

# WESTONBIRT *Life*



Termly News from Westonbirt School - Boarding & Day for Girls Aged 11-18

SPRING 2010



## We Top *Telegraph's* Table

Our reputation for enabling all girls to do their best was enhanced by the recent publication of the *Daily Telegraph's* GCSE league table.

It ranked Westonbirt **first** in the county, **fourth** among independent schools and **46th** in the country. The table lists the percentage of pupils achieving at least 5 GCSEs at A\*-C grades, including English and Mathematics, and the average overall points score per pupil. 100% of Westonbirt girls achieved 5 A\*-C grades.

Of course, it takes more than league tables to prove academic merit. Value Added is another important consideration.

Director of Studies Mr Mark Gluning explains:

"On joining Westonbirt, all our girls undergo baseline tests, run by Durham University, which predicts their GCSE results. We compare their actual GCSE results with their predicted grades, and the difference is the 'Value Added'. At Westonbirt, on average, each girl improves by at least one grade per subject. This level of improvement puts us among the highest achieving schools in the country for Value Added."

in this issue

**NEXT OPEN DAY**  
**Saturday 8th May**  
**10am-1pm**

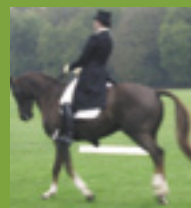
P2

We meet interesting people



P3

We share our successes



P3

We learn new skills





## From the Headmistress

The beginning of the Spring Term 2010 will be remembered for a long time to come. As the boarders flew in from all around the world, snow fell and Westonbirt was virtually marooned for four days.

Many staff and daygirls braved the conditions. We ran revision sessions for all our public examination classes and Years 7 to 9 had just one half day off to go sledging in the **Arboretum**. Everyone was warm and well fed and our log fires really came into their own!

We welcome this term from warmer climes in Australia our new volunteer student **Sian McConchie** and a former Westonbirt pupil, **Maija Calvert**, as Assistant Housemistress of Beaufort. In February she will be joined by her contemporary **Rose Farquhar** as Sixth Form AHM. Our alumni enjoy being on the other side of the fence and we love having them in the staff room!

Everyone has been very moved to see the pictures of the horrific devastation in Haiti. The girls in Year 10 organised a charity concert in aid of the **Red Cross Haiti Appeal** on Friday 29th January, hoping to match the £800 raised at a concert for the Asian Tsunami Appeal. Amy Falkenburg, Abigail Lowes, Fiona Vincent and Aisha Gross gave a very thoughtful presentation to the whole school and worked hard with Mrs Spyvee, our Charities Coordinator, to make the event a success, raising £1,500 so far.

Music continues to go from strength to strength with two thirds of the school taking part in last term's **Carol Service**. It was an impressive occasion and, as everyone said, our best ever, thanks to the gargantuan efforts of Dr Exon who leads the girls with much passion and commitment.

The cold evenings were much brightened by reeling practices in preparation for the Caledonian Society's Ball at **Eton** on February 7th. 50 Sixth Formers were invited and Miss Urquhart trained them all, many from scratch. I took a Saturday morning session and was impressed with how many dances they had learnt in a few weeks and how much they were enjoying themselves. We now have the basis and the enthusiasm for our own **Caledonian Society** and look forward to hosting balls in the Great Hall, surely one of the best venues in the country. This year's **Burns Night** went, as always, with a swing, with 180 guests, including some of our Sixth Form and more young people than ever before, reeling the night away and enjoying excellent catering too.

I look forward to meeting you at the many events, academic and extra-curricular, scheduled for the Spring Term and to welcoming new parents and pupils at our Summer Term **Open Day** on Saturday 8th May. Please do feel free to invite your friends!

*Mary Henderson*

Mrs Henderson is pictured above with Lord Janvrin. See page 3 for more news of his visit to Westonbirt: 'Gaining Political Wisdom'.



## BBC Profiles Pygmalion Team

Last term's excellent **Senior Play**, Shaw's *Pygmalion*, received a publicity boost when **BBC Radio Gloucestershire's** Faye Hatcher came to interview cast members live on air. The girls gave an entertaining preview of the show, confidently answering tricky questions such as "How can girls play the male roles convincingly?" As anyone who saw the show will testify, the answer is "very well indeed". Outstanding performances from the whole cast, against a witty set designed by Jenny Edwards as part of her Art GCSE, elicited tumultuous applause. The final announcement that brought the house down was that the Director, Mrs Charlotte Crosbee, had produced her new baby, Poppy, between the final rehearsal and the first night. Congratulations all round!



## 'New Palin' Pays A Visit

The girls enjoyed meeting the man heralded by *Tatler* as "the new Michael Palin", travel writer Henry Hemming. He gave the **Autumn Westonbirt Lecture** on his entertaining new book, *In Search of the English Eccentric*. The girls plied him with questions as he autographed their copies. We are now looking forward to the **Spring Westonbirt Lecture**, "Katherine Mansfield and The Bloomsbury Group", to be given by the internationally renowned academic, Dr Gerri Kimber, Chair of the Katherine Mansfield Society. Dr Kimber chose Westonbirt for her daughter's education.



# AUTUMN TERM HIGHLIGHTS



## All for One - and One for All!



When rising young fencing star **Flavia Laschetti** joined Westonbirt last term, we took the opportunity to enthuse other fellow pupils about this exciting sport. Pictured above are four newcomers to fencing in a group lesson, and Flavia is pictured, left, with top **coach Jamie Melia**, who provides our training.

## New! PE at GCSE

PE is gaining a higher profile on our academic curriculum following the introduction of a **GCSE** course this academic year, in addition to our PE A Level.



Pictured left is PE A Level student **Emily Carmichael** giving a dressage demonstration on the playing fields as part of her practical coursework. Despite torrential rain, virtually the whole school turned out to support her. Emily's equestrian skills have already earned her national acclaim.

## Sharing Different Cultures



At Westonbirt we enjoy sharing different cultures with each other and with the local community. Last term we helped the nearby **Hawkesbury Primary School** expand its pupils' horizons during their International Week (left) We introduced the Beaver Colony of **First Dursley Scouts** to new friends from overseas who explained how the Scout movement operates in their home countries to help them earn their Friendship Badge. We enjoyed a Japanese cookery demonstration (right). We are now looking forward to our **International Day** celebrations on April 23rd - St George's Day!



Making Christmas cakes is a highlight of our **Leith's Food and Wine Course** in the Sixth Form  
(Photo: Andrew Clarke)

## Gaining Political Wisdom

Our older pupils had excellent opportunities last term to expand their knowledge of politics, to hone their debating skills and to work in partnership with other local senior schools.

**Lord Janvrin** (pictured on page 2 with Mrs Henderson, Mrs Phillips and Mrs Cowell), gave an informative talk about the House of Lords. Year 10 girls took part in a **Model United Nations** at Sir William Romney School, and Sixth Formers competed against Marling School amongst others at regional level in stimulating **debating competitions**.

## Feeding the Inner Girl

In response to last summer's research among our pupils' parents, the governors have outsourced school catering to **Chartwell**, the leading provider of catering and support services to universities, colleges and independent schools. Chartwell ([www.chartwell.co.uk](http://www.chartwell.co.uk)) has a reputation for excellent management as well for providing first class, nutritious food with real appeal to their target market.

"They are already showing considerable understanding of the particular needs of our girls and staff" reports Mrs Henderson.



## Science or Art?

Our new **Science Club** offered an intriguing Science of Art course last term, enabling girls to manufacture paint from raw ingredients - just one of many choices in our new extensive **extra-curricular programme** held after tea every weekday.



# MOVING ON!



Last term we welcomed the official Reunion Day of our alumni association and some individual

and group visits too. Pictured here is **Catherine Charlton** and friends who left in 1996.

Of course, these days you don't need to visit the school to catch up with your old classmates. Over 100 alumni have already joined our **Facebook** Westonbirt School Alumni group ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)). If you're not already familiar with this popular social networking site, Charlotte Rogers-Jones will be happy to tell you more about it (email: [crogersjones@westonbirt.gloucs.sch.uk](mailto:crogersjones@westonbirt.gloucs.sch.uk)).

Following our story last term about **Hermione Berry's** jewellery company, she has won the Perfect Wedding award for Best Hair Accessories. She is now busy with London bridal shows but also planning for her own wedding this summer.

A more recent leaver, **Gina Stewart-Cox**, is also making headlines with her jewellery business. ([www.ginastewartcox.com](http://www.ginastewartcox.com)).

## WESTONBIRT ASSOCIATION NEWS

We will be celebrating the Association's 80th anniversary with a **Garden Party** on Sunday 20th June at the School. We hope that as many of you as possible will be able to come and bring your families. It will be a wonderful opportunity to meet up with old friends and visit the gardens. A 'Scratch Choir' will give an informal concert later in the afternoon, including your favourite vespers and anthems. Please let me know if you would like to take part. Full details are on the website.

Some beautiful souvenir items will be available to order on the day or via the website: two mugs and a dish in fine bone china and a cushion-sized needlepoint tapestry. All will bear our much-loved amaryllis in pastel colours.

Fiona Stokes is to step down from the Committee after 10 years as News, Finance and Distribution Coordinator. If you are interested in volunteering to replace her, please contact me via the School for more information.

*Ali Warrington Smyth,  
Honorary Secretary*

# DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

SPRING & EARLY SUMMER 2010

Thursday 25 February  
Prep School Open Day  
Our coeducational prep school, **Rose Hill Westonbirt**, welcomes prospective pupils and their families to visit the school. For more information please call 01666 881378

Saturday 27 February (7.30pm)  
Music at Westonbirt Concert: **Imperial Winds**  
The wind band from Imperial College, London, with Musical Director Gilly French, co-director of Bampton Classical Opera who perform in our grounds every summer

Friday 12 March (7.30pm)  
Westonbirt Spring Lecture  
Dr Gerri Kimber on "The Bloomsbury Group and Katherine Mansfield" - free lecture followed by optional supper (supper bookable only in advance)

Friday 19 March (2pm)  
Drama Gala  
Annual event showcasing the talents of girls of all ages

Sunday 21 March (2-5.30pm)  
Snowdrop Day in aid of HOWT ([www.bolfordtrust.com](http://www.bolfordtrust.com))  
Open gardens plus talk on snowdrops, by the former Head of Gardens at the National Trust £10 for admission to gardens and talk at 3pm; £4 for gardens only.

Friday 23 April  
International Day  
Celebrating the cultures of all the countries represented at Westonbirt School

Saturday 22 May  
Friends of Westonbirt School's Dance & Dodgems Evening

Westonbirt School, Tetbury,  
Gloucestershire GL8 8QG

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[www.westonbirt.gloucs.sch.uk](http://www.westonbirt.gloucs.sch.uk)

## Friends' News

*Chairman Sally Moreland writes:*

For the **Friends of Westonbirt School**, the first event in our 2010 social calendar was the very popular **Burns Night** on Saturday 23rd January when guests enjoyed traditional Scottish fayre and reeling to Harvie Sharpe and his wonderful band.

This evening was closely followed by the highly entertaining and competitive **Quiz Night** with teams of all ages. The questions were once again posed by our brilliant quizmasters, Joy Bell and Philip Dixon.

On Friday 12th March there will be a post-lecture supper following the talk by Dr Gerri Kimber on "Katherine Mansfield and the Bloomsbury Group". Tickets for the supper are available from Eileen Galbraith in Reception and cost £15 per person. There is no charge for the lecture and the supper is optional.

Our main event this Summer Term will be a **Dance and Dodgems Evening** on Saturday



22nd May. The girls were highly amused at the School's 80th Birthday Celebrations in 2008 to see

the Headmistress and the Governors taking a turn on the dodgems we had hired for the event, and we are bringing the dodgems back by popular request! We very much hope that you, your friends and family will be able to join us.

*Advance news of all FOW events is posted on the school's website and updates are sent via email.*

## Wedding Belle



During the Christmas holidays, **Sixth Form Housemistress Miss Freya Gooden** married Stephen Hudson. We wish Mr and Mrs Hudson a long and happy life together.

We also congratulate **Mrs Lucy Weeden, Head of Classics**, and her husband, on the birth of their first child, **Lily Mary**, on 29th January. Photo to follow in due course!

## An Editor's Exit

*Mary Henderson writes:* "This first issue of *Westonbirt Life* will be the last of our newsletters to be compiled by **Mrs Debbie Young**, our Director of Admissions and Marketing. A dedicated and very hard working member of our team for 13 years, Debbie is leaving to become a freelance writer. We thank her for her commitment to marketing Westonbirt and all its changes over 13 years and particularly for her way with words and photos and her ability to turn every event into a good news story! She will be a very hard act to follow and leaves with our very best wishes for her future career."

*Follow Debbie's progress via her personal website: [www.debbieyoung.info](http://www.debbieyoung.info)*



"What have I done?!"

(Photo: Claire Haines)