seeing what new science books were available, I think the whole group agrees that the highlight of the trip was discovering a set of giant microbe plush toys.



CREATIVE DIRECTIONS 2018

Fiona MacGregor, Head of Art at MES

On Friday 12th October 2018, I welcomed over 300 pupils and exhibitors to the first ESMS Creative Directions careers event held at The Mary Erskine School. The main aim of the event was to inform and inspire our young creatives towards a future career in the creative industries. University and art school representatives, students, guest speakers and industry professionals were on hand to answer any questions about the diverse and exciting courses and careers available to them in the future. As Joseph Chilton Pearce said, "To live a creative life, we must lose our fear of being wrong", so pupils were encouraged not to be afraid of asking anything 'wrong'!

Sir Ken Robinson once said, "creativity is the greatest gift to human intelligence". Recognising this gift, for a number of years the Head of Product Design, Mr Kevin Bowen, and myself have been taking S5 and S6 pupils to an event in Manchester called Create Your Future. This annual event is attended by thousands of pupils who are interested in studying a visually creative subject at university. The event proved very useful for S5 pupils considering applying for courses and for those studying Fine Art and Product Design who want to make a successful career in the industry. On the ten hour round trip to Manchester, Creative Directions was born when I asked myself, 'Why isn't there an event like this in Scotland?'. Working with Edinburgh-based brand, design, digital and marketing agency, D2 Collective, we created the event concept and logo and got the ball rolling, reaching out to former pupils working in the creative industries across the schools.

Creative Directions was a resounding success and I am extremely grateful to everyone who helped me organise the event. I look forward to organising the next Creative Directions and in the future hope the event can grow to accommodate schools from across the whole of Scotland. If you would like to be involved in some aspect of the Creative Directions event next year, please get in touch.

fjmacgregor@esms.org.uk



GRANDPARENTS' AFTERNOON TEA

On Thursday 15th November, the S6 Charity group organised and hosted the annual Grandparents' Tea Party in the Mar Hall, with around 140 grandparents attending. There was an abundance of tea, coffee and cake and the special guests were treated to various live performances from talented members of the Sixth Form, from dance and singing to harp and piano. The afternoon also happened to fall on one of the grandmother's 90th birthdays, so cake and plenty of singing was in order!

Various people make this annual event a success and it is a fantastic way for the Sixth Formers to show their grandparents how valued they are and what a special role they play in their lives. Special thanks go to the S6 Charity pupils who helped organise the event, as well as all of the performers, bakers, servers, music staff, especially Mr Chenery, Mr Matthews and Mr Burns, technical staff including Liam and Keith, Kath Dewar and the other MES Janitors, MES Catering staff and Charity Assistant Victoria Henzell who gave their time to the event.



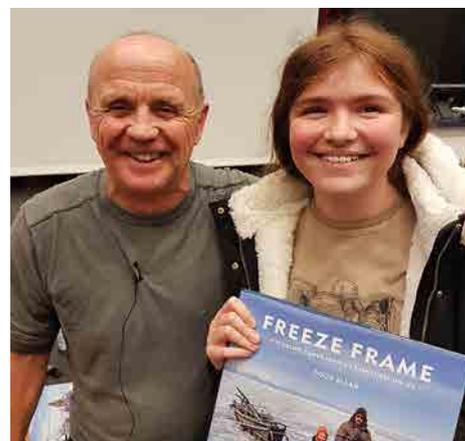
BUTTERFLY RELEASE

Learning about minibeasts, 2CB and 2JM have been looking after caterpillars and they have thoroughly enjoyed watching them transform into beautiful butterflies. They also enjoyed watching them fly to freedom.



GEOGSOC

Early in January, a group of Geography and Biology pupils attended a superb talk by the world-renowned cameraman, Doug Allan. Doug gave an illuminating and humorous talk about whales, using his decades of first-hand experience whilst filming and photographing them for programmes such as Frozen Planet and Blue Planet. As well as passing on fantastic expert knowledge, he shared highlights of his own experiences, including being grabbed by a walrus, through eye-catching images and short excerpts from his filming. He also explained the threats to whales due to historic whale hunting and ongoing 'research activity' by some countries. He finished his talk by passionately discussing the impact of climate change and plastic pollution on these mammals. After addressing a packed audience, he answered numerous questions and was kind enough to sign copies of his book and even take pictures with some of the pupils.



Boarding

FLEXI-BOARDING by Hamish Murray (S2)

Being a flexi-boarder has many advantages. One of these is that, living in Linlithgow, I don't have to travel for a long time to get to school. Another is that when my parents are away working, I know that I will always have a place to stay.

Currently, I board two days a week and this is perfect for my parents who both work away from home a lot of the time. It means that they get plenty of opportunities to see me, while also being able to work in London while knowing that I am safe.

Another advantage is that when I have to be in school very early, for instance for strength and conditioning training, I can stay at the boarding house, meaning I can get up later and still be on time.

I also have access to all the advantages of being a boarder without having to be away from my parents all the time, this means that I get invited on many boarding house trips, such as end of year adventures to Alton Towers and Elie beach and our Christmas meal at The Raj.

These trips offer a great chance to get to know boys and girls from other years. Flexi-Boarding is the perfect resource for people who want or need to board certain days, but do not require full time boarding.

Although most of our boarders are full time, we also welcome weekly, flexi and occasional boarders. If you would like more information about any of the boarding options

available, please do not hesitate in contacting Mr Roxburgh at daroxburgh@esms.org.uk (boys' boarding) or Mrs Anderson at fanderson@esms.org.uk (girls' boarding).





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